

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

by

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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.

EKSERP

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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Dr Marietjie Strydom

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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.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATION – A BRIEF THEORETIC OVERVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief theoretic overview of some aspects relevant to research in communication. The researcher believes that government communicators always need to conduct research on the basis of sound theoretical guidelines and principles to ensure research of good quality. Writing about Total Quality Management (TQM), Pace (2001) defines quality as “doing the right thing the right way the first time and every time”, and further defines “right” and “wrong” with regard to quality as follows:

The right thing must be understood from both internal (product/service) and external (customer) perspectives. This means that the product or service meets customer requirements, performs as stated, is priced fairly, and is delivered on time.

The right way is the most effective, most efficient, lowest cost, fastest, highest value approach to producing the right outcome the first time and every time. It applies conformance to all applicable standards and specifications as well as minimisation of the costs of poor quality such as rework, waste, and scrap.

Pace (2001) concludes that “poor quality could be defined as either doing the wrong thing (or failing to do the right thing) or doing the right thing the wrong way (or failing to do the right thing the right way every time).”

The researcher argues that communication research is the “right thing” to do, but that it is of no use if not done in “the right way.”

In chapter 2 communication research is defined. The researcher furthermore distinguishes different types of research, discusses the different steps in the research process typical to most research projects and refers to some of the challenges of communication research. Lastly, a few points regarding the use of communication research by governments are introduced.

2.2 COMMUNICATION RESEARCH DEFINED

Definitions and descriptions of different focus areas in research and of various research methodologies and processes are more readily available than a definition of ‘research’, and Leedy (1997:3) remarks that “the word *research* is used in everyday speech to cover a broad spectrum of meaning, which makes it a decidedly confusing term ...”

Reinard (2001:3) provides the following short definition of research: “Research is the systematic effort to secure answers to questions.” He expands on this concise definition by stressing the point that “these questions are not mundane ones”, but that “research questions deal with issues requiring reference to data and information” (Reinard, 2001:3-4). Leedy (1997:3) defines research as “the systematic process of collecting and analysing information (data) in order to increase our understanding of the phenomenon with which we are concerned or interested.” Powell (1997:2) does not provide his own definition of ‘research’, but quotes three definitions from others:

“Studious inquiring or examination; especially: investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories

or laws in the light of new facts, or practical applications of such new or revised theories or laws” (*Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, cited by Powell, 1997:2).

“A method or study by which, through the careful and exhaustive investigation of all the ascertainable evidence bearing upon a definable problem, we reach a solution of that problem” (Hillway, cited by Powell, 1997:2).

“Research is best conceived as the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through the planned and systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data” (Mouly, cited by Powell, 1997:2).

Both interesting and useful to understand the meaning of research, is Leedy’s guidelines as to what research is not (Leedy, 1997:4):

- Research is not mere information gathering.
- Research is not mere transportation of facts from one location to another.
- Research is not merely rummaging for information.
- Research is not a catchword to get attention.

According to Powell (1997:2) “there is no one definition of research, in part because there is more than one kind of research.”

Focus areas in research covered extensively in the literature available, include the following:

- marketing research (Martins, 1996a:3-22; Chisnall, 1991:6; Crimp, 1990:3; Bailey, 1982:2)
- market research (Cooper, 1998:1015-1024); Fairweather, 2001; Smith, 1998:29-65; Yule, 2001; Shalofsky, 1998:1103-1128)

- social research (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000; Bulmer, 2000a:8-9; Groenewald, 1981; Möhler, 1998:1025-1032; Shalofsky, 1998:1103-1128)
- advertising research (Hansen, 1998:653-724; Yasuda and Spence, 2000:179-201; Martins, 1996b:550-567)
- public opinion research (Khoury, 1989; Mattes, 1993:30-32; Worcester, 1999; Taylor, 1998:975; ESOMAR, 2000a)
- media research (Raimondi, 1998:803-838; Martins, 1996c:570-597).

Similar to both Reinard and Leedy, Chisnall (1991:6) and Weiers (1984:2) refer to research as being a “systematic process” when they define marketing research. Chisnall (1991:6) defines it as being “concerned with the systematic and objective collection, analysis and evaluation of information about specific aspects of marketing problems in order to help management make effective decisions.” Weiers (1984:2) adapts a definition presented by Kotler in 1980 in the following way: “Marketing research is the systematic design, collection, analysis and reporting of data and findings relevant to a specific marketing situation.”

In this chapter, the researcher quotes from different sources consulted where the focus was either on one or more of the focus-areas mentioned above – e.g. marketing research and social research. The researcher is of the opinion that the same broader principles, processes and challenges apply to communication research and the other focus areas identified.

Analysis of definitions available, leads the researcher to the conclusion that most authors emphasise the ‘why’ and ‘how’ when defining research and the different focus areas in research.

Referring specifically to the 'how', Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:11) defines scientific research as “the translation into practice of the relationship between facts and theory ... in order to acquire specific information” and distinguish the following four characteristics of scientific research:

- “Scientific research is *empirical* since the aim is to know reality. Each step is based on observation, be it when collecting the basic facts or when testing the explanation, assessing the value of the prediction or the result of an intervention.
- Scientific research is *systematic* and *logic*. Not only must the observation be done systematically but a certain logical order must be followed all along (see discussion regarding research process, paragraph 2.4).
- Scientific research is *replicable* and *transmittable*. Since the observation is objective and the explanation logical, anyone placed in exactly the same circumstances can observe the same event and make the same reasoning, leading to the same explanation and prediction. Moreover, it is possible to communicate each step of the research and to transmit the acquired knowledge.
- Scientific research is *reductive*. To grasp the main relationships of laws, the complexity of reality is reduced. All details which are not essential or which have little influence on the process under investigation are omitted” (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000:5-6).

The only definition of communication research available to the researcher is that of Reinard (2001:5) who defines communication as “the process by which participants transact and assign meaning to messages” and explains that a message is “the set of verbal and non-verbal cues communicators exchange.” According to Reinard (2001:4), communication research is “a speciality that studies message-related behaviour.” He explains that “some people have difficulty separating communication research from work in psychology, sociology

or literature”, and that they argue “that since ‘meanings are in people’ (Berlo, cited by Reinard, 2001:4) any study of people is communication research.”

Relevant for the communication researcher is the reminder by Worcester (1999:3) who, writing about public opinion research, says that “polls do not measure some abstract ‘truth’, but people’s perceptions.” Worcester (1999:3) refers to the wisdom expressed by Epictetus as long ago as the first century that “perceptions are truth, because people believe them.”

Although researchers are confronted with various challenges when conducting communication research (see paragraph 2.5), and the reality that contemporary communication testing is still far from perfect, Hansen (1998:716) argues that it is still good enough to warrant the recommendation: “Test rather than guess.”

The researcher fully agrees with Hansen’s argument, but wants to emphasise the necessity of conducting this “test” in the “the right way.” Furthermore, the researcher is of the opinion that the spectrum of aspects covered by communication research conducted by governments is broader than “studies in message related behaviour” referred to by Reinard in his definition of communication research as quoted. Research conducted by governments to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information (see chapters 3 to 5 of this dissertation) also includes studies related to communication and information products and initiatives of governments; exposure to and attitude towards the different mediums that can be used for government communication and the dissemination of government information; awareness and knowledge of and attitude towards government performance and towards government policies and initiatives on a wide spectrum of issues. To some extent, therefore, the research conducted by governments to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information focuses on more than merely communication and

information. The focus includes areas like media research, public opinion research and social research.

2.3 TYPES OF RESEARCH

2.3.1 Introduction

There are many different ways according to which research studies are classified – e.g. according to various focus areas (see paragraph 2.2), the environment from which the research is conducted (e.g. academic, business or government) or the specific technique of data collection (e.g. personal interviews, telephone interviews or mailed questionnaires).

The researcher distinguishes different types of research according to the classification of Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:37-44). These authors suggest that research studies can be classified according to the following three aspects:

- the methodology used (*quantitative* and *qualitative* research)
- the reasons for the research being conducted (*basic* social research and *applied* social research)
- the demands of the research question (*exploratory* research, *descriptive* research, *correlational* research and *explanatory* research).

2.3.2 Different types of research

2.3.2.1 Quantitative and qualitative research

Two broader *methodologies* are mostly distinguished to classify different types of research studies – quantitative and qualitative research.

(a) Quantitative research

Quantitative research involves “the collection of primary data from large numbers of individuals, frequently with the intention of projecting the results to a wider population” (Bennett, 1996:125). Quantitative research is normally conducted amongst a representative sample of a target population with the aim to generalise the research findings to the specific population (or universum). The emphasis is on numerical measurement (Smith, 1998:40; Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000:38 and MORI, 2001a) and subsequent statistical analysis (Smith, 1998:40; Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000:38). The large sample (number of respondents) is necessary to analyse the results according to categories within the target population - that is according to age, gender, exposure to a communication product or message and so forth. According to Reinard (2001:8) quantitative research “tends to be explanatory, especially when experiments are involved, or it attempts to use precise statistical models to achieve comprehensive understandings of human communication (as in survey studies and polls of public opinion).” Using quantitative research methods, researchers often aim to explain communication behaviour by looking at processes that allow them to predict future behaviour (Reinard, 2001:8).

Reinard (2001:11) argues that there are two major types of quantitative research - surveys and experiments. Examples of the different types of quantitative research, in the focus area of communication research is also provided by Reinard – see table 2.1.

TABLE 2.1

TYPES OF QUANTITATIVE STUDIES¹

TYPES (DESCRIPTION)	EXAMPLES
<p>SURVEY METHODS: Techniques that involve carefully recorded observations that provide quantitative descriptions of relationships among variables</p> <p>Descriptive or observational surveys: Direct observation of behaviour by use of some measurement (the researcher does not manipulate or change any variables)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovering what sorts of things small-group communicators say that predict their becoming group leaders • Identifying the relationship between the number of newspapers a person reads on a regular basis and the amount of ear of society the person reports

(continue ...)

¹ Reinard, 2001:11

TYPES (DESCRIPTION)	EXAMPLES
<p>Content analysis: A systematic, quantitative study of verbally communicated material (articles, speeches, films) by determining the frequency of specific ideas, concepts, or terms</p> <p>Opinion surveys: assessments of reports from individuals about topics of interest</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studying the amount of violence on children’s television programmes • Inquiring into the amount of newspaper space dedicated to stories about a women’s movement • Analysing the types of speech defects shown by children in samples of spontaneous speech • Analysing surveys regarding which candidate people think won a political debate • Examining whether the public believes that speech correction therapy should receive increased funding in public schools • Assessing surveys of the favourite television programmes people watch
<p>EXPERIMENTAL METHODS: A method of studying the effect of variables in situations where all other influences are held constant. Variables are manipulated or introduced by experimenters to see what effect they may have</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studying the impact of the use of evidence by exposing one group to a speech with evidence and another group to a speech without evidence • Studying the effect of colour in advertising by exposing one group to an advertisement with colour printing and another group to an advertisement without colour printing

The methods of data collection mostly used for quantitative surveys include:

- face-to-face (or personal) interviews of the interviewer (or researcher) with the respondent at the respondent's place of residence, in the street, at shopping malls or at work
- telephone interviews
- self-completion of a questionnaire by the respondent (either alone or as individuals in a group) in the presence of the researcher or through the questionnaire being delivered and collected by the researcher
- self-completion of a questionnaire by the respondent received and returned by post
- Internet or online research

(Ward, 1998:149-171; Bennett, 1996:125-133; Smith, 1998:49-55).

Each of these data collection methodologies has certain limitations and advantages – e.g. in terms of cost, time to collect the data, quality control and sampling efficiencies. These are not discussed by the researcher. The limitations and advantages need to be properly investigated and considered in the context of each survey when a decision has to be taken regarding the method of data collection.

(b) Qualitative research

Qualitative research, according to Goodyear (1998:177), is often defined in terms of its relation to quantitative research: “Where quantitative research *measures*, and answers questions like ‘how many, how often, what proportion, what size ...?’, qualitative research leads to *understanding* and answers questions like ‘why did, how can, in what way?’”

Furthermore, Bennett (1996:133-134) argues that qualitative research methods can also be used “to uncover new ideas from or hidden feelings of respondents” and that it can best be achieved by “unstructured interviews in which respondents can talk freely without too much leading” from the moderator.

In qualitative research, qualifying words or descriptions are used to record responses (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000:37) and observations are mostly described in “non-numerical terms” (Reinard, 2001:6). In qualitative research the researcher involves a smaller number of respondents (Smith, 1998:40) and there is no attempt to generalise about the population (Bennett, 1996:145). Qualitative research does not place the same emphasis on classic statistical validity as quantitative research. Smith (1998:40) explains that, for qualitative research, “validity centers more on *face* validity – that is, establishing whether the evidence is consistent with existing theories and prior knowledge.”

Qualitative research is response and not question orientated. The response to a question largely determines the following question, therefore respondents are not interviewed according to a predetermined set of questions (Smith, 1998:40).

According to Reinard (2001:6) qualitative research studies in the field of communication “tend to *describe* or *interpret* communication exchanges.” Reinard (2001:7-8) proceeds to explain that these studies attempt to “describe the human condition by using general views of social action” and that “researchers who use qualitative methods often try to interpret the meanings to be found in communication exchanges.”

Qualitative research can be conducted in either an individual or group setting. There are a number of different approaches to collecting qualitative results on an individual basis. According to Smith (1998:45), the *depth interview* is the most commonly used method in this regard. Bennett (1996:134) emphasises that depth interviews require the services of skilled interviewers and refers to Webb (1992) who identifies the following circumstances where depth interviews will be particularly useful:

- when the issue under investigation is embarrassing, stressful or of a confidential nature
- when a detailed analysis needs to be conducted of rather complex situations such as attitudes, beliefs and feelings
- when peer pressure may cause some respondents to conform to societal norms when in reality they would not
- when the interviewer needs a progressive set of images, such as buying decision with regard to overseas holidays
- in complex situations when the aim is to explore rather than measure.

From experience, the researcher can add that depth interviews with individual respondents are, for various reasons, also often preferred to qualitative research in a group setting when involving leaders, managers or opinion-formers.

With regard to collecting qualitative research results on a group basis, there are also a variety of approaches, but the most widely used is the *group discussion* (MORI, 2001b; Smith, 1998:45; Bennett, 1996:136). A group discussion describes a session involving between six and eight

individuals (Smith, 1998:45) who are recruited according to specific criteria.²

The moderator's role is to manage the discussion flow in the group (Smith, 1998:45). Bennett (1996:138) explains that ideally the moderator should let the group carry on the conversation "by themselves" and that "interventions are deemed necessary only to introduce a new topic if it does not come up spontaneously or to bring the discussion back on track if participants have strayed into irrelevant areas." The moderator needs to manage the discussion flow according to the discussion guide in a response-orientated approach and probe for response where appropriate. The moderator should "create a relaxed atmosphere in which respondents can comment in a constructive, non-defensive way" (Smith, 1998:45) and facilitate the balanced involvement of different members of the group. Moderators "should exercise just enough authority to direct and control the flow of conversation without affecting its content" (Bennett, 1996:138). Furthermore, the moderator needs to observe non-verbal communication in the group (Smith, 1998:45).

The terms *group discussion* and *focus group* are mostly used interchangeably, but Smith points out that they are in fact slightly different: "The group discussion, which has a European pedigree, places the emphasis on depth understanding. In contrast, the more American style focus group tends to place more emphasis on – albeit still in a qualitative mode – measurement and quantification" (Smith, 1998:45). It is of critical importance to properly understand the need of the research client in this regard.

² The criteria will depend on the nature of the study. In communication research basic socio-demographic variables are commonly used – e.g. gender, age, level of socio-economic development and language preference.

2.3.2.2 *Basic and applied research*

Based on the *reasons* why research is conducted, the two types of research distinguished are basic research and applied research. Whether the aim of the research is basic or applied does not affect the way in which the research is conducted (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000:39) – the methods of inquiry are identical (Reinard, 2001:4). Suchman (cited by Philips, 1985:534) and Kidder and Judd (1986:396) also emphasise that the significant difference between basic research and applied research is one of purpose and not of method.

(a) Basic research

Basic research applies when the researcher seeks to “contribute to human knowledge and understanding relating to a specific phenomenon” (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000:38). Neuman (1997:21) argues that “basic research advances fundamental knowledge about the social world.” Neuman furthermore explains that basic research “focuses on refuting or supporting theories that explain how the social world operates, what makes things happen, why social relations are a certain way, and why society changes” and that “basic research is the source of most new scientific ideas and ways of thinking about the world” (Neuman, 1997:21). Reinard (2001:4) explains that basic research is conducted “to learn about relationships among variables” and according to Vickery (cited by Powell, 1997:2) basic research “is concerned with elucidating concepts and their relations, hypotheses and theories.” This aim is normally achieved by “gathering more facts and information which enables existing theories to be challenged and new ones to be developed” (Bless and Higson-Smith 2000:38).

Basic research is research conducted “regardless of any immediate commercial product or service” (Reinard, 2001:4). As Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:38) put it, the “actual utility or application of this newly acquired knowledge is of little

concern to the researcher.” According to Reinard (2001:34) and Powell (1997:2) most research usually referred to as ‘pure’ scientific research is actually basic research.

(b) Applied research

Applied research is conducted if the researcher’s motivation is to assist in solving a particular problem (Reinard, 2001:4; Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000:38; Philips, 1985:534; Neuman, 1997:22 and Powell, 1997:2) or to develop a product (Reinard, 2001:4). According to Neuman (1997:22) theory is “less central” to applied researchers than “seeking a solution to a specific problem” and its main strength, is its “immediate practical use.”

Although Powell (1997:2) mentions that applied research is occasionally referred to as action research, Neuman (1997:23-28) remarks that researchers use “several types of applied research,” and distinguishes three types of applied research: action research, social impact assessment and evaluation research.

According to Neuman (1997:23) “*action research* is applied research that treats knowledge as a form of power and abolishes the line between research and social action.” Isaac and Michael (cited by Powell, 1997:45) state that the purpose of action research is “to develop new skills or new approaches and to solve problems.” Action research is characterised as “practical, orderly, flexible and adaptive, and empirical to a degree, but weak in internal and external validity” (Isaac and Michael, cited by Powell, 1997:45). Neuman (1997:23) explains that there are “several types of action research” and that “most share the following common characteristics:

- those who are being studied participate in the research process
- research incorporates ordinary or popular knowledge
- research focuses on power with a goal on empowerment

- research seeks to raise conscious or increase awareness, and
- research is tied directly to political action.

Social impact assessment, according to Neuman (1997:24) “may be part of a larger environmental impact statement required by government agencies. Its purpose is to estimate the likely consequences of a planned change. Such an assessment can be used for planning and making choices among alternative policies.” Researchers conducting social impact assessments “examine many outcomes and often work in an interdisciplinary research team” (Neuman, 1997:24). Neuman furthermore notes that “social impact studies often include a cost-benefit analysis” in which the researcher “estimates the future costs and benefits of one or several proposed actions.”

Evaluation research is a widely used type of applied research (Neuman, 1997:25) and has as its primary goal “not the discovery of knowledge but rather a testing of the application of knowledge within a specific programme or project” (Powell, 1997:45). Neuman (1997:25) emphasises that “ethical and political conflicts often arise in evaluation research because people have opposing interests in the findings” and Powell (1997:45) notes that “evaluative researchers must be concerned with threats to validity, such as intervening variables, measurement techniques and operational definitions.” The two general types of evaluation research are *summative* evaluation and *formative* evaluation. Summative evaluations look at final programme outcomes (Neuman, 1997:25). A summative or outcome evaluation “tends to be quantitative in nature and often is used as the basis for deciding whether a programme will be continued” (Powell, 1997:46). Formative or process evaluation is “built-in monitoring or continuous feedback on a programme” (Neuman, 1997:25) and “examines how well the programme is working” (Powell, 1997:46). According to Powell (1997:46) formative evaluation is often more qualitative and it is typically used for “revising and improving programmes.”

Classifying research projects in this way is perceived as not being very useful in practice. Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:39) argue that no study is “only purely basic or purely applied,” and Reinard (2001:4) explains that “last year’s basic research may be today’s source of new products.” Powell (1997:2) also holds the opinion that basic and applied research are “not necessarily dichotomous” and that “in spite of the fact that basic and applied research have tended to be conducted in isolation from one another.”

2.3.2.3 *Different objectives of social research*

A third way of classifying types of research is based on the demands of the research question, that is in terms of the research objectives. Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:37-44) distinguish four types of research on the basis of this classification: exploratory, descriptive, correlational and explanatory.

(a) Exploratory research

In cases where very little is known about the research topic, one speaks of exploratory research (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000:37). Powell (1997:58-59) explains that exploratory research “can increase the researcher’s familiarity with the phenomenon in question, can help to clarify concepts, can be used to establish priorities for future research, can identify new problems and ... can be used to gather information with practical applications.” According to Neuman (1997:19) exploratory researchers are “creative, open minded, and flexible; adopt an investigative stance; and explore all sources of information. Researchers ask creative questions and take advantage of serendipity, those unexpected or chance factors that have large implications.”

Both Powell (1997:58) and Neuman (1997:19) remarks that exploratory researchers frequently conduct qualitative research. Powell (1997:59), speaking

of exploratory research in general, emphasises that “it is important to remember that exploratory studies merely suggest insights or hypotheses; they cannot test them,” and Smith (1998:38) remarks that a “typical outcome” from exploratory research would be “the generation of a number of hypotheses that could be taken forward for quantitative testing at a later stage of the project.”

(b) Descriptive research

Descriptive research “presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship” (Neuman, 1997:20). Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:41) and Neuman (1997:20) are of the opinion that descriptive and exploratory research have some similarities. Neuman (1997:20) remarks that descriptive and exploratory research “blur together in practice” and explains that “in descriptive research, the researcher begins with a well-defined subject and conducts research to describe it accurately.” Descriptive research focuses on “how”, “who”, “what”, “when” and “where” questions (Smith, 1998:38 and Neuman, 1997:20) and “provides a solid platform for helping to understand currents, and possibly predict future behaviour” (Smith, 1998:38).

(c) Correlational research

When the research question requires an understanding of the relationship between variables, the research is called correlational research (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000:37). The task of determining a casual relationship is a complex and difficult one. Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:43) explain that “it is based on systematic comparison, manipulation and control of variables.” Correlational research is “not only useful when no clear causal relationship exists, but also allows for an estimation of the strength of the relationship between two variables even when one variable is influenced by many others” (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000:43).

(d) Explanatory research

“When the research question demands that the researcher explains the relationship between variables and demonstrates that change in one variable causes change in another variable, the research is called explanatory research” (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000:37). According to Neuman (1997:20) the desire to know why things are the way they are, to explain, is the purpose of explanatory research. Neuman (1997:20-21) explains that explanatory research “builds on exploratory and descriptive research and to identify the reason why something occurs.” Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:43) state that explanatory research is often not feasible: “This is the case when it is not possible to manipulate the suspected independent variable or to assess the time-order of variables.”

2.3.3 Summary

Different research methodologies are applied (or applied in combination) depending on the reasons why the research is conducted, the demands of the research question, the target group for the research, available funding, time-scales and the competency and capacity of researchers.

2.4 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

2.4.1 Introduction

In paragraph 2.2 the researcher, with reference to various authors, mentions that research is a “systematic effort”, a “systematic process” and the “systematic and objective collection, analysis and evaluation of information.” In paragraph 2.5.3, reference is made to Reinard (2001:12) who remarked that “productive research

follows steps that carry out some sort of design.” This implies that every research project invariably requires careful and appropriate planning and execution by the researcher.

No matter how unique any research problem or project, there are a number of steps which are common to the process relevant to most research projects. As the word *process* implies, Puth (1996:80) explains, “(marketing) research involves a series of steps or phases which cannot be viewed in isolation, but which should be seen and dealt with as an integrated whole. This integrated evolvment of steps which are followed when planning and executing a research project is known as the research process.”

Although not all the steps are applicable to all types of research, sensitivity and application of relevant steps in the research process by the researcher will enhance the success and quality of the research project – it will assist the researcher in his/her initiative to do “the right thing” in “the right way” (see paragraph 2.1).

Different sources of research literature distinguish many different steps and permutations of steps. The researcher uses the steps as identified and developed by Puth (1996:80-96) through combining and synthesising an extensive variety of relevant documentary resources. The different steps in the research process are referred to shortly, but not discussed in any detail.

2.4.2 Steps in the research process

2.4.2.1 Identifying and formulating the problem

Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:15) express a sentiment shared by many other researchers that “selecting a research problem is a delicate task.” Puth

(1996:82) mentions that the American Marketing Association (AMA) came to the conclusion in 1968 that “if any step in a research project can be said to be more important than the others, then problem definition is that step.”

The step in the research process referred to by the AMA as ‘problem definition’, is broken up into two distinguishable phases by Puth (1996:82). The first phase entails the identification of the problem whilst the second phase is the refinement of the problem to a level where it can be clearly formulated in order to provide direction and guidance to the research process. If the research problem is well formulated and the research objectives precisely defined, the likelihood of designing a research study that will provide the necessary information in an efficient manner is greatly increased. Problem identification and problem formulation should result in “a precise statement of the objectives of the research to be conducted and a set of research questions” (Puth, 1996:82).

Reinard (2001:32-35) suggests the following five criteria to formulate sound and useful problem statements:

- problem statements must be stated unambiguously, usually as questions
- except for simple exploratory studies, problem statements must include at least two variables
- problem statements must be testable
- problem statements must not advance personal value judgements
- problem statements must be clear grammatical statements.

2.4.2.2 *Deciding on what kind of data is required*

After identifying and formulating the problem, the researcher will have a good idea of the nature of the data required. According to Puth (1996:84) the data relating to the research objectives may be anyone or more of the following:

- facts – e.g. demographic profile
- levels of awareness – e.g. awareness of an announcement by government regarding initiatives to create job opportunities
- opinions and attitudes – e.g. respondents' opinions and attitudes on whether government's initiatives to create jobs will be successful
- preferences – e.g. the channel(s) of communication preferred (closely related to opinions and attitudes)
- motives or predispositions – reasons why people act or think as they do
- behaviour (that can be seen as the result of attitude, preference and motivation).

On their website, MORI (2001c) also adds the aspect of knowledge – that is assessing what the respondents know (or think they know, or claim to know!).

2.4.2.3 *Exploring secondary data sources*

Puth (1996:86) argues that as every research project is a search for information on some topic, researchers can be more confident of the quality and appropriateness of their information if they tap all the relevant resources. “Often there is a wealth of information and data on the research problem already collected by others, in which case it may not be cost-effective or necessary to conduct a whole new research project in order to answer the research question. In many cases existing secondary data may be sufficiently relevant and comprehensive to answer at least a certain part of the overarching research question” (Puth, 1996:86).

An exploration of secondary data resources can begin with a search of published data, identification of unpublished data that is relevant and interviewing knowledgeable or well-informed people on the topic or problem area. It is

essential to explore all possibilities of secondary data sources before proceeding with the remaining steps of the research process.

Reinard (2001:76) remarks that “some inexperienced researchers believe they can ignore past work and use entirely new ideas and methods”. Reinard (2001:76) proceeds by referring to Stanovich who calls this misguided approach the ‘Einstein syndrome’ since “researchers who suffer from it fail to connect their ‘sudden breakthroughs’ with lessons from others. By discarding previous lessons as irrelevant, they fail to learn from the lessons from others.”

2.4.2.4 *Revising and fine-tuning the research question*

After exploring the secondary data sources, the researcher needs to fine-tune the research question. According to Puth (1996:86), this is the stage at which “a clearer picture of the problem starts to emerge and where the project begins to crystalise in one of two ways:

- it is apparent that the question has been answered and the research process has been completed
- the original question has been modified in some way by the gathered information.”

Puth (1996:86-87) furthermore identifies five other problem-related activities that should be considered to effectively complete the fine-tuning of the original question:

- examine if the concepts and constructs to be used in the investigation are defined satisfactorily
- review the investigative questions to break them down into more specific levels of questions
- if hypotheses are used, they must be relevant to the refined research problem

- determine what evidence needs to be collected to answer the various questions and hypotheses
- set the boundaries or limits of the project by stating what is part of the research problem and what is not.

2.4.2.5 *Designing the research study*

Mouton (2001:55) explains that a research design is “a plan or blueprint of how you intend conducting the research.” Mouton (2001:56) argues that researchers often confuse ‘research design’ and ‘research methodology’ and summarises the differences between these two concepts – see table 2.2.

TABLE 2.2

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY – A SUMMARY³

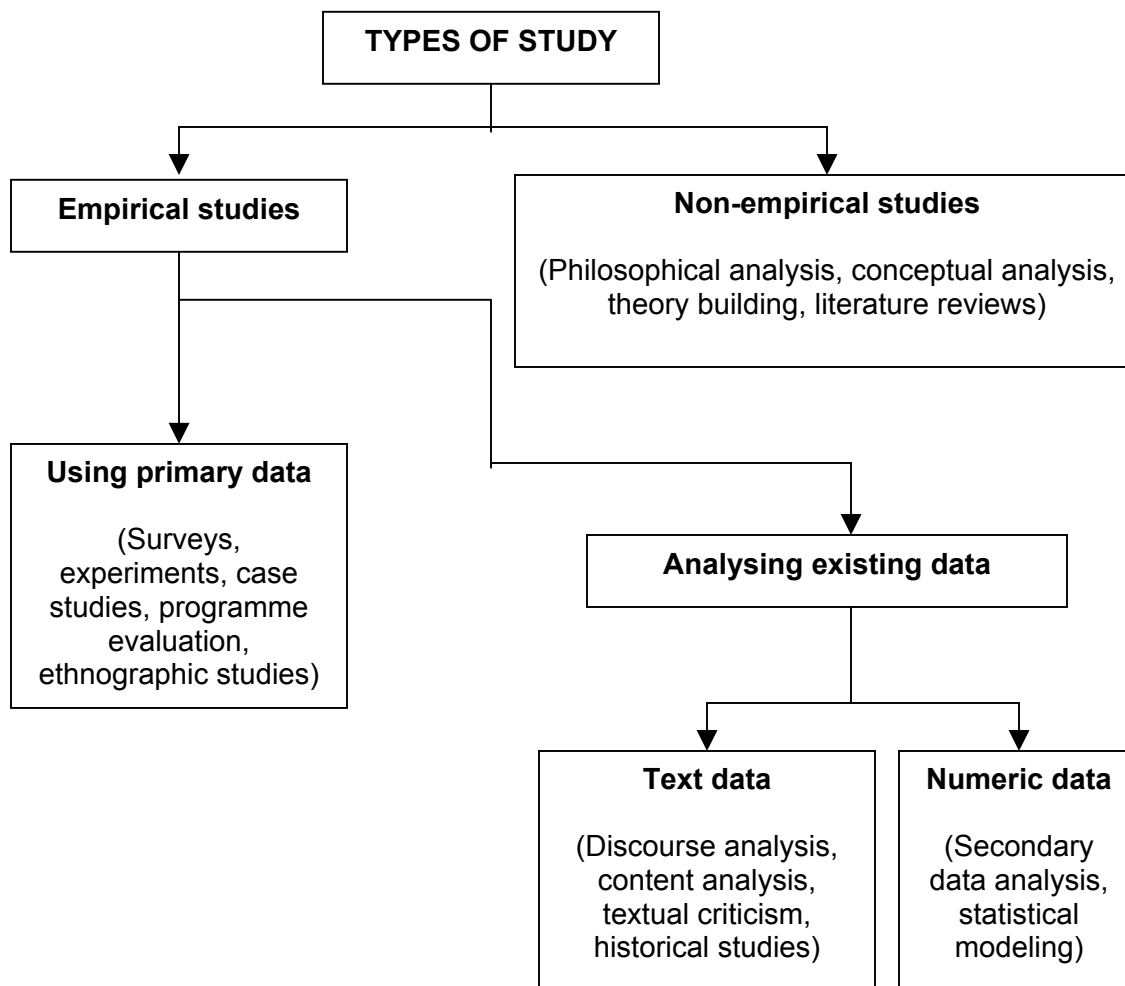
RESEARCH DESIGN	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Focuses on the end product: What kind of study is being planned and what kind of result is aimed at?	Focuses on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used
Point of departure = research problem or question	Point of departure = specific tasks (data collection or sampling) at hand
Focuses on the logic of research: What kind of evidence is required to address the research question adequately?	Focuses on the individual (not linear) steps in the research process and the most ‘objective’ (unbiased) procedures to be employed

³ Mouton, 2001:56

Puth (1996:87) is of the opinion that “selecting an appropriate research design is often complicated by the availability of a large variety of methods, techniques, procedures and ever-more-sophisticated computer programming and technology.” Also emphasising the reality that the design of the research study is one of the most challenging steps in the research process, is the viewpoint of Smith (1998:29) that researchers will seldomly be able to pursue their ‘ideal’ design and that it is a process of compromise. Smith (1998:29) explains that “decisions have to be made about what degree of *precision* is needed and how much *depth of understanding* is required. This trade-off also needs to be balanced against the *time* and *budget* available.” Further, Smith explains, “market researchers must take into account the *practicality* of different approaches whilst ensuring the study is *ethical*” and also complies with the codes of conduct in the research industry.

Mouton (2001:57) presents a broad classification of the main research design types according to the kind of questions the design types are able to answer – see figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: *A typology of research design types*⁴



2.4.2.6 *Determining the sample*

According to Collins (1998:69) “almost all market research studies use sampling – the attempt to learn about some large group, a population, by looking at only a small part of it, a sample.”

⁴ Mouton, 2001:57

The “population” referred to by Collins is not necessarily the total population of a country or area, but the totality of the target group (or universum) from which the sample needs to be drawn. As a first step in the sampling process the target population needs to be identified. Thereafter the researcher needs to determine the sample characteristics and determine the sample size.

Two broader sampling methods can be distinguished, namely probability and non-probability sampling. Martins (1996d:253) explains that “a probability sample is one in which every element has a known non-zero probability of being selected. It is unnecessary for all elements to have an equal chance of being selected, but each element must have a chance and that chance must be known so that the sampling results can be applied to the universe. Non-probability samples rely on the judgement of the researcher and are only as representative as the researcher’s luck and skill permit. In non-probability sampling there is no way of estimating the probability that any element will be included in the sample, and therefore there is no method of finding out whether the sample is representative or not”. It is important to note that “the most important criterion” of a sample, according to Puth (1996:87) is that it will be “totally representative of the population relevant to the solving of the management problem and the ensuing research questions.”

2.4.2.7 Allocating funds and resources

Depending on the nature and scope of a research project, substantial financial and human resources may be necessary. The researcher needs to do appropriate planning and allocate resources timeously in order to avoid a situation where a project has to be terminated due to a lack of resources.

Puth (1996:88) explains that “although data collection does require substantial resources, it might not always be as big a part of the budget as clients or

researchers would expect. Employee salaries, training and travel, and other miscellaneous expenses are incurred during data collection, but this phase of the project often takes no more than a third of the research budget. The geographic scope and number of respondents naturally affect the cost, but much of the cost is relatively independent of the extent and size of the data gathering exercise.” An interesting and useful guideline suggested by Puth (1996:88) is that project planning, data collection and analysis and, lastly, interpretation and reporting each have a share more or less equal in the budget.

2.4.2.8 *Writing and presenting the research proposal*

A research proposal is mostly developed and fine-tuned concurrently with the exploring and planning phases of the research project. The research proposal would therefore incorporate the decisions and choices made by the researcher in the preliminary stages of the project.

The most important purpose of the research proposal is to ensure that all parties concerned understand the project’s purpose and the proposed methods of research. Time limits and budgets are also identified and justified in most research proposals. Various responsibilities and obligations are clarified.

According to Puth (1996:89) “every proposal should contain two basic sections, namely the problem statement and a statement of what will be done and how it will be done. In its varied forms the research proposal can include any number of the following elements: executive summary, problem statement, research objectives, literature review, importance and benefits of the study, research design, data analysis, nature and form of results, qualification of researchers, budget, time schedule, facilities and special resources, project management, bibliography and appendices.”

2.4.2.9 *Conducting a pilot test*

Piloting is the last stage in the design of a research project (including design of the questionnaire or discussion guide) before the survey goes into the field for data collection (Miller and Read, 1998:380).

Puth (1996:89) explains that the primary purpose of a pilot test is two-fold: to detect weaknesses in design and instrumentation and to provide a sound base for determining and refining the sample. During the pilot test respondents are drawn from the universum or target population and the procedures and protocols of the research project are simulated. The number of respondents involved in a pilot test would depend on primarily the research methodology and the characteristics of the target population, but need not be statistically selected.

2.4.2.10 Collecting primary data

According to Bulmer (2000b:205), the “most critical phase in social research is that during which data are actually collected.”

The different data collection methods (e.g. questionnaires or transcribed recordings of focus group discussions) will have different implications for data collection. Each method of data collection has specific advantages and disadvantages, qualifying it as a better or a less-preferable option than other methods for the collection of certain types of data. Puth (1996:90) mentions that “although a combination of methods can be considered in certain circumstances, it is often not done for reasons of cost.” The researcher then needs to decide invariably on the method that will yield the most satisfactory range of reliable data as cost-effectively and as quickly as possible.

In order to provide data in a form that can be used by the researcher for analysis and interpretation, it needs to be edited to “identify and isolate omissions and spoilt responses. In the case of survey methods editing is essential to reduce recording errors, to improve legibility, and to identify and filter unclear and inappropriate responses” (Puth, 1996:90).

2.4.2.11 *Analysing and interpreting the data*

Data analysis involves reducing the accumulated data to a manageable size to allow summarising, comparing, syntheses and applying statistical techniques in order to interpret the results in relation to the research problem. Data analysis can be either very basic (e.g. one-way frequency distributions or cross-tabulation), involve different methodologies of significance testing (e.g. analysis of variance or the Mann-Whitney test) or even done by applying multivariate statistical techniques (e.g. discriminant and cluster analysis) (Martins, 1996e:305 and 315; Loubser, 1996b:336 and 339; Wegner, 1996:356-363).

Mouton (2001:109) explains that interpretation involves the synthesis of data into larger coherent wholes. Observations or data are interpreted and explained by “formulating hypotheses or theories that account for observed patterns and trends in the data. Interpretation means relating one’s results and findings to existing theoretical frameworks or models, and showing whether these are supported or falsified by the new interpretation. Interpretation also means taking into account rival explanations or interpretations of one’s data and showing what levels of support the data provide for the preferred interpretation.”

In order to interpret results correctly, the researcher needs to be familiar with the method of the research and the limitations of the results (Van Wyk, 1996:396). The pitfalls awaiting the researcher in the interpretation of results include the following:

- drawing inferences from the data that are not supported by the data
- biased interpretation of the data through selectivity
- overgeneralisation
- confusing correlation with causation

(Van Wyk, 1996:396 and Mouton, 2001:110).

Adding to the pitfalls already mentioned, Van Wyk (1996:397) emphasises “there may be more information hidden in the data than the researcher cares to or is able to bring to light” and that “it requires experience, disciplined thinking and familiarity with the research method to let the results say what they are able to say.”

2.4.2.12 *Reporting the results*

Preparing the research report and communicating the research findings and recommendations to the client are the final steps in the research process. Van Wyk (1996:398) argues that “the report is the culmination of the whole research project” and quotes Churchill who expressed this sentiment: “Regardless of the sophistication displayed in the other portions of the research process, the project is a failure if the research report fails.”

The ultimate objective with the report is “to enable the client to make an informed and scientifically verified decision to solve the original problem that prompted the undertaking of research in the first place” (Puth, 1996:90). Various authors emphasise that research reports will be quite different in terms of style and organisation depending on the aim and objectives of the research project and the target audience for the report (e.g. Van Wyk, 1996:398-402; Puth, 1996:90; Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000:141).

Puth (1996:91) remarks that “the items to be included in a research report are essentially the same as those identified in the discussion of the research proposal.” But, taking into account the target audience for the research report, Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:141) write as follows:

The most detailed, complete and scientific report for research-funding institutions and archives will present all the different steps of research in detail. A report written to be published in a scientific journal will have to show a high level of scientific quality condensed into a few pages. A report written for an agency particularly interested in the conclusions and practical consequences will cut short the technical aspects of the research and emphasise the discussion of the findings. A report to be understood by the average educated readership of a magazine will present the findings in more general terms and will avoid scientific vocabulary. In other words, these different reports will stress one or the other aspect of the most complete research report.

Clients will often also expect the researcher to make a personal presentation of the findings and recommendations. Marbeau (1998:520) is of the opinion that the challenge of results presentation lies in achieving “*speed and clarity* without stripping out any important substance from the findings. The answer is conciseness, i.e. being short yet complete.” The same author also regards it as important for the presenter to be *modest*, and to “present the results and the answers rather than the research and the researcher. Also important is *honesty*, to separate the reliable facts from their hypothetical interpretation” (Marbeau, 1998:520).

2.5 CHALLENGES OF COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

Already from the preceding paragraphs, it is clear that researchers conducting communication research are exposed to various problems and challenges. Awareness of such challenges is essential for conducting communication research of professional quality.

Reinard (2001:6-14) identifies the following six challenges of communication research:

- the challenge of breadth and focus
- the multiple methods challenge
- the scholarly rigour challenge
- the personal challenge (or what do I need to do to study communication research methods successfully?)
- the ethical challenge
- the structure of the field challenge.

The researcher shortly discusses the challenges of communication research according to Reinard's categories of challenges, incorporating contributions from other authors. A few of the other challenges facing the communication researcher are also mentioned.

2.5.1 The challenge of breadth and focus

Reinard (2001:6) is of the opinion that although "the number of communication applications can seem enormous, there is a rational order to it." Making this statement, he refers to the work done by McBath and Jeffrey (1978) to identify the professional areas in communication on behalf of the Speech Communication Association and the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). These two organisations were trying to organise information about careers in various

fields. The list of communication specialities used by the NCES is provided in table 2.3. The left column of the table shows the official taxonomy with an emphasis on the career areas of scholars. Reinard added a couple of areas to those originally listed by McBath and Jeffrey - e.g. conflict management, journalism, radio and television, public relations and health communication. In the column to the right of table 2.3 a description is provided of the kinds of research issues that are normally addressed in each of the areas.

TABLE 2.3

COMMUNICATION SPECIALITIES⁵

COMMUNICATION TAXONOMY	DESCRIPTION
<p>1. The Broad Areas of Mass Media Communication</p> <p>Advertising</p> <p>Communication Technology</p> <p>Communication Policy</p> <p>Film as Communication</p> <p>Journalism</p>	<p>The study of mass media methods of influence to promote a product, service or cause</p> <p>The study of the mechanisms and technologies of mass media</p> <p>The study of public policy and regulation of mass media communication and freedom of speech</p> <p>The role of popular and technical cinema in society</p> <p>The study of the methods of reporting and organising news for presentation in print media</p>

⁵ Reinard, 2001:7-8

<p>Public Relations</p> <p>Radio</p> <p>Television</p>	<p>The study of methods of managing publicity and press relations for an organisation, person or cause</p> <p>The study of the methods and uses of radio</p> <p>The study of the methods and uses of televised communication</p>
<p>2. Specific Areas of Speech Communication Research</p> <p>Code Systems</p> <p>Intercultural Communication</p> <p>Interpersonal Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict Management • Family Communication <p>Organisational Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Communication <p>Oral Interpretation</p>	<p>The study of the uses of verbal and non-verbal symbols and signs in human communication</p> <p>The study of communication among individuals of different cultural backgrounds</p> <p>The study of communication interactions occurring in person-to-person and small group situations</p> <p>The study of the role of communication in the creation and control of conflict</p> <p>The study of communication transactions within the constraints of families of all sorts</p> <p>The study of interrelated behaviours, technologies, and systems functioning within an organisation</p> <p>The study of communication issues among participants involved in medical and health systems</p> <p>The study of literature through performance involving the development of skilled verbal and non-verbal expression based on critical analysis of written texts (aesthetics of literature in performance, criticism of literature in performance, group performance, oral traditions)</p>

<p>Pragmatic Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argumentation • Debate • Discussion and Conference (including Group Decision Making) • Parliamentary Procedure • Persuasion • Communication and the Law <p>Public Address</p>	<p>The study and practice of communication, the object of which is to influence or facilitate decision making</p> <p>The study of reason-giving behaviour</p> <p>The study of decision making in which adversaries present arguments for decision by a third party</p> <p>The study of methods of decision making in which participants strive to discuss, explore and make decisions on issues</p> <p>The study of the means used to handle deliberation in large legislative bodies through the use of formal rules and procedures to regulate debate and discussion</p> <p>The study of the methods used to influence the choices made by others</p> <p>The study of communication issues involved in the legal system and the practice of law</p>
<p>Rhetorical and Communication Theory</p>	<p>The study of speakers and speeches, including the historical and social context of platforms, campaigns, and movements</p> <p>The study of the principles that account for human communicative experiences and behaviour</p>
<p>Communication Education</p>	<p>The study of communication in pedagogical contexts (communication development, oral communication skills, instructional communication)</p>

Speech and Hearing Science	The study of the physiology and acoustical aspects of speech and hearing (biological aspects of speech and hearing, phonological aspects of speech and hearing, physiological aspects of speech and hearing)
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The researcher fully agrees with Reinard’s (2001:6) sentiment that “each area is broad enough to promote many interesting studies.” The breadth and extensive focus of communication research clearly poses various challenges to the researcher, and the importance of having a broad knowledge should be emphasised.

2.5.2 The multiple methods challenge

Reinard (2001:6) explains that qualitative methods are mostly used in studying literature whilst the historical method is employed in history and the experiment holds a prominent position in psychology. Contrary to this, the communication researcher uses all of these and other methods to answer questions. Research projects in communication tend to rely mostly on quantitative and qualitative methods – see paragraph 2.3.2.1. The research question or objectives guides the selection of methods, not the other way around (Bulmer, 2000a:10; Reinard, 2001:8; Smith, 1998:40).

Smith (1998:39) remarks that “the debate that is often conducted about the merits of small scale, flexible qualitative, and larger scale, structured quantitative research, has been largely unhelpful in the sense that they are more ‘mutual friends’ than ‘mutually exclusive foes’.” To a growing extent it is suggested that different methodologies should be used in combination. Smith (1998:40) strongly argues the case that “a good research design invariably involves adopting an eclectic approach, mixing together the best combination of methodologies to deal

with the research objectives.” Sonnenwald and Iivonen (1999:430-431) conclude that “research in information studies increasingly combines multiple methods to research human information behaviour because doing so can provide a more holistic and comprehensive view of information behaviour, increase the validity of research results through data and methodological triangulation, or both.”

The communication researcher needs to have appropriate knowledge of different research methods and needs to know when, why and how to apply different methods. Furthermore, the researcher needs to understand when and how to apply more than one method during work on a communication project in order to properly address the aim and objectives of the research project.

2.5.3 The scholarly rigour challenge

In order for research to meet standards of excellence, communication researchers must conduct research with recognition of five key challenges identified after Tuckman by Reinard (2001:12):

- Research is *systematic*. Productive research follows steps that carry out some sort of design. Researchers ask questions and implicitly agree in advance to seek for answers by examining pertinent information.
- Research is *data driven*. If data cannot be collected, or if we are unwilling to alter our opinions, the issue is not suitable for research.
- Research is a *sound* argument. Research arguments reason from research data and information to draw conclusions. Thus, arguments in this context are defined as claims advanced on the basis of reasoning from evidence. Sound reasoning is vital for effective research. Logic and the methods to evaluate arguments are valuable tools to judge research.
- Research is capable of *replication*. If research methods are so vaguely described that it is impossible to repeat the procedures in a study, the worth of the entire research project is questioned. Regardless of whether

replications actually are completed, the ability to replicate studies is essential for any piece of sound research.

- Research is *partial*. Research findings are partial because we may discover new relationships involving other variables that make us modify or qualify the conclusions we have found. Thus, communication researchers do not claim to have discovered 'The Truth' for all time. Instead, they advance tentative - but meaningful - insights for communication phenomena.

2.5.4 The personal challenge

This challenge relates to the question of what a person needs to do to study communication research methods successfully. According to Reinard (2001:13-14) the following five aspects apply:

- the need to *think* in an *orderly* way – to train our minds to separate the relevant from the irrelevant, the observable from the unobservable, and the complete from the incomplete
- the need to *write clearly* – crisply, clearly, precise, structured and to the point
- the need to *set aside personal prejudices* in the light of data – be willing to let the data decide our conclusions, even if we do not like them
- the need to *stay organised and follow instructions* – research requires carefully following protocols and methods and to fight the urge to leave out steps, to take shortcuts or to ignore instructions
- the need to *know the reasons* for studying research methods – e.g. to learn to think rigorously and critically, to find answers to questions about communication, to acquire survival skills to help read and use the field's literature and to learn how to sort through past research for answers to research questions.

2.5.5 The ethical challenge

Every decision made in communication – e.g. which methodology to apply for a project – is not merely a practical one, but also an ethical one. Reinard (2001:14) remarks that “research is judged not only by the rigor of procedures and the results obtained but (also) by the ethics of the researchers.”

In the literature on social research, the importance of specifically the ethical issues of voluntary participation of respondents, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality is emphasised (e.g. Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000:100-101; Shalofsky, 1998:1111-1113; Groenewald, 1981:97-98). The reality is that ethical issues in communication research are much broader than the few mentioned above that only relate to a specific aspect of data collection. For example, Reinard (2001:14) refers to a situation in the United Kingdom where the archbishop of York once challenged British scientists to consider the ethical consequences of their research by urging them to ask “What applications will be made of my research?” before they undertake their studies.

Over the period of the last few decades, many research organisations have developed formal codes of conduct to guide practitioners and researchers. The first code was published in 1948 by the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR) (ESOMAR, 2000b).

In South Africa initiatives of the Southern African Marketing Research Association (SAMRA) to develop a code of conduct for this industry in the country go as far back as 25 October 1963. On that date a first sub-committee was appointed to “investigate the ethical codes of conduct existing in market research practices overseas.” In October 1967 the first SAMRA Code of Conduct was ratified. Following various revisions, the current SAMRA Code of

Conduct includes guidelines regarding the following issues (SAMRA, 2001:60-67):

- responsibilities to the reader of a report
- obligations to the client/sponsor of a survey
- responsibility to informants
- responsibilities to and of the research practitioner
- responsibilities to the general public.

A document that creates food for thought to the researcher sensitive to the importance of ethics, is the document compiled by Paul Reynolds in 1979. Reynolds compiled an extensive list of ethical issues from documentation from 24 organisations doing research in the social sciences (Reinard, 2001:14). The list involves a total of 78 guidelines according to the following broader structure, and is attached as an Annexure:

- general issues related to the code of ethics
- decision to conduct the research
- conduct of the research
- effects on and relationships with the participants' informed consent
 - general
 - provision of information
 - voluntary consent
- protection of rights and welfare of participants
 - general issues
 - deception
 - confidentiality and anonymity
 - benefits to participants
 - effects on aggregates or communities
- interpretations and reporting of the results of the research

2.5.6 The structure of the field challenge

Reinard (2001:14) correctly remarks that “communication research has been promoted by many organisations whose members often cross the barriers created by the organisation of different schools” and that “it is helpful to know how the diverse and major organisations in our field showcase our research.”

The researcher is of the opinion that communication researchers need to make a specific effort to enhance their perspective and the quality of their work by seeking to engage and interact with other researchers in the field of communication research through outreach to professional organisations in their country as well as abroad, to private sector research companies, the advertising and public relations industry and the academic environment.

2.5.7 Other challenges

A few of the many other challenges facing the communication researcher are:

- measurement in a cross-cultural environment (McGorry, 2000:74-79)
- challenges in underdeveloped and developing communities - e.g. availability of reliable statistics, language, cultural and custom-related issues, identification, training and management of interviewers (e.g. Bulmer and Warwick, 2000:38; Gil and Omaboe, 2000:42; Hershfield *et al.*, 2000:241; Loubser, 1996a:236-248)
- public education on how survey statistics and differences are generated, and how to use them (Cooper, 1998:1024)
- choosing the right research company to conduct a research project (MORI, 2001c)
- bridging the communication gap that often exists between researchers and creatives (Hansen, 1998:655).

When conducting communication research for government, researchers need to be alert of all the potential challenges, and implement procedures and processes to ensure that the research conducted is of unquestionable quality.

2.6 THE USE OF COMMUNICATION RESEARCH BY GOVERNMENTS

According to Faure (1995:11) previous initiatives for development in “third world” countries failed due to “lack of understanding by professionals or change agents for the real needs of ‘third world’ communities. An overarching problem was that development programmes in the ‘third world’ were characterised by a strong deterministical (unilateral Western) paternalistic ‘top-down’ approach.”

Interesting though, is information provided by Khoury (1989:77-79) that “even in ages and societies where government was of despotic nature, most of the illustrious rulers retained by History, have shown in one way or another a deep concern for public opinion.” Examples provided by Khoury to prove his point, include that of H Al Rashid and Cathrine II from Russia. Al Rashid, one of the most famous Arab Khalifs⁶, as depicted in the *One thousand and one nights* tales of the thirteenth century, was so eager to know what the people thought of his Khalifat that he left the Palace, and went into the streets of Bagdad asking the people their opinion. Cathrine II, the Great of Russia, devised a way for taking into account the public’s reactions in the process of her decision-making. Before taking an important stand or approving a new law, she used to spread rumours about it in the streets of Moscow. Thereafter she asked for feedback reports on the people’s reactions and considered them in her actions.

⁶ A Khalif in Islam has two roles – he is the head of the state and the head of the religious authority

Two former heads of state in the United States also remarked about the importance of public opinion. Worcester (1999:1) quotes Abraham Lincoln as saying: “Public opinion is everything.” According to Cooper (1998:1015) former US President Clinton is said to have remarked just prior to his election that “the most important people in the United States today are those sitting in focus groups.”

Cooper (1998:1016) argues that “market research is a powerful and well-established tool for the development and maintenance of any democratic society.” The term *democracy* originates from the ancient Greek, *demos* (people) and *kratos* (strength or power). “In essence”, Cooper (1998:1016) explains, “it means that the strength of a society rests with the people, and that a society is strong when the people or their elected representatives directly exercise their power.”

In the first edition, in 1988, of *Fundamentals of social research methods: an African perspective*, Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:iii) remark that “it was observed that many African governments, non-government and private sector organisations were beginning to attach greater value to social research and the information it provides.”

Talking about the process of transforming government communication in a democratic South Africa at the Conference of Government Communicators, Thabo Mbeki (1995b:1) made clear his opinion about the importance of South African citizens’ contributions:

The road to an informed and active citizenry should be defined by the citizens themselves. We must strive to ensure that each individual, whatever his or her station in life, plays a meaningful role in decision-making and in governance.

Mbeki (1995b:2) furthermore remarked that South Africa “cannot afford a situation where the majority of our people are mere consumers of information and opinion whose content is determined by one sector of society” and that “the people out there are crying out to hear and be heard.”

It is encouraging to note that governments increasingly realise that communication research can be used to enhance the effectiveness of their communication and the dissemination of government information. In order to conduct communication research in “the right way” (see paragraph 2.1), governments communicators need to understand – or at least have the support of those who know and understand – the important principles, challenges and processes involved.

2.7 SUMMARY

Since the researcher’s point of departure is that it is of critical importance that communication research by government needs to be conducted on the basis of sound theoretical principles and processes, a brief theoretic overview of research in communication is provided in chapter 2. The concept communication research is defined, and different types of research explained briefly. The research process is attended to by means of a short discussion of the steps in the research process. Lastly, the researcher describes some of the challenges of communication research.

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

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 3 the researcher provides an overview of the use of research in government communication and the dissemination of government information in South Africa by a central institution in the Public Service from 1936 up to the launch of the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) on 18 May 1998. This includes:

- the period up to the establishment of the Bureau for Information
- the time of the Bureau for Information, 1 September 1985 to 30 April 1991
- the South African Communication Service (SACS), 1 May 1991 to 17 May 1998.

Throughout chapter 3, specific reference is made to the use of research to promote the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information.

The process of reviewing and transforming government communication after the new constitutional dispensation was introduced in 1994 and the use of research in government communication since the launch of GCIS is given attention in chapter 4.

3.2 THE PERIOD UP TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BUREAU FOR INFORMATION

3.2.1 The period from 1936 to 26 November 1961

3.2.1.1 The State Information Bureau, Department of the Prime Minister – 1936 to 1939

On 29 January 1936 the Public Service Commission approved one post of “Information Officer” as a permanent position in a newly-created State Information Bureau in the Department of the Prime Minister (Hansard, cited by Mulder, 1975:10). According to Muller and van Jaarsveld (cited by Mulder, 1975:10), the establishment of this post must be seen against the background of circumstances in South Africa and outside its borders during 1936 to 1939. Within the country it was the period after the political merger of Hertzog and Smuts. Outside the borders of South Africa it was the time of the rise of Germany and pre-war turbulence in Europe. Wilson (cited by Mulder, 1975:1) mentioned that Genl JBM Hertzog, the Prime Minister, experienced many problems with the press at the time. After extensive criticism by the opposition and advertisement of the post in the media, an appointment was made on 9 May 1937 - one year and four months after approval of the post (Hansard, cited by Mulder, 1975: 13 and 16). The functions of the Information Officer were primarily to liaise with the press and to provide information to the press. According to Hansard (cited by Mulder, 1975:15), government expected from the person to ensure that the press received the correct information and to assist the press if they had the wrong information. After a personal interview with the relevant official, Mulder (1975:16) mentions that he did not perform above-mentioned functions but had to read newspapers and prepare newspaper clippings.

3.2.1.2 *The State Information Bureau, Department of the Interior – 1939 to 1946*

According to the Report of the Department of Information for 1 April 1969 to 31 March 1971 (p.4), the State Information Bureau was transferred to the Department of the Interior after the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. After “extensive investigation” Mulder (1975:26) concluded that the most important function of the State Information Bureau during this period was to disseminate propaganda regarding the war openly. Additional to disseminating information from the government to the public, the Bureau also regarded the provision of information from the public to the government as its responsibility (Mulder, 1975:45). “It was also vital to keep the Government informed as to what the public was thinking and one of the functions of the Press Section of the Bureau was to compile a daily press report outlining the criticisms which had appeared in the newspapers that morning and the evening before. The report was distributed to Cabinet Ministers and a limited number of officials. Where it was thought advisable, the attention of the responsible Minister or head of the Department was drawn to a specific complaint or grievance ventilated in the press” (article by unknown author in *The Nonqa*, cited by Mulder, 1975:45).

This initiative to inform government about “what the public was thinking”, can be regarded as the first recognition of the importance of feedback from the public to promote the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information. Mulder (1975:45) states that this feedback of information from the population to the government, and which resulted in the Bureau becoming a two-way channel, was especially emphasised by Dr HF Verwoerd as an important function of such an information service in the period after 1948.

3.2.1.3 *The State Information Office, Department of the Interior and the Native Information Service – 1947 to 1954*

Towards the end of the war, a number of investigations aimed at redefining the peace-time function of the Bureau were conducted. This resulted in the founding of the State Information Office in the Department of the Interior as successor to the State Information Bureau on 1 January 1947 (Department of Information, 1971:4). The functions of the State Information Office, as determined by the Interdepartmental Commission of 1945, are summarised as follows in the 1951 Annual Report of the State Information Office (State Information Office, 1952:4):

- to co-ordinate the publicity services of the State
- to arrange for the publication of official statements
- to assist State departments with their work of enlightenment
- to provide the Union's foreign representatives with information
- to advise the Government on information and publicity matters.

After the National Party came into power on 26 May 1948, Cabinet decided that the reorganisation, expansion and furtherance of the Union's information service abroad should also be entrusted to the State Information Office. In respect of the information service abroad the necessary co-ordination was affected with the Department of External Affairs. Although the Information Attachés were staff members of the State Information Office, they performed their work under the direct supervision of the heads of missions (State Information Office, 1952:4). According to the review of the activities of the different sections in the abovementioned Annual Report (1952:8-25) the professional staff of the State Information Office were sub-divided into the following seven sections:

- Foreign
- Press

- Visual Publicity
- Publications
- Films
- Research and Reference
- Radio.

Regarding the Research and Reference section, the Annual Report of the State Information Office for 1951 (1952:22) reads as follows:

This section comprises a large reference library and is responsible for the daily filing and indexing of South African and overseas news items under more than 2 000 separate headings, serves 13 Information Attachés and 10 South African missions abroad with airmailed newspaper cuttings, and answers queries about South African affairs received by telephone, letter and cable from all quarters of the globe.

The most important objective of the State Information Office in this period was to disseminate government information abroad. Within South Africa the State Information Office was a passive publicity office, providing information in South Africa only on request of government departments. Information was mostly provided to newspapers and not directly to the public (Mulder, 1975:97).

Towards the end of 1952 the first information officers were appointed by the newly-established Native Information Service to provide information to 'Natives' regarding the government's policies and objectives. The service was also expected to provide information back to the government. Whilst the State Information Office almost exclusively disseminated information abroad, the Native Information Service provided this service within South Africa (Mulder, 1975:95).

3.2.1.4 *The State Information Office, Department of External Affairs and the Native Information Service – 1955 to 1957*

The State Information Office was incorporated into the Department of External Affairs on 1 April 1955. Exactly a year later it became a semi-independent organisation under the control of the Minister of External Affairs and had a Director as accounting officer and a budget vote (Department of Information, 1971:4).

The functions of the officials of the regional offices of the Native Information Service described in Hansard (cited by Mulder 1975:119) are very relevant:

To provide people in their area with correct information regarding all aspects regarding 'Bantu' concerns, to work towards good relations between whites and the 'Bantu' regarding the implementation of the country's policy and legislation adopted by Parliament, to obtain information regarding the needs of 'Natives' on issues relevant to them through direct contact and personal discussion and to, where necessary, assist officials working in districts when they have too much to do with any relevant duties.

The Annual Report on the State Information Office for 1956 and 1957 (1957:18) reported as follows on the activities of the Research and Library section:

To meet the needs of State Information Office (SIO) offices abroad for a continuous flow of information material, the research section had to be strengthened and expanded during the year. The activities of this section are twofold: one is to collate and prepare information gleaned from the press, official reports and other publications and the second is to build up a reference library about South African affairs on as wide a basis as possible. The latter task is necessarily a slow as well as an important one because of the vast volume of

documentation, which has to be classified and indexed. For this reason the emphasis for the year under review was on the library aspect of this section's activities. The necessary posts were created and qualified staff was appointed. In the coming year additional attention will be devoted to the supply of library information as well as material to the overseas offices.

3.2.1.5 The South African Information Service, Native Informative Service and Coloured Information Service – 1957 to 26 November 1961

Towards the end of 1957 the name of the State Information Office was changed to the South African Information Service (Mulder, 1975:101-102). The State Information Office was also “under the control of the Minister of External Affairs” (Department of Information, 1971:4).

The coordination of information dissemination by government departments was discussed extensively during this period (Mulder, 1975:106-107). The South African Information Service was responsible for various publications of other government departments and liaised with the media on behalf of the government (Mulder, 1975:114).

The Native Information Service that had to provide information to the South African population and to the government was very active in South Africa during this period (Verwoerd, HF in Hansard, cited by Mulder 1975:117). Although the Native Information Service was not part of the South African Information Service, the two information services worked together. The Native Information Service assisted by addressing foreign visitors of the South African Information Service and by taking them around in the country (South African Information Service, 1958:9).

The Coloured Information Service was established within the Department of the Interior in 1957. According to Mulder (1975:126-127) the functions and approach of the Coloured Information Service were quite similar to that of the Native Information Service.

Towards the end of this period, the activities of the various information services increasingly overlapped. Various aspects contributed to a decision by government to establish a coordinated and autonomous Department of Information (Mulder, 1975:129).

3.2.1.6 Summary: the period from 1936 to 26 November 1961 – the role of research

According to the information available for the period 1936 to November 1961, the government role-players responsible for the dissemination of information were sensitive to the value of two-way communication: providing information from the public to the government (about 1942), and obtaining information regarding people's needs on issues relevant to them (1957). Unfortunately no information is available to determine whether information obtained from the public was constructively used to improve the availability of government information and to the benefit of people, or whether it was merely used for political purposes and in the interest of government.

What is clear, however, is that no scientific research projects were conducted to support the government's communication and information dissemination initiatives and programmes.

3.2.2 The period from 27 November 1961 to 16 September 1985

Following a whites-only referendum on 5 October 1960 on whether the country should remain a colony of the United Kingdom – or not – South Africa became a republic on 31 May 1961.

3.2.2.1 *The Department of Information – 27 November 1961 to 30 June 1978*

(a) The period 27 November 1961 to 30 March 1969

The Department of Information was created on 27 November 1961. The functions of the Department were outlined as follows in Government Notice No. 1142 of 1 December 1961 (Department of Information, 1971:4):

- The taking over of all the duties and responsibilities hitherto carried out, internally as well as externally, by the South African Information Service.
- The performance of all the functions hitherto carried out by the Information Service of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development (Native Information Service).
- The provision of an effective information service for the Coloured and Indian communities in South Africa and the distribution, internally as well as externally, of data concerning them and their development.
- The co-ordination of all State publicity services.
- The performance of all the additional services and the utilisation of such media as may be effective to supply, wherever it may be necessary or advisable, accurate information on all aspects of the way of life, activities and natural resources of South Africa and South West Africa.

- The performance of such functions as may be decided upon from time to time.

Originally, the new Department consisted of three sections: Publicity, Liaison and Administration (Department of Information, 1962:16). In an interview with *Die Transvaler* (article in *Die Transvaler*, 17 July 1962 as cited by Mulder, 1975:136) the Secretary for the Department of Information summarised the responsibility of the Department as that of having to provide a complete picture of the different population groups living in the country by means of guidance and information – how they live, what they do and how the country is developed. The Secretary also added that the Department needed to provide a support service to other government departments.

The Department of Information was criticised from the beginning. Mulder (1975:137-140) quoted extensively from Hansard to indicate that the House of Assembly debated heavily about the activities and objectives of the Department in 1961 and 1962 – specifically regarding its functions within South Africa. One of the parliamentarians expressed concern that it could be the beginning of an extensive initiative to indoctrinate and influence the ‘Bantu’ in South Africa under the surveillance of the Minister of Information. Another Parliamentarian raised the concern that taxpayers’ money would be used by the Department of Information to finance a party-political propaganda machine to the benefit of Government.

In the Annual Report of the Department of Information for 1962-63 (Department of Information, 1963:30) it is claimed that the ‘dual purpose’ envisaged for the information service to the ‘Bantu’ had been largely achieved. According to this Annual Report, ‘Bantu’ organisations and individuals made contact with officials of the Department to a growing extent – to present their problems and to ask for advice. Also a few years later in the Report of the Department of Information for

April 1966 to March 1968 (1968:41), it is repeated that the Department's functions as far as the 'non-White' sections of the population were concerned, operated in two directions: "The task of the Department's regional officers is to make known to the non-whites, in their areas the State's policies and actions on behalf of the non-whites, and at the same time *determine the non-White reactions and wishes*⁷." Zimmerman (cited by Mulder, 1975:178) referred to the "real function" of the Department's Bantu-liaison sub-division to be that of "liaison", and to "win the goodwill and confidence of the community in order to ensure that the message of government makes impact and also that the population will have the confidence and frankness to disclose their opinions and possible grievances."

It is relevant to note that the Department of Information's Report for the period April 1966 to March 1968 (Department of Information, 1968:6) mentions that a Data Section had been established with the "task of doing the initial research necessary to problems that may arise in the course of overseas information campaigns and in the preparation of articles, brochures and books for use in South Africa as well as overseas." This 'research' entailed the acquisition of relevant information, but did not include any initiative to determine needs, levels of knowledge or relevant attitudes and behaviour.

In the period November 1961 to March 1969 the work of the Department of Information introduced a more integrated approach in terms of information dissemination by the government within South Africa and abroad. For the first time the responsibility of information dissemination by government was coordinated in one body, the Department of Information. Furthermore, the Department was responsible for the coordination of all publicity services of the government.

⁷ Researcher's emphasis

Although no scientific research projects were conducted to support the Department's function during this period, there are indications of a sensitivity regarding the importance for the Department of Information to take account of the 'problems' as well as the 'reactions and wishes' (see previous paragraphs in this section) of specifically 'non-White' South Africans.

(b) The period 1 April 1969 to May 1972

From 1 April 1969 to 31 March 1971, the Department of Information consisted of four professional divisions apart from the customary Administrative and Financial Divisions. These were Interior, Foreign, Audio-visual Services and Publication, and Press Liaison. The Annual Report for the time (1971:4-5) reported on the activities of the professional divisions:

- The Interior Division – with its subdivisions of White Liaison, Coloured Liaison, Indian Liaison and Bantu Liaison had as its main function to provide South Africa's various population groups with information on official policy and its implementation, and to convey the wishes and opinions of those groups to other government bodies.
- The Foreign Division co-ordinated the activities of the Department's 19 overseas offices which were responsible for distributing information on South Africa in the countries in which they were situated.
- The Audio-visual Services and Publication Division was the Department's production machine. It had to supply publications – both regular and occasional – films, photographs and slides series. Art and layout work for departmental publications, exhibitions and so forth were also handled. The Data Subdivision was a research and production unit responsible for compiling occasional publications such as brochures, background articles, information documents and articles on specific subjects for the use of other sections of the Department and internal and overseas offices. This

subdivision on request also undertook tasks such as the revision of articles appearing in standard textbooks and encyclopedias.

- The Press Liaison Division, which was created on 19 October 1970 to establish and maintain close liaison between the Department and the press handled press announcements on behalf of Ministers and government departments and distributed them to the press, magazines, the South African Broadcast Corporation (SABC), foreign press correspondents and information offices and various organisations and private individuals. It also provided assistance to representatives of foreign newspapers and magazines, and arranged their accreditation.

From the information provided in the preceding paragraphs the researcher concludes that the functions and structures of the Department of Information were refined to meet the political needs of the government during this period (1969-1972). No scientific research projects were conducted, but the responsibility of the Interior Division included conveying 'the wishes and opinions' of South Africans 'to other government bodies' (see information provided regarding activities of this Division earlier in this section).

(c) The period June 1972 to 28 February 1975

The then Minister of Information, Dr CP Mulder, explained in the House of Assembly on 19 May 1972 that certain new complications had resulted in new demands to the Department and that he therefore envisaged reorganisation of the Department (Hansard, cited by Mulder, 1975:182). In the Annual Report of the Department of Information for 1972 (1973:5) the purpose of the reorganisation is explained: "The structural changes and improvements are not only aimed at improving the time in which the Department responds to requests but also to simplify procedures enabling the organisation to make urgent adjustments to its priorities and *modus operandi* when necessary."

Apart from an administrative component, the Department consisted of eight professional divisions in 1972 (Department of Information, 1973:8):

- Guests and Visitors
- Foreign Information
- Foreign Publications
- Film, Television and Radio production
- Visual Services
- Press Liaison
- Training
- Internal Information that included Interior Publications.

During the early 1970s the Department was notably active abroad – among others with the so-called *détente* initiative in Africa. Internal activities also increased, and a Deputy Minister was appointed in October 1975 to oversee these (interview with Dr CP Mulder, Minister of Information – cited by Mulder, 1975: 185). In this regard the newspaper *Die Vaderland* reported on 20 October 1975 that the Department of Information would be responsible for a new campaign of the government to improve *détente* within South Africa. The campaign was undertaken by the Internal Information division of the Department. Information was provided to all population groups, including whites, regarding aspects like moving away from discrimination, racial relations and elimination of irritating measures (cited by Mulder, 1975:185).

In order to “adapt to changed conditions” and “to promote efficiency as well as making the organisation more streamlined, organisational adjustments were made ... as from 1 October 1973. A new division, Planning was created, while the divisions Visual Services and Film, Television and Radio Production were linked together in one division, namely Audiovisual Services and Production. In

addition the division Guests and Visitors as from the same date became part of the Foreign Information Division” (Department of Information, 1974:8).

The first time reference is made of an initiative to conduct research in support of the Department’s work is in the Report of the Department of Information for 1 January 1974 to 31 December 1974 (Department of Information, 1975:10). The Report refers to an analysis of the image of South Africa in 14 countries abroad which was conducted in 1973 with the assistance of overseas research companies. During 1974 the results were made available to the Department’s offices abroad and other public institutions concerned. The Report (1975:10) also mentions that the Department’s officials were able to ”adapt their action plans in a scientific way to fit the reality instead of acting intuitively.” The report proceeds to explain that the results obtained from the market analysis were also used in decision-making regarding themes and nuances for departmental films, publications and advertisements (Department of Information, 1975:10). The Division Planning, responsible for this “market analysis”, was also responsible for advertising. The extent to which this market analysis was found to be useful at the time, was emphasised in the Annual Report (Department of Information, 1975:10). The copy and themes of the advertisements were judged and evaluated on the basis of the research results. Thereafter the concept product was tested abroad. Only after the pretesting had proven that the concept would be successful, was it implemented. After the advertising campaign, post-testing was done to determine whether the campaign had been successful.

It is interesting to note that the 1974 Annual Report of the Department (Department of Information, 1975:10-11) refers to two more research projects conducted during this period.

- Firstly, after the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) had shown a film of the Department (*Black man alive – the facts*) and following a debate between two South African officials with critics of the country, an

independent research company in London conducted research on behalf of the Department. According to the research results, South Africa succeeded in changing the opinion of 13 percent of the viewers whilst 85 percent supported the BBC decision to allow both sides to raise their points of view instead of only allowing the anti-South Africa viewpoint to be raised. By using the research results the Department's office in London was able to measure the impact of the initiative scientifically – instead of haphazardly and only by means of media coverage.

- Secondly, a study was conducted about the effectiveness and impact of the publication *SA Panorama* both internationally and in South Africa. It was envisaged that the study would enable the Department to adapt the content of the publication – and possibly also the format and design – to fit the preference and interest of the readers (Department of Information, 1975:13). Letters from the readers were the only guidelines that the editorial staff previously had in preparing the magazine – a measurement not regarded as being accurate.

According to information available the Department of Information was increasingly involved in disseminating government information internationally and in South Africa during the period June 1972 to February 1975. Following the establishment of the Planning Division, the Department, for the first time in the history, conducted scientific research to enhance effectiveness of its initiatives of government communication and information work in South Africa. Three research projects were conducted by the Department of Information during the period.

(d) The period 1 March 1975 to 30 June 1978

The Report of the Department of Information for the period 1 January 1975 to 31 December 1975 (Department of Information, 1976:10) provides information about

the restructuring of the Department that was implemented on 1 March 1975. The Department then consisted of two professional branches, the Information Branch and the Planning Branch, and an administrative one, Administration Services.

The 1973 market analysis aimed at investigating South Africa's image in 14 countries (see page 71) was extended to Japan and Brazil in 1975 (Department of Information, 1976:10).

Also in 1975 a series of advertisements appeared in leading newspapers and periodicals in the United States (US) and Britain. According to the Department's Annual Report for 1975 (Department of Information, 1976:10) "the theme was South Africa's rightful role in the international community of which three specific aspects were stressed in different advertisements: South Africa's role in international sport, its aid to other African countries and its strategic importance to the West. The series of advertisements was, with the aid of scientific methods of investigation of prominent overseas research groups, subjected to preliminary investigations and its effect on readers effectively measured. From this it appeared that the most important arguments in the advertisements were brought pertinently to the attention of those at whom they were directed."

The 1975 Annual Report also mentions that "a survey by Fessel Market Research in Austria of the readers of the Information Service monthly *Südafrika Kompass* (and the weekly news service *Heute aus Südafrika*) revealed that 84 percent of the readers thought the contents to be balanced, 55 percent accepted this as accurate and reliable and 32 percent as being at least partially reliable and balanced. Almost 40 percent of the newspaper editors who receive the two publications have replied that they use the material in their newspapers" (Department of Information, 1976:6).

According to the report of the Department of Information for the following year, January to December 1976, the Planning branch had to “analyse tendencies and world events in order to properly plan ahead. The process of determining strategy does not merely rely on worldwide media coverage” (Department of Information, 1977:10). The report continues by stating that “many opinion-makers and decision-makers, both locally and from abroad, were involved with the analysis and determination of priorities – apart from opinion surveys in some countries” (Department of Information, 1977:10). Unfortunately, despite the fact that the Annual Report provides information regarding the Department’s activities in 19 countries where it had offices, no information is provided regarding the opinion surveys mentioned.

The 1977 Annual Report also mentions opinion surveys: “During 1977 the Planning Division had no comprehensive opinion surveys conducted abroad, but on several occasions commissioned surveys in respect of specific matters. Data acquired in this way (specific opinion surveys) are of particular value in planning the operation and priorities of the various overseas offices. The findings also help to determine the contents of publications, lectures, advertisements and films” (Department of Information, 1978:21).

The following quotations from the 1977 report of the Department is an outstanding example of how incorrect and unreliable one’s own evaluation of the impact of certain initiatives can be – if research were conducted amongst those targeted for the communication initiatives their evaluation would have been much different:

The large-scale dislocation caused by the riots in various Black communities in general and at certain schools in particular is well-known. The Interior Division was compelled to adapt tried and trusted liaison techniques to new circumstances to ensure that vital contact remained intact. Pamphlets, literally

compiled and printed within hours and often distributed in a highly unorthodox manner, proved to be of particular value. In this way the Department succeeded in defusing the highly explosive situation in Soweto following the announcement of increased rents. In the event, the higher tariffs were accepted quietly. By using the same technique the Division played a part in ending the examination boycott on the Witwatersrand and in the Free State, and in isolating the agitators with the help of responsible elements in the local communities (Department of Information, 1978:29).

Blacks in Bloemfontein accepted the idea of a community council after the Division had distributed a small brochure to every inhabitant” (Department of Information, 1978:27-28).

Another survey conducted in 1977 was aimed at updating the mailing list and “to establish whether the existence of the *Progress Series* could still be justified. It was surmised that these publications no longer served a useful purpose. In the event, the survey surprisingly proved “the exact opposite” (Department of Information, 1978:29). On the basis of the research results, efforts were then made “to increase the circulation, but with better control over the contents of these magazines” (Department of Information, 1978:29).

Early in 1978 the Planning Division “engaged in pilot studies of a new series of advertisements for the overseas press and in planning a new world-wide market analysis to determine South Africa’s image abroad” (Department of Information, 1978:21).

During the period 1 March 1975 to 30 June 1978 the Department of Information conducted various research projects to enhance the effectiveness of departmental initiatives. The value of information acquired by conducting ‘opinion surveys’ is appreciated in the Department’s 1977 Annual Report (see

discussion earlier in this section). Despite this recognition of the value of research by the Department, the researcher refers to the reality that the Department evaluated some of its initiatives in South Africa from an internal perspective instead of conducting scientific research amongst South Africans towards whom certain messages were directed – and came to a conclusion that we know from history was incorrect.

3.2.2.2 *The period 1 July 1978 to 16 September 1985*

The Department of Information was dissolved on 1 July 1978 following a government decision and a recommendation by the Public Service Commission. On the same date the Bureau of National and International Communication was established – resorting under the Secretary for Plural Relations and Development. All the activities of the former Department of Information, excluding secret projects, were transferred to the Bureau. On 1 September 1978 the Bureau was assigned to the Department of Foreign Affairs. The secret activities were transferred to the Bureau on 7 November 1978. Following a Cabinet decision and at the recommendation of the Public Service Commission, the Bureau was renamed the Information Service of South Africa (INSA) with effect from 1 February 1979 (INSA, 1979:4). According to the source mentioned (INSA, 1979:4) the objectives of the Information Service were:

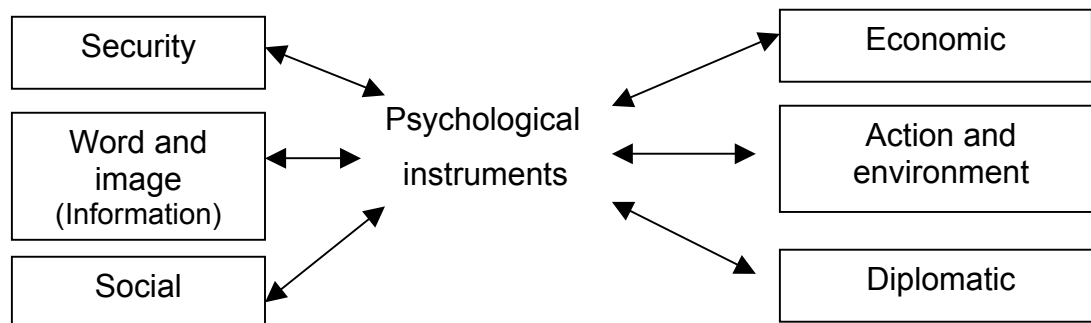
- to promote South Africa's image and to cultivate a positive attitude towards the RSA
- to repulse the psychological onslaughts against South Africa.

The report also mentions two target groups – overseas target groups, and internal target groups including target groups in neighbouring countries (INSA, 1979:4).

The only reference to research in the INSA Annual Report for 1 April 1978 to 31 March 1979 relates to *Alpha* – the magazine of the section responsible for ‘Coloured Liaison’: “The magazine *Alpha* (circulation 19 200) was effectively used to publicise and explain the proposals (regarding the proposed new constitutional plan). An investigation by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) showed that 20,8 percent of all adult coloureds read the magazine. This means that one copy is read by as many as 20 people” (INSA, 1979:7).

The last Annual Report of INSA – for the period 1 April 1979 to 31 December 1979 – provides information regarding the “Primary function” and “Reference framework” of INSA. Its primary function is described as “to project a favourable image of the Republic of South Africa and to improve local and overseas attitudes towards the country, as well as to ward-off the onslaught against it both here and abroad with the aid of the spoken and written word and film.” According to the Annual Report the methodology decided upon, and the strategy followed, were based on the assumption that there was a group of at least six instruments which had to be employed to ensure the safety and progress of the Republic. A simplified schematic representation of these instruments was portrayed as follows:

Figure 3.1: *The inter-relationship between the psychological and other instruments*⁸



⁸ INSA, 1980:3

According to the Annual Report of INSA for 1 April 1979 to 31 December 1979 the instruments portrayed in figure 3.1 "... determine and form the reference framework of the target(s) in so far as the Republic is concerned. What is *read*, *seen* and *heard* determines the imagery which is eventually conjured up by the concept 'RSA'. The *reference framework* of observers of the RSA and its socio-economic problems is thus continually being formed and adapted by *images*, *words*, *actions* and *environmental impressions*. To create favourable frames of reference for South Africa, it is Information's task to make purposeful and scientifically planned audio-visual impressions on targets, to imprint specific positive images and values and, if need be, to modify fallacies" (INSA, 1980:3-4).

The last Annual Report of INSA does not mention any scientific research. Despite this, INSA claimed in this report – where reporting on the work of the Foreign Information Branch – that: "The Prime Minister's new initiatives enjoyed effective and worldwide publicity during this period" and that "It was discovered that people who already possessed first-hand knowledge of South Africa were particularly impressed with the new developments in the Republic" (INSA, 1980:11). This claim of INSA is not motivated by means of objective feedback from the target audience – e.g. by means of scientific research – but based on subjective interpretation of the situation.

Nevertheless, INSA reflects some understanding of the importance of being sensitive to the needs and perceptions of the target audience – at least to some extent: "To be able to identify the needs of isolated Coloured communities and to bring them to date with swiftly-changing trends, contact tours were undertaken during which films were shown, addresses and lectures given, and publications supplied to the public." Also, although it seems that INSA made the conclusions from their own, subjective point of view, some sort of sensitivity towards the importance of feedback from the target audience is revealed: "The feedback of information, even from the most isolated areas, to the government body

concerned is an important facet of the activities of the Information Service” (INSA, 1980:11).

In its 1979 Annual Report INSA claims that “in the period under review a thorough investigation into the effectiveness of the Information Service’s advertising programme was made, and in the light of this, various new approaches will be followed in the new financial year. It will form part of integrated communication plans and programmes feasible within our financial capabilities” (INSA, 1980:13). Again, no information is provided on how this “thorough investigation” was done, but from the information available it can be interpreted that it was not by means of conducting research.

It is significant that the last Annual Report of the Information Service of South Africa makes no reference to the so-called “Information scandal” that was such prominent news both in South Africa and internationally since the second half of 1978. According to the *Official yearbook of the Republic of South Africa 1980/81* (Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, 1981:746-747) the Information scandal concerned the spending of tens of millions of State money from a secret fund on a vast complex of secret projects financed by the Department of Information. At that stage the Department’s political head was Dr CP Mulder, leader of the Transvaal National Party, and its administrative head was the Secretary for Information, Dr EM Rhodie. Breaking at the time when Mr Vorster was being succeeded as Prime Minister by the Minister of Defence, PW Botha, after a narrow victory over Dr Mulder in the National Party Parliamentary caucus, the “Information scandal” shook public opinion as it unfolded in a series of press and official revelations affecting the Vorster government. Some newspapers, indulging in investigative journalism to the full in a field of secret projects, covert deals and misspent State funds, aroused great political anger exceeding the level of that during previous confrontations (between government and the media). At the centre of the storm about misspent State funds was *The Citizen*, an English-

language daily newspaper published in Johannesburg and founded ostensibly by an Afrikaner entrepreneur, Mr Louis Luyt, in 1976.

From 1 April 1980 the Information Service of South Africa was taken up in a wider, newly-created Department of Foreign Affairs and Information. The implication was that the information organisation of the government did not continue as a separate and independent organisation with its own accountable head and staff structure. Although it was the aim, at the time of the Department of Information's demise, to drastically reorganise the new Information Service administratively and functionally, these efforts were not altogether successful. Other priorities came first. The rationalisation plans of the Civil Service as a whole were so all-embracing that INSA could not be examined on its own. However, there were attempts to reach this ideal. Ad hoc additions to the establishment enabled INSA to gauge important information needs scientifically, and to work out an effective system of method and strategy. The over-all priorities of the Civil Service in other fields, however, resulted in a position where the function of information analysis within the framework of the two institutes of INSA could not be made to work. These two institutes were the Institute of Information Analysis and Development (foreign-orientated), and an Institute for Southern Africa. Other factors which played a role were the shortage of funds for development, the freezing of the staff establishment in favour of the priorities of rationalisation, and the additional burden emanating from the demands of the State Security Council and the work of the State Trust Board – which investigated the projects of the former Department of Information (INSA, 1980:3).

No annual reports are available for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Information between 1980 and 1985. The *Official yearbook of the Republic of South Africa 1982* (Department of Foreign Affairs and Information, 1982:144) provided the following information regarding the aim and functions of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Information:

- Aim: To implement the RSA's foreign policy; to promote relations abroad; and enhance the country's image.
- Functions:
 - Co-coordinating and implementing South Africa's foreign policy
 - Promoting relations abroad
 - Protecting and promoting the interests of the RSA and its citizens abroad
 - Supporting the efforts of developing countries towards economic growth and the evolution of their social systems
 - Conveying in a co-coordinated manner relevant facts concerning the RSA to the people, particularly the opinion formers and decision makers in all spheres, of other countries
 - Rendering a Government publicity service in the RSA.

3.2.2.3 Summary: the period from 27 November 1961 to 16 September 1985 – the role of research

From 1961 to 1984 there was an increasing understanding by the institution in Public Service responsible for the dissemination of government information that government needed to "listen" to its target audience. Feedback from target groups – specifically those that did not have the opportunity to take part in elections – was an important objective.

In the early 1960s (1962-1963) the Department claimed that its "dual purpose" envisaged for service to the "Bantu" had been largely achieved due to the situation that "Bantu" organisations and individuals made contact with officials of the Department "to present their problems". In the middle to late 1960s (1966-1968), the Department perceived it as part of their responsibility to "determine the non-white reactions and wishes". In the period 1969 to 1972, the Interior Division

was expected to, additional to its other responsibilities, “convey the wishes and opinions of South Africans to other government bodies.”

In 1973 the first scientific research project was conducted to enhance effectiveness of government’s communication initiatives. The research project was outsourced to overseas research companies and entailed an analysis of the image of South Africa in 14 countries abroad.

Most of the research projects conducted by the Department from 1973 up to 1 July 1978 when the Department of Information was dissolved, were conducted abroad. These projects included an extension of the 1973 market analysis to Japan and Brazil. In 1975 a readership study of two Departmental publications circulated in Austria and testing advertisements that appeared in magazines in the US and the UK. The two research projects conducted by the Department in South Africa during the late 1970s both related to departmental publications. A survey was conducted to establish whether the existence of the *Progress Series* could still be justified, and a readership study was done for *Alpha*.

The last Annual Report of INSA (1980:3) refers to an initiative where “ad hoc additions to the establishment enabled INSA to gauge important information needs scientifically.” Unfortunately nothing more is known about this project. From documentation available regarding the activities of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Information between 1980 and 1985, no reference is made to any research conducted to enhance effectiveness of the information function.

3.3 THE BUREAU FOR INFORMATION – 17 SEPTEMBER 1985 TO 30 APRIL 1991

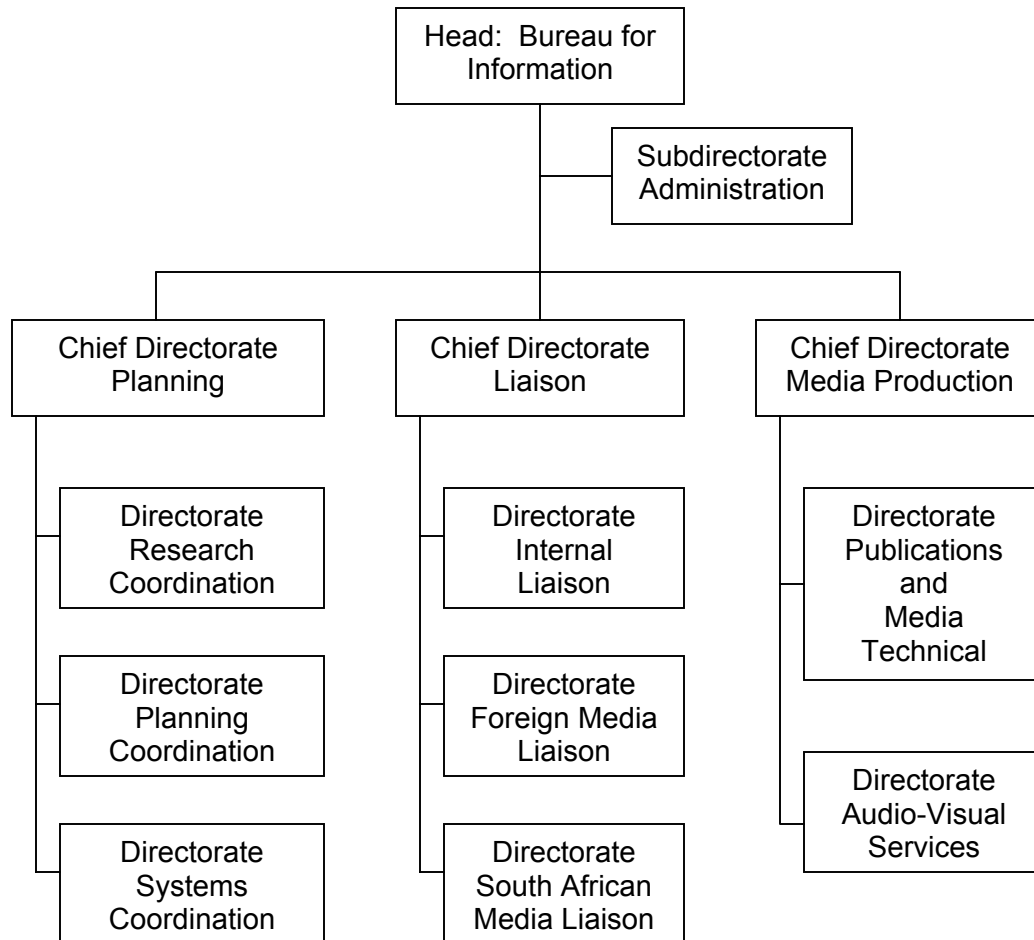
3.3.1 The establishment and structure of the Bureau for Information

According to the first Annual Report of the Bureau for Information (1987:2) the organisation was established on 17 September 1985, following a decision by the Government and at the recommendation of the Commission for Administration. “All domestic activities which were formerly handled by the Department of Foreign Affairs, were transferred to the Bureau. Up to 31 March 1986 the overall management of the Subdirectorate: Administration was carried out by staff of the Office of the Commission for Administration. When the Bureau became an autonomous institution on 1 April 1986 the post of Deputy Director: Administration was established to head the Subdirectorate: Administration” (Bureau for Information, 1987:10). The first year of the Bureau for Information was “marked by activities aimed at laying a foundation for an effective communication organisation.”

In addition to the Subdirectorate Administration, the Bureau for Information was structured into three line-function chief directorates, each comprising different directorates (see figure 3.2):

- The Chief Directorate Planning, which promoted “effective communication at the national level”, comprised the directorates Systems Coordination, Planning Coordination and Research Coordination (Bureau for Information, 1987:2).

Figure 3.2 *Bureau for Information – structure, 1986*⁹



- The Chief Directorate Liaison had as its task “the promotion of communication with all population groups and foreign media representatives in South Africa.” This Chief Directorate comprised Internal Liaison, Foreign Media Liaison and South African Media Liaison (Bureau for Information, 1987:4).
- The Chief Directorate Media Production comprised the Publications and Media Technical Services Directorate and the Audio-Visual Services Directorate. “Apart from publication and audio-visual services and material

⁹ Researcher’s own compilation

directed at the domestic market, the Chief Directorate also produced publications and audio-visual material for the Department of Foreign Affairs on an agency basis” (Bureau for Information, 1987:8).

The 1988 Annual Report of the Bureau for Information provides information regarding the clients and objectives of the Directorate Research Coordination: “The Directorate Research Coordination provides a continuous communication research and communication advice service to the Minister, the Head of the Bureau, other directorates, regional offices and other government departments in order to constantly improve the quality and efficiency of government communication, thereby endeavouring to ensure maximal cost-efficiency” (Bureau for Information, 1989:3).

3.3.2 Directorate Research Coordination

3.3.2.1 Research – May to December 1986

Already in the introductory (“Background”) paragraph to the Bureau’s Annual Report for 1986, reference is made to the research function: “To promote effective communication, a research section was established” (Bureau for Information, 1987:2). The Directorate Research Coordination was established in May 1986 with the “primary responsibility to undertake research that would contribute to meaningful communication between the Government and the people of South Africa” (Bureau for Information, 1987:4). The projects conducted by the Directorate Research Coordination from June to December 1986 comprised more than opinion and attitude surveys. According to the relevant Annual Report, the Directorate undertook the following projects during the period mentioned:

- Monitoring the National State of Emergency (NSE) on a continuous basis
- Planning and management of opinion and attitude surveys

- Planning and compiling communication packages on a variety of subjects
- Computerising information for easy retrieval
- Monitoring and analysing news reports in the media
- Basic surveys in Black townships (Bureau for Information, 1987:4).

It is also mentioned in the Annual Report that “the findings of these research projects were used as basis for regular lectures by Directorate staff to, amongst others, businessmen, educationists, women’s organisations, government officials, visitors from overseas, journalists and academics. Directorate staff also acted as spokesmen for the government during press conferences and in radio and television programmes” (Bureau for Information, 1987:4).

From own experience the researcher can say that the “regular lectures” referred to in the Annual Report, were almost exclusively on the basis of analysis of statistics regarding the National State of Emergency declared in June 1986.

The Directorate Research Coordination was responsible for two “opinion survey” research projects in 1986:

- A telephone survey amongst whites and blacks was conducted by a private sector research company on behalf of the Bureau. The abolition of the pass laws and attacks by the South African Defence Force (SADF) on military ‘bases’ of the African National Congress (ANC) were the two main subjects of the project.
- The Bureau subscribed to a multi-purpose survey conducted country-wide amongst whites on a syndicated basis. Questions regarding attitude to government policies (e.g. separate education, homeland policy and the Group Areas Act), ‘inter-group relations’ and sources of government information were included.

During the period the Bureau purchased research results relevant to its work from the private sector, including attitudes of whites regarding the National State of Emergency, and perceptions of blacks in urban areas regarding high-density housing.

The results of the two opinion survey research projects conducted and the results purchased from the private sector were used by the Bureau and other government role-players to plan for communication and policy development.

3.3.2.2 *Research – 1987*

According to the Annual Report for 1987, the “Bureau’s ability to communicate effectively with the South African public was enhanced by the expansion of its communication research capability” (Bureau for Information, 1988:2). Reporting on the work of the Directorate Research Coordination for the calendar year 1987, the Annual Report reads as follows: “The Directorate Research Coordination is responsible for communication research which, on a continuing basis, enables the other directorates within the Bureau, the Bureau’s regional offices and other state departments to contribute effectively to communication between the Government and the population of the RSA” (Bureau for Information, 1988:3). The Annual Report referred to some of the research projects that were undertaken by the Directorate Research Coordination. Topics included:

- the long-term monitoring of the critical variables underlying the National State of Emergency
- reform legislation
- profiles of six self-governing states within the RSA
- profiles of Transkei, Ciskei, Venda and Bophuthatswana
- democracy
- attitudes towards sanctions and disinvestment

- social and economic attitudes of whites, coloureds, blacks and indians
- whites' attitudes towards the SADF's involvement in Angola (Bureau for Information, 1988:3-4).

Similar to 1986, the information provided in the 1987 Annual Report of the Bureau regarding the projects undertaken by the Directorate Research Coordination points to involvement in research projects broader than opinion surveys. Although it is claimed that "all communication by the Bureau was continuously monitored and evaluated to promote the effective use of funds" (Bureau for Information, 1988:4) it was primarily done by means of monitoring and interpreting media coverage regarding the communication and/or done from a theoretic perspective.

A list of empirical research projects conducted by the Directorate Research Coordination during 1987 (GCIS, Directorate Research, 2001a) includes the following:

- Attitudes of blacks in Soweto and Mamelodi regarding the Nonzame campaign, a campaign "to normalise rent and service" (Bureau for Information, 1988:3) – personal interviews
- The attitude of whites regarding media regulations (part of the National State of Emergency regulations) – a telephone survey
- Perceptions of whites regarding discussions between a delegation of the Institute for Democratic Alternatives for South Africa (IDASA), led by Dr Van Zyl Slabbert, and the African National Congress (ANC) in Dakar, Senegal – a telephone survey
- Perceptions of whites on the involvement of the South African Defence Force (SADF) in Angola and the release of Mr Govan Mbeki – a telephone survey

- Perceptions of blacks, coloureds and asians regarding various socio-political, socio-economic and security issues – personal interviews.

All these surveys were outsourced to private sector research companies and, with the exception of the first, conducted country-wide.

The empirical research projects conducted during 1987 focused on two of the major challenges of government – the boycott of rent and services payment in specifically the former ‘black townships’ and the National State of Emergency. Three surveys conducted during 1987 provided results regarding issues relevant to the process of political change that was initiated in the country (GCIS, Directorate Research, 2001a).

3.3.2.3 *Research – 1988*

The contribution of research to enhance the effectiveness of the Bureau’s initiatives is again emphasised in the introduction to the 1988 Annual Report: “During 1988 the Bureau made extensive use of public opinion surveys, conducted on its behalf by private organisations. The Bureau has found that it is impossible to communicate with the public without a clear idea of the public’s current perceptions and attitudes. The Bureau also regards such surveys as an essential part of its function of promoting two-way communication between the government and the people of South Africa” (Bureau for Information, 1989:2).

Reporting on the activities of the Directorate, the 1988 Annual Report distinguishes the following three components:

- The Subdirector Evaluation and Monitoring. This Subdirector surveyed the printed media on a daily basis during 1988 with the aim to identify, categorise and computerise all relevant media information in a database in terms of which the Bureau could evaluate its communication

projects and undertake its communication planning. The Subdirectorate also evaluated monitored press reports on important events, documentary films, videos and Bureau publications and projects. Communication appearances by ministers and civil servants were evaluated on request to advise such persons.

- The Subdirectorate Information Products. According to the Annual Report this Subdirectorate continuously handled *ad hoc* requests for information and researched and compiled 65 information documents. These documents related to virtually all levels of society. A new information brochure entitled “On ---“ or “Met betrekking tot ---“ was also launched. The aim of this brochure was to convey interpreted messages on the one hand and factual information on the other to the public in the most understandable manner.
- The section Opinion Polls. According to the Annual Report this section “offered increasing opportunities to the population to communicate with the government. Numerous quantitative nation-wide and regional opinion polls were undertaken. During and upon completion of each publicity project undertaken, the impact of the project was determined¹⁰.

Resultant from the surveys undertaken, numerous information documents were compiled and a wide variety of opinion-forming groups in both the private and public sectors were briefed” (Bureau for Information, 1989:3-4).

After acquiring the *Survey System* software, the Subdirectorate conducted its first in-house research project in 1988 – an evaluation of *Puisano*, the regional newspaper of the Port Elizabeth office of the Bureau. The *Puisano* evaluation was done by means of self-completion questionnaires.

¹⁰ From own experience the researcher needs to remark that the Annual Report is *not* correct. Research was conducted regarding only some of the projects.

The other research projects were outsourced to the private sector, and included the following:

- Perceptions of the Black elite in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (PWV) area regarding constitutional reform – a telephone survey
- Perceptions of blacks, coloureds and asians regarding various socio-political, socio-economic and security issues – a survey conducted country-wide by means of personal interviews, addressing primarily the same issues as a survey conducted during 1987 among the same target group
- Perceptions of whites regarding South Africa's future – a telephone survey
- Evaluating the effectiveness of an advertising campaign of the Bureau to promote participation in the municipal elections – a telephone survey conducted amongst whites in the PWV area and blacks in Port Elizabeth
- Perceptions and attitudes regarding "Nation-building" – a telephone survey amongst Black elite in Soweto (GCIS, Directorate Research, 2001a).

With the exception of the *Puisano* study, all other projects related to broader socio-political issues.

3.3.2.4 *Research – 1989*

After his election as the State President of South Africa in September 1989, FW de Klerk did not appoint a Minister of Information, but for the time being assumed responsibility for the information portfolio himself. "This was in keeping with his rejection of a centralised information function and the view that Ministers and government departments should instead be responsible for their own communication. In executing this responsibility, government departments should, however, not unnecessarily duplicate the entire range of communication services that can be provided more cost-effectively on a centralised basis or purchased from the private sector. The provision of such services is the main objective of the Bureau for Information" (Bureau for Information, 1990:i).

In 1989 the Directorate Research Coordination still consisted of the three components: Evaluation and Monitoring, Information Products and Opinion Polls. The previous 'section' *Opinion Polls* was upgraded to a subdirectorates in 1989.

According to the 1989 Annual Report the Subdirectorates Opinion Polls "offered all population groups the opportunity of communicating their opinions scientifically to the government" and that a large number of qualitative and quantitative opinion polls and product project tests were initiated, planned and conducted on behalf of the Bureau's executive management, other directorates, regional offices, the State President, Cabinet and other departments. Through these opinion polls, which dealt with divergent subjects such as constitutional initiatives, reform and high-density housing, valuable information was obtained pertaining to the population's needs, preferences, fears and attitudes. The results obtained were utilised for communication planning and specialised briefings" (Bureau for Information, 1990:1).

A list of the 25 research projects conducted by the Subdirectorates *Opinion Polls* provides proof that the research indeed related to certain initiatives indicating the start of a process of change in the country. Research projects regarding the population's needs and perceptions were useful in the Bureau's communication. Projects outsourced included:

- Perception of whites regarding the discussions between State President PW Botha and Mr Nelson Mandela – a telephone survey
- Knowledge and perceptions of whites with regard to Resolution 435 (independence of South West Africa/Namibia) and related issues – a telephone survey
- Perceptions and attitudes of coloureds in the Western Cape regarding local authorities – a survey conducted by means of personal interviews

- Perceptions of whites with regard to the South African Police (SAP) and media reports regarding SAP ‘murder squads’ – telephone survey
- Perceptions and attitudes of blacks regarding the concepts “Peace”, “Prosperity”, “Progress” and “Participation” – research conducted by means of focus group discussions in the three main metropolitan areas to pre-test concepts for a communication campaign.

The first research project on behalf of another government department by the Bureau was conducted in 1989. It was a project amongst people in Soweto regarding high-density housing conducted by means of focus groups for the Department of Local Government and National Housing. The project was outsourced to the private sector.

Two of the research projects conducted during 1989 were conducted by staff of the Subdirectorate:

- Attitudes and perceptions of blacks and coloureds in Walvis Bay regarding the incorporation of the area into South West Africa/Namibia – conducted by means of personal interviews by interviewers recruited from the area, and trained and managed by staff of the Bureau
- A readership study of the Bureau’s magazine *SA Today* – self-completion questionnaires.

In his Budget Vote speech on the Bureau for Information for 1989, delivered in Parliament on 17 April 1990, President FW de Klerk emphasised that it was particularly important that the South African government had to be able to communicate effectively with all the people in the country:

In the first place, our government needs to communicate effectively to identify and promote the important interests which our complex population shares and which forms the basis of an emerging national consensus. In the second place

our government requires special communication skills to participate in the national debate on the constitutional future of South Africa. Thirdly, many of the problems which our country experiences internally and abroad have their origin in incorrect perceptions of South Africa. These distorted perceptions can best be addressed by effective communication (De Klerk, 1990:1).

De Klerk continued by remarking that the main task of the Bureau for Information was to ensure that the South African Government was well equipped to meet these communication challenges (De Klerk, 1990:2). He expanded further:

How does one communicate with a population as complex as the population of South Africa - a country of 30 million people in which eight different languages are spoken by more than a million people, in which no single language is spoken by a majority? How does one communicate with a population comprising so many different cultures and stages of economic development, where a message which is understood by one group will alienate another, a country in which modern media still do not reach millions of people? The Bureau believes that this task cannot be accomplished without a clear understanding of this complex population, of their attitudes, their aspirations and their needs. The Bureau has accordingly become a major commissioner of opinion surveys and market research. The data which we acquire in this fashion provides us not only with the basis for our own communication. It is also the means by which we listen to the views of all our people - since it is quite impossible to have one-directional communication. Our research, in addition, provides heartening evidence that the vast majority of our population shares important interest which will serve as the basis for the emerging national consensus (De Klerk, 1990:2).

3.3.2.5 Research – 1990

It is generally agreed that major changes and developments were introduced in South Africa after FW de Klerk's historic speech in Parliament on 2 February 1990. According to the Annual Report of the Bureau for Information for 1990 (Bureau for Information, 1991:i) the year 1990 was one of dramatic development in government communication in South Africa:

The State President's speech of February 2 and the subsequent developments opened the way to a much easier relationship between the government and the national and international media. These developments also created a much greater need for the flow of information between the government, the media and the public. There was consequently greater demand for the Bureau's services. The Bureau was able to play a supportive role, particularly with regard to media arrangements at various occasions including at the time of Mr Nelson Mandela's release from prison and during the discussions between the ANC and government at Grootte Schuur and in Pretoria. At the same time, the Bureau was able to consolidate and expand the communication services which it provides to the government and to government departments. These services include assistance with communication advice and planning; market and media research¹¹; advertising; media liaison services, including the more effective distribution of government press releases by way of the SAPA PR wire service; the government's international guest programme; exhibition and shows; the provisioning of extensive regional liaison services; the production of publications, videos and films, and the provisioning of photographic and graphic services.

The government's point of view with regard to a centralised communication and/or information function and the provision of communication services is also

¹¹ Researcher's emphasis

explained in the 1990 Annual Report: “Our intention in providing these services is not to take over the communication role of government departments, but to provide specialised communication support to them. We also trust that the provision of such specialised communication services on a centralised basis, will help to avoid the unnecessary duplication and proliferation of communication capabilities throughout the Public Service” (Bureau for Information, 1991:i-ii).

The opinion polls conducted during 1990 “dealt with divergent subjects such as constitutional initiatives, reform, use of leisure time and hostel accommodation” (Bureau for Information, 1991:i). Surveys conducted by the Subdirectorate Opinion Polls included the following:

- Perceptions and attitudes of blacks, coloureds and Asians on the tour of the cricket team of England – a telephone survey
- Perceptions and attitudes of South Africans (all population groups) regarding State President FW de Klerk’s speech in Parliament on 2 February 1990 – a telephone survey
- Perceptions and attitudes of South Africans (all population groups) regarding the release of Mr Nelson Mandela from prison – a telephone survey
- Attitudes of whites towards socio-political changes in the country – subscription to a multi-purpose survey conducted country-wide by means of personal interviews
- Response of whites regarding the negotiations between the government and the ANC at ‘*Grootte Schuur*’ – a telephone survey
- Evaluation of the regional newspaper of the Cape Town office of the Bureau, *Caret* – self-completion questionnaires, done by Bureau staff
- Sentiments and aspirations of blacks in metropolitan areas – conducted by means of focus group discussions
- Investment and financial confidence amongst whites – a telephone survey

- Response of whites and blacks regarding negotiations between the government and the ANC in Pretoria (*Grootte Schuur II*) and related issues – a telephone survey
- Knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of blacks regarding the rent and services boycott – subscription to a multi-purpose survey conducted country-wide by means of personal interviews.

3.3.3 Summary: Bureau for Information – the role of research

During the lifetime of the Bureau for Information, government started making extensive use of research or “opinion polls” as they were referred to.

The researcher is of the opinion that the Bureau’s research initiatives were originally primarily in support of the government’s communication needs and political interest. From 1987 some of the research projects were also directed at determining the public’s information needs and to enhance the effectiveness of the Bureau in fulfilling its function to disseminate government information to the people.

Since 1989 the Bureau conducted communication research projects at the request of other government departments. Various research projects were conducted since 1989 to support the process of political transformation and democratisation in the country and government communication in that regard.

3.4 THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNICATION SERVICE – 1 MAY 1991 TO 17 MAY 1998

3.4.1 The establishment and structure of the South African Communication Service

On 1 May 1991 the name of the Bureau for Information changed to South African Communication Service (SACS). In the 1991 Annual Report of the SACS it is argued that the old name “had for quite some time been unsatisfactory because it did not adequately reflect the function of the organisation and caused confusion with other information bureaus, particularly in the regions. The old logo, a shield, was too militaristic and did not reflect the image which we wish to project” (SACS, 1992:i).

Another important development for SACS during 1991 was Cabinet’s decision to transfer responsibility for the promotion of inter-community relations from the Department of Planning and Provincial Affairs and the provinces to SACS (SACS, 1992:i). According to the Annual Report of SACS for 1993, “the extension of the functions of the Bureau for Information to include the development of co-operative structures within communities led to the decision to rename the Bureau the South African Communication Service on 1 May 1991” (SACS, 1994:i).

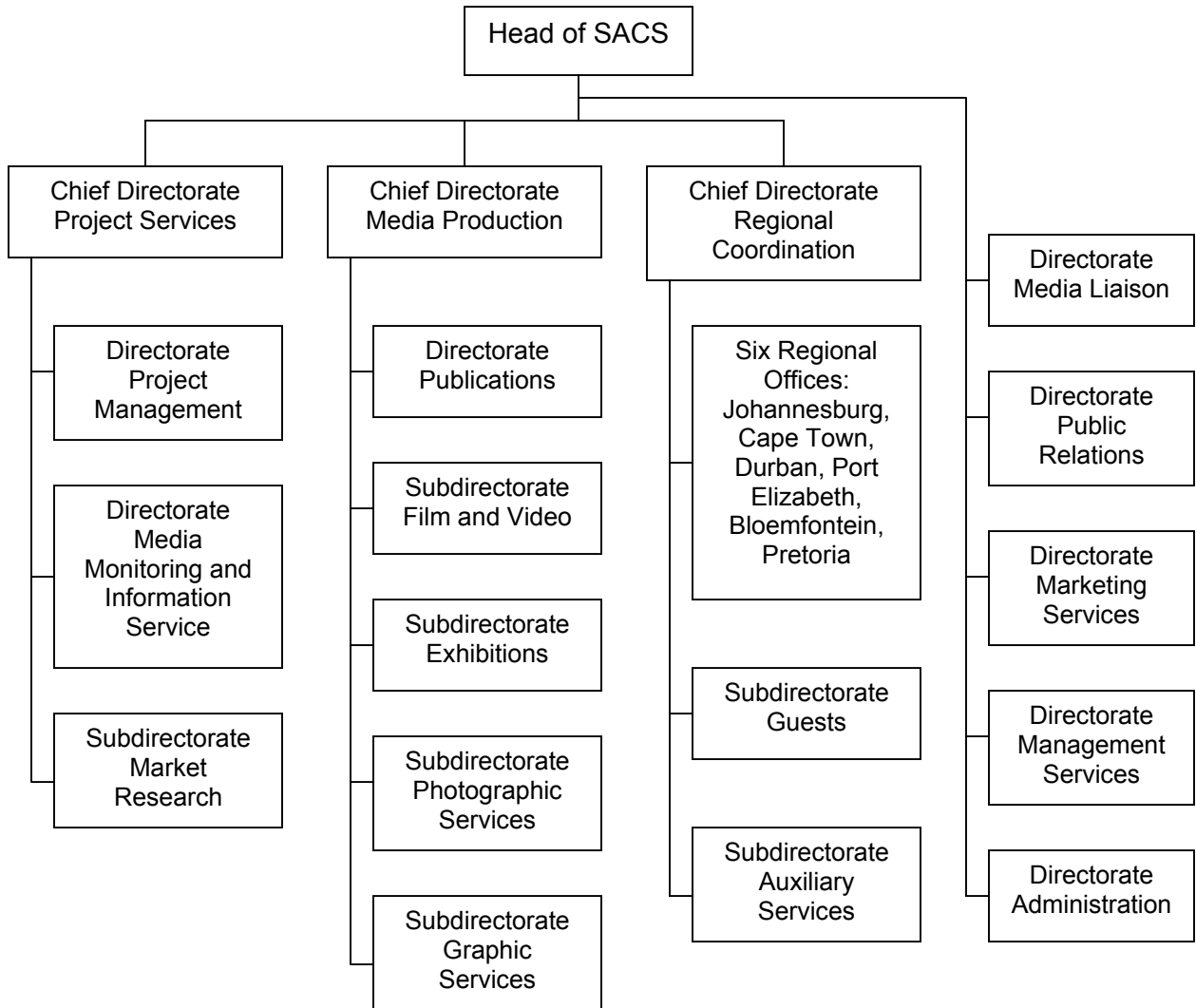
In 1991 the mission of SACS was “to promote South Africa’s national goals by providing cost-effective communication services, products and expertise to the government.” The importance placed on cost-effectiveness and coordination is reflected in the aim and main function of the organisation:

“The SACS *aims* in the long, medium and short term to provide maximal communication value for the funds we receive. We wish to do this by ensuring

the most effective management of our costs and by producing the greatest possible value in terms of our products and services, measured against market-related norms. The SACS's *main function* is to provide to the government and government departments those communication services and products which can be rendered most cost-effectively on a centralised basis. It can also play an important role with regard to the coordination of government communication and to the implementation of the government's National Communication Policy and Strategy (NCPS)" (SACS, 1992:1).

At the time of its launch in 1991, SACS was structured into three Chief Directorates (comprising different Directorates) and five Directorates which reported directly to the Head of SACS (see figure 3.3):

Figure 3.3 SACS – structure, 1991¹²



¹² Researcher's own compilation

- Chief Directorate Project Services, consisting of the Directorate Project Management, the Directorate Media Monitoring and Information Service and the Subdirectorates Market Research
- Chief Directorate Media Production, consisting of the Directorate Publications and Subdirectorates Film and Video, Exhibitions, Photographic Services and Graphic Services
- Chief Directorate Regional Coordination, consisting of six regional offices of SACS and the Subdirectorates Guests and Auxiliary Services
- The five Directorates reporting directly to the Head of SACS were Media Liaison, Public Relations, Marketing Services, Management Services and Administration (SACS, 1992:ii).

3.4.2 Research by the South African Communication Service

At the time of the launch of SACS, the name of the Subdirectorates Opinion Polls had been changed to Market Research. According to the SACS's Annual Report for 1991 (SACS, 1992:2) the functions of this Subdirectorates were to:

- manage research projects
- compile research reports and to interpret research findings
- conduct fieldwork independently
- target analysis
- advice
- identification of new sources of information.

3.4.2.1 Research – 1991

In 1991, the Subdirectorates Market Research assisted “other directorates and government departments in their communication actions by providing information

on public attitudes for planning purposes. It conducted numerous qualitative and quantitative surveys, studies, readership profiles and target analyses. These studies covered various topics such as constitutional reform, HIV/AIDS, value-added tax (VAT) and market research on SACS's own publications, *SA Panorama* and the regional papers *Umso* and *Vision*. The results were used for communication planning and specialised briefings" (SACS, 1992:2).

Of the research projects conducted in 1991, 14 related to the process of constitutional reform in the country. A total of eight research projects were conducted on behalf of the Department of Finance to assist with their communication regarding the implementation of VAT. Seven projects were conducted amongst the Black youth regarding the image of the South African Police, the rent and services boycott, the process of political transformation and sexually transmitted diseases. A study was conducted amongst journalists by means of personal in-depth interviews to determine perceptions regarding government communication. For the first time a specific study was conducted to determine the needs of people regarding government information. This research project was conducted by means of focus group discussions amongst all population groups in the greater Johannesburg area. Two research projects were conducted for the Department of Health in support of their communication initiatives on HIV/AIDS (GCIS, Directorate Research, 2001a).

Compared to the previous years, the scope of the research projects conducted in 1991 was broader. The results of research projects conducted could be used to enhance effectiveness of government communication regarding constitutional reform, communication campaigns on specific issues (e.g. HIV/AIDS, value-added tax and the boycott of rent and services payment) and government communications in general (e.g. study amongst journalists and study to determine population's needs for government information).

3.4.2.2 *Research – 1992*

In 1992, the inter-community relationship function which had been transferred to the SACS (in 1991) received “priority attention”, and an interpretation of those initiatives is reflected in the Annual Report: “The SACS, acting as facilitator to bring communities together across artificial divides, is increasingly helping to ensure that meaningful and grassroots debate on the future of communities takes place. The increased contact and mutual understanding which is being established is very encouraging. Considerable success have been achieved and an ever-increasing demand for more such ventures is being experienced” (SACS, 1993:2).

During 1992, the SACS formulated a vision for the organisation and reviewed the mission of the organisation to properly reflect its responsibility. The vision and mission were formulated as follows:

- Vision: Informed and committed communities for the sake of peace and prosperity
- Mission: To render a cost-effective, co-ordinated and specialised government information service to the population in order to inform and involve them, as well as to render such a service to foreigners on request (SACS, 1993:5).

In 1992 the Directorate: Research was established, consisting of the Subdirectorates Market Research and Information Service. According to the SACS’s Annual Report of 1992, the Subdirectorate Information Service “gathers information on a wide variety of subjects, computerises it and makes it available to clients. The products supplied focus on identified needs, for example, a departmental directory and a media contact list” (SACS, 1993:18). Staff of the

Information Service were also responsible for responding to information enquiries from clients.

The 1992 Annual Report mentions: “The need for communication research constantly increased during 1992” (SACS, 1993:18). This was indeed the case as 60 research projects were conducted in 1992 compared to 45 in 1991.

Research was conducted in 38 communities in support of the SACS’s new function to improve “inter-community relationships” and to determine the need for government information. Most of these projects were conducted by staff of the Subdirectorate Market Research. Interviewers were recruited and trained. White respondents were mostly interviewed telephonically whilst personal interviews were used to interview blacks, coloureds and asians. The results of these research projects were provided to the relevant SACS regional offices, and were used to set up “community structures” in the respective communities with the aim to improve inter-community relationships.

Various research projects were outsourced to support the process of constitutional reform – specifically regarding the *Convention for a Democratic South Africa* (Codesa) negotiations that took place in Kempton Park between representatives of various political and interest groups over a period of several months. The results were made available to the Department of Constitutional Development, and the Head of SACS briefed the Cabinet on the findings.

Studies to specifically determine government information needs were conducted in the Durban metropole (blacks, focus groups) and in Aliwal North (telephone interviews with whites and personal interviews with coloureds and blacks).

Readership studies were conducted for *Vision* and *Izindaba* (regional newspapers of the Durban office of SACS), and the SACS magazine *RSA Policy Review*.

Communication audits were conducted for the Department of Public Works and for the Cape Provincial Administration's section for Nature Conservation.

A focus group study was conducted amongst public servants to assess their image and perceptions of the Public Service for the Public Service Commission. The other studies included one by means of personal interviews with blacks in the greater Johannesburg area to assess the effectiveness of the distribution of government information by post and the 'knock-and-drop' method (GCIS, Directorate Research, 2001a).

3.4.2.3 Research – 1993

The role and contribution of research in the process of reshaping the SACS is emphasised in the foreword to the 1993 Annual Report: "Even before the normalisation of the political process in South Africa and the government's acceptance that *apartheid* was developing into a national disaster, the South African Communication Service underwent a radical change in its thinking. Opinion Polls undertaken amongst all population groups since 1986 emphasised the reality of irreversible political change and exposed the dehumanising results of *apartheid*" (SACS, 1994:i).

In 1993, the vision and mission of the organisation were both slightly changed. Consequently, the vision, mission and aim of SACS were formulated as follows:

- Vision: Informed and involved communities in promotion of peace and prosperity for all in South Africa

- Mission: To provide a cost-effective, co-ordinated and specialised national information service to inform the population of the government's initiatives and thereby to involve them, and to provide such a service to foreigners on request
- Aim: To promote effective two-way communication between the government and the population (SACS, 1994:1).

During 1993, the Subdirectorate Market Research, within the Directorate Research, conducted research projects in support of the co-operation processes of the SACS's regional offices in 29 communities. In addition to this, a number of surveys were conducted to determine the population's knowledge of, attitudes towards and perceptions on the constitutional reform process. Research on SACS products and services also helped to ensure value for money. Research projects in this regard included a postal survey on the *Official South African yearbook*, a qualitative project (focus groups) to evaluate the newspapers of the SACS's regional offices and another postal survey to evaluate the products of the Subdirectorate Information Service. The logo used in the advertisements to inform South Africans that they needed Identity Documents in order to vote in the 1994 elections was tested by means of focus groups. Ten training courses presented in SACS were evaluated. Other projects included one on the information needs of staff at South Africa's missions abroad, an evaluation of how satisfied SACS staff were and an evaluation of the in-house magazine *Let's Talk* (GCIS, Directorate Research, 2001a).

The results of research projects conducted in 1994 were available to enhance the effectiveness of different communication products (e.g. *Official South African yearbook*), important communication campaigns (e.g. Identity Documents for 1994 elections), the process of SACS regional offices to improve inter-community relationships and government communication regarding the process of political change and constitutional reform.

3.4.2.4 Research – 1994

After the historic democratic election in South Africa on 27 April 1994, the Executive Deputy President, Mr TM Mbeki, became the political principal of SACS.

The vision and mission of SACS were again revised in 1994. “In so doing, the organisation confirmed its commitment to major transformation and to non-racialism. The abilities and resources of the SACS were focused specifically on the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), and on the other aims of the Government National Unity (GNU)” (SACS, 1995:3). After review, the vision and mission of the SACS became:

- Vision: Excellence in communication as an instrument in reconstruction, development and nationbuilding.
- Mission: To render a coordinated and relevant information and client service in promotion of public involvement and of meaningful dialogue between the government and the population (SACS, 1995:3).

In 1994 the Subdirectorate Market Research was involved in fewer projects. This was largely due to the political transition before the election of 27 April 1994, and to the decision of the SACS Chief Management to halt all activities that could have impacted on the election. Various planned studies were put on hold in order to give the new government the opportunity to determine its own market research needs. Studies that were planned and carried out in 1994 conformed to the broad objectives of the SACS. The inter-group communication actions of the SACS regional offices, which were undertaken with a view to encouraging greater community interaction, were supported by the majority of these studies. The implementation of the RDP at local level was a further subject for market research. Increasingly important activities were the testing before, during and after of advertising concepts; the measuring of service and product efficiency; the

analysing of target markets, and the auditing of internal communications. Examples of work done include a study of the magazine *Social Work Practice* for the Department of Welfare; a readership analysis of subscribers to the publication *RSA 2000* for the South African Mission in Bonn; a communication audit for the Department of Finance, and an investigation into the viability of a newspaper for semi-literate South Africans. A new area introduced in 1994 was that of literature studies. For example, the theories of development communication and of target market analysis were investigated (SACS, 1995:12-13).

3.4.2.5 Research – 1995

In 1995 the Subdirectorate Communication Centre also became part of the Directorate Research in addition to the Information Service and Market Research. The Annual Report indicates the activities of each Subdirectorate as follows:

- The Communication Centre monitored news, articles and the current affairs programmes in the print and electronic media and timeously informed the government of events which received media coverage, as well as the reported perceptions related to these events. Government was also informed on a continuous basis of news reports that deserved speedy attention and reaction. A report identifying possible communication problem areas for the government was also issued daily. The Centre's 24-hour monitoring service proved worthwhile, as various events occurred at night and the responsible Ministries' liaison officers could be notified timeously, for example about violence, mine disasters and events of national and international significance (SACS, 1996:48-49).
- The Information Service rendered a comprehensive information enquiry service. Approximately 6 900 enquiries were answered (compared to 4 296 in 1994) of which 32 percent came from government institutions, 36

percent from non-governmental and private organisations, 25 percent from SACS and seven percent from foreign embassies. The computerised information retrieval system, *Topic*, was expanded and stored various types of full-text information, which considerably eased the storage and indexing of information and the answering of enquiries. During the second half of 1995, SACS installed computer equipment and software to get access to the Internet. Information publishing was initiated via this medium, thus providing a further channel for the local and international distribution of government information. Various value-added information products were also produced by the Subdirectorate Information Centre:

- *Constitutional Process* which documents the constitutional process chronologically
- *Local government*, which deals with events at local government level
- *Verbatim*, which contains extracts from important statements by government and its other spokespersons
- *Directory of Contacts*, containing information on political, financial and labour organisations and the media
- *Government of National Unity: A Directory*, containing information on Ministers and Deputy Ministers, provincial governments and other government institutions
- *Profile*, containing profiles of Ministers and Deputy Ministers and some parliamentary officials.

A comprehensive daily newspaper clipping service was also provided (SACS, 1996:49-50).

- The Subdirectorate Market Research “attempted to obtain a balance between external and internal service rendering, and to render an increasingly cost-effective service to its clients. In the light of budgetary restrictions, the Subdirectorate conducted more studies independently in order to make the research more affordable. The focus was largely on the

RDP and determining the information needs of the population” (SACS, 1996:50).

Research projects conducted in 1995 included:

- an extensive national survey on the public’s perceptions and levels of knowledge regarding the RDP – conducted by means of personal interviews
- three national studies, focusing on a variety of socio-political and socio-economical issues on behalf of the Office of the President conducted by means of both personal interviews and focus groups
- a survey on behalf of the Central Statistical Service (CSS) to ascertain perceptions and knowledge of the population with regard to the 1996 Population Census
- an internal communication audit for the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
- a readership study of the Department of Public Works’ in-house magazine, *Clinker*
- RDP-related studies carried out in Sedgefield, Ladismith, Bronkhorstpruit, Witbank and Davidsonville at the request of the SACS regional offices, to determine specific needs and priorities
- the feasibility of a new magazine for women – tested by means of focus groups on behalf of the Directorate Publications
- determining information needs became an increasingly important focus. Questions in this regard were included in the RDP-related studies mentioned above. A countrywide qualitative research project covering the whole spectrum of the specific information needs of the population was done at the request of the Information Service and the Directorate Publications. A request from SACS’s Pietersburg regional office led to the determination of information needs in the Northern Province (GCIS, Directorate Research, 2001a).

3.4.2.6 Research – 1996

Despite severe budget restrictions, the Subdirectorate Market Research “strove to maintain a high standard of timeous and cost-effective service to clients” in 1996 (SACS, 1997:38). Most studies were conducted by SACS itself to save costs. The focus was largely on the RDP and on determining the information needs of the population in various provinces. Studies included:

- various studies for the Department of Welfare on the *I'm addicted to life* campaign (against the abuse of alcohol and drugs) to test the effectiveness of various workshops and to pre-test a video on alcohol and drug abuse
- two readership studies for the Department of Agriculture, both by means of postal surveys
- an assessment of the training needs of managers in the Public Service for the South African Management Development Institute (SAMDI) through self-completion questionnaires
- evaluating several SAMDI courses among course attendants
- pre-testing a logo on subsistence farming among general assistants of the Department of Agriculture by means of focus groups
- two national studies (personal interviews) focusing on the public's attitudes and needs regarding socio-political and socio-economic issues, on behalf of the Office of the President
- a comprehensive internal communication audit by means of self-completion questionnaires for the Department of Home Affairs
- determining information and development needs in the Northern Province, Mpumalanga, the Western Cape, Free State, and in Morgenzon
- the need for a gender desk at SACS
- focus group research amongst local and foreign journalists to evaluate the services of the Directorate Media Liaison
- evaluating the information needs of various community radio stations

- evaluating the Communication Centre's products and services.

3.4.2.7 Research – 1997

During 1997 various research projects were conducted on behalf of other government departments and the SACS regional offices. The studies conducted in 1997 included:

- Evaluation of products/services/campaigns by means of pre-, post- and impact testing:
 - further studies to evaluate the *I'm addicted to Life* campaign for the Department of Welfare, including an extensive qualitative survey to investigate the impact of the campaign on the youth, an evaluation of 10 *Drug Demand Reduction* workshops, nine *Retrain the Trainer* workshops and five workshops on the *Impact of the workshops on Drug Demand Reduction*
 - an assessment of the need for a forum representing all government communications: a survey conducted among all communication personnel employed by national government departments at the request of the Government Communicators' Forum (GCF) Steering Committee
 - determination of various economic-related perceptions among the population at the request of the Department of Trade and Industry
 - determination of the level of knowledge about HIV/AIDS among the youth of Mpumalanga at the request of the SACS regional office in Nelspruit
 - evaluation of service-rendering by the News Service (SACS)
 - needs assessment regarding a refreshment kiosk for the SACS
 - needs assessment regarding a social club for the SACS

- Evaluation of communication channels and determination of information needs among personnel of the State Library, the National Secretariat for Safety and Security, and the Department of Minerals and Energy
- Determination of training needs amongst managers at the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Trade and Industry
- Determination of the information needs of the population in the Eastern Cape and in Gauteng conducted by means of personal interviews and focus groups respectively (GCIS, Directorate Research, 2001a).

3.4.3 Summary: South African Communication Service – the role of research

During SACS's existence, the request for research to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information increased substantially. This included an increase in requests from other government departments for assistance with relevant research projects and research to enhance the effectiveness of communication campaigns – some of these campaigns being very extensive. A large number of research projects were conducted in support of the SACS regional offices' responsibility to promote inter-community relations.

Of specific significance are the various extensive and specific research projects conducted to support the process of negotiations and democratisation in South Africa and support to the new government of 1994 to keep track with the communication environment.

SACS research staff conducted various studies independently and this enabled SACS to satisfy the needs of an increased number of clients and contributed to the development of staff.

The SACS also progressed from the Bureau for Information which almost exclusively attended to government's communication needs, to an organisation which contributed to an understanding of the public's information needs as well as their knowledge of, perceptions on and attitudes towards government initiatives, policies, products and services.

3.5 THE USE OF RESEARCH IN GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION, 1936 TO 17 MAY 1998 – A SUMMARY

During a period of 62 years – from 1936 to 1998 – the use of research by the government in South Africa to enhance the effectiveness of its communication and the dissemination of government information changed substantially.

Available documentation indicates that government communicators in the 1940s and 1950s provided information from the public to the government and obtained information regarding people's needs. However, no scientific research projects were conducted to support the government's communication and information dissemination initiatives and programmes. During the early 1960s the importance for government communicators to obtain feedback from target groups – especially those who did not have the opportunity to take part in elections – was perceived as an important objective. No information is available to determine whether government communicators used this 'information' and 'feedback' from the public to enhance the availability of government information useful to the people or whether it was used primarily to serve the political interests of government.

The first scientific research project to enhance the effectiveness of the South African government's communication initiatives was conducted less than 30

years ago – the analysis of the image of SA in 14 countries abroad conducted in 1973. Most of the few other research projects conducted until the Department of Information was dissolved in 1978 were conducted abroad. Indications from official documentation are that the research results were indeed used to enhance the effectiveness of communication initiatives.

No reference to relevant research is available for the period 1 July 1978 up to the launch of the Bureau for Information in 1985.

The Directorate Research Coordination was established in the Bureau for Information in May 1986. The availability of relevant research results soon proved to be extremely useful to government. The 1988 Annual Report of the Bureau even contains the following statement in this regard: “The Bureau has found that it is impossible to communicate with the public without a clear idea of the public’s current perceptions and attitudes. The Bureau also *regards such surveys as an integral part of its function of promoting two-way communication between the government and the people of South Africa*”¹³ (Bureau for Information, 1989:2).

The researcher is of the opinion that the research initiatives of the Bureau were originally not aimed at improvement of government information useful to the people of the country, but primarily in support of the government’s political interests and communication needs in that regard. Since 1987 though, some of the research projects were aimed at determining the public’s needs in terms of government information and to enhance the effectiveness of some of the Bureau’s initiatives to disseminate government information to the people. From 1989, the Bureau also assisted other government departments to conduct communication research. Various research projects conducted since 1989 to assess public opinion regarding various socio-political issues, probably had some

¹³ Researcher’s emphasis

impact on the 1990 initiatives to introduce a process of substantial political and constitutional transformation in South Africa. The Bureau's research also supported government communication during the process of transformation and democratisation – including the dissemination of information in this regard to the public.

The request for research to enhance effectiveness of government communication and dissemination of government information increased during the period of SACS's existence. A large number of research projects were conducted at the request of other government departments and to enhance the effectiveness of government communication campaigns.

Most research projects by SACS since 1991 were conducted in support of the process of negotiations and democratisation in the country. These included research in support of communication initiatives before the first democratic elections in 1994. Related to these are the research projects conducted in various communities all over the country in support of the initiatives of the SACS regional offices to promote 'inter-community' relationships, and various research projects aimed at assessing the population's needs in terms of government information.

The researcher is of the opinion that research conducted by SACS did not only assist in meeting government's communication needs, but also contributed to an increased effectiveness in meeting the public's information needs.

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

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 3, the researcher provided an overview of the use of research in government communication and disseminating of government information by the South African government up to May 1998, when SACS was dissolved – four years after a democratic dispensation was introduced in the country.

The process of transforming government communication in the ‘new’ South Africa and the use of research by the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) since 18 May 1998 is given attention in chapter 4.

4.2 TRANSFORMATION OF GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION IN SOUTH AFRICA AFTER 1994

4.2.1 Introduction

After the historic election of the first democratically elected government of South Africa on 27 April 1994, it was immediately clear that the new Government’s focus was people-centred and that communication was regarded as a critical responsibility. In his inaugural address to a joint sitting of Parliament on 24 May 1994, President Mandela emphasised his Government’s commitment in this regard:

My government's commitment to create a people-centred society of liberty binds us to the pursuit of the goals of freedom from want, freedom from hunger, freedom from deprivation, freedom from ignorance, freedom from suppression and freedom from fear. These freedoms are fundamental to the guarantee of human dignity. They will therefore constitute part of the centerpiece of what this Government will seek to achieve, the focal point on which our attention will be continuously focused. The things we have said constitute the true meaning, the justification and the purpose of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), without which it would lose all legitimacy (Mandela, 1994:2-3).

In the 1995 budget vote speech on the SACS, (then) Deputy President Thabo Mbeki echoed this sentiment: “The government is committed to the view that as part of the building of a people-centred society the people have a right to be informed about the government’s policies, programmes and services It [government] therefore also has an unescapable responsibility to ensure that it keeps the people informed on a continuous basis, so that they will be able to intervene in an informed and purposeful manner where their future is at stake” (Mbeki, 1995a:4).

4.2.2 Conference of Government Communicators, August 1995

The Conference of Government Communicators held at Waenhuiskrans towards the end of August 1995, can probably be regarded as the beginning of a process to transform government communication to meet the needs of the new government and reality in the country. In his opening speech at the Conference on 25 August 1995, Thabo Mbeki remarked that the Conference was “starting a process that is long overdue, one that must culminate in the formulation of a government communication policy that will bring our theory and practice in this critical area in line with the ethos and challenges of our young democracy” (Mbeki, 1995b:1).

From a broader communication point of view the following statements by Mbeki at the Waenhuiskrans Conference (Mbeki, 1995b:2-3) on two-way communication and the importance for government to also receive information are of specific importance:

The principle of two-way communication between government and society is in this (RDP) context, central, so that people know what government is doing and they themselves contribute to the formulation of policy and take an active part in its implementation.

It goes without saying that if government did not get information, it would be struck by paralysis and rendered ineffective. Information is as vital for the functioning of government as the supply of blood to the brains. There are various categories of information – that which comes from the people, including their perceptions of government performance. The other comes from abroad, from our neighbours and the international community at large.

Mbeki, at that stage the Deputy President and political head of SACS, remarked at the Waenhuiskrans Conference of Government Communicators that the Conference was “charged with the responsibility to look into SACS in a purposeful and meaningful manner.” He requested the Conference to “come up with suggestions on how to restructure it in accordance with the needs of our time ... and how to make its operations even more effective” (Mbeki, 1995b:3). Mbeki’s sentiment that “there was an existing need for a central and specialised government information service” (Mbeki, 1995b:3), was echoed by one of the conference commissions:

There is a clear need for a central government communication body that will mainly provide communications support services to government, *inter alia*:

- manage government corporate image

- media monitoring and research
- coordinate communications campaign for reconciliation and reconstruction
- market the country internationally
- provide training and capacity building programmes (Conference of Government Communicators, 1995:1).

One of the Commissions at the Conference also resolved that Deputy President Thabo Mbeki had to appoint – by 15 September 1995 – an independent task group to investigate government communications. It was resolved that:

- the Task Group be charged with the responsibility of investigating policies and structures for the future of government communication in the country
- the Task group should comprise of persons with knowledge and experience in the field of communications and be as broadly representative as possible in terms of race, gender as well as the various fields of communications
- the Task group perform its functions in a transparent fashion and conduct research on communication practices of other democratic governments
- a broader Communicators' Conference should take place to discuss the Task Group's recommendations
- the recommendations of the Task Group will form the basis of a White Paper on Government Communications
- the White Paper be presented to Cabinet by the end of March 1996 (Conference of Government Communicators, 1995:1-2).

4.2.3 Task Group on Government Communications

Later in 1995, Deputy President Mbeki indeed appointed the Task Group on Government Communications (Comtask) to investigate government communication. The brief of the Task Group was extensive and it was

requested to complete its work “within six months of 1 March 1996” (Comtask, 1996a:2).

It was expected of Comtask to review:

- existing government communication policy at national, provincial and local level
- existing government communication structures and facilities at national, provincial and local level
- the relationship between government communication functions at national, provincial and local level
- existing government budgets with special reference to personnel, operations and equipment
- relationships between government communication structures and non-governmental information providers
- government communication training and capacity building with special emphasis on affirmative action
- ownership and control of South Africa media and to interpret how these affect government communication.

In addition it had to:

- define existing information delivery mechanisms
- examine international communication functions with special emphasis on information dissemination
- do research on government communication policies, functions and structures in other democracies, with special emphasis on developing countries
- make recommendations on new government communication policy, functions, structures, personnel and budget at international, national, provincial and local level (Comtask, 1996b:10).

From the final report of the Task Group to Deputy President Thabo Mbeki in October 1996, it is evident that they did their work in a transparent and consultative way. All the meetings of the Task Group were open to the public and the media. On 11 March 1996 Comtask issued a press release, and later in the month ran advertisements in newspapers (national and regional) and on radio (in nine official languages) appealing to the media, government departments, institutions of civil society and individuals to express their views on the efficacy or otherwise of government communications by 12 April 1996 (Comtask, 1996a:1-2). Comtask also had a page on the Internet for information and comments. A total of 150 written submissions were received and 61 presentations from a wide range of stakeholders and experts were made to the Task Group. They attended a two-day presentation by SACS and made a presentation to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communications. In March 1996, a questionnaire was submitted to all Ministries, Departments and Provinces in which information regarding staffing, budgetary resources and working methods were invited. It also invited comments and suggestions. The Task Group also commissioned an independent survey of media coverage of government communications, and research to describe ownership and control of the South African media. Furthermore, with financial and technical assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Commonwealth Secretariat, members of the Task Group travelled in teams of two or three to 19 countries to examine South Africa's international information dissemination and to research international perspectives on government communication in democracies (Comtask, 1996b:11-12).

The final Comtask report delineates critical constraints which new policies regarding government communications in South Africa should take into account: the low status of government communicators, a tradition of inflexible and inward-looking bureaucracy, a high level of concentration of media ownership, a journalism profession impoverished by *apartheid*, obsolete media legislation and

the unfortunate reality of severe resource constraints on government (Comtask, 1996b:15-18).

According to the Comtask investigation, national and provincial government employed 1 095 and 406 communication personnel respectively at the time of its investigation – a total of 1 501. Based on the material submitted, the estimated expenditure on communications staff, operations and publicity in 1996 amounted to R380,48 million – R294,5 million at national level and R85,98 million at provincial government level. This represented an average of 0,31% of total government spending. Based on these figures, national government was spending about R7,20 per capita and provincial government R2,10 per capita – R9,30 per citizen per year (Comtask, 1996b:19-20). Providing a picture of government communication in 1996, the Comtask report lists the following five characteristics:

- The level of resources applied to communications is too low, although we do not believe increased percentages *per se* are an answer to improved communication. The extreme variations in range of expenditure and the lack of a clear budget and accounting system underline the fact that government does not accord communications sufficient priority. There is no overall government standard for setting budgets or national strategies, nor are there mechanisms for measuring performance. As a consequence, widely differing priorities are given between different bodies.
- There is a lack of central coordination. Although Cabinet has a Communication Sub-Committee, it does not meet frequently. Press conferences are conducted by the Director-General of the President's Office, and ministries are sometimes not involved, even where the information relates directly to their line functions. Also, despite the existence of a category in Cabinet memoranda regarding communications around particular pieces of legislation, this is either ignored or given the most cursory attention. Communicators are seldom asked for inputs.

- Communication is not taken sufficiently seriously at a high enough level. Although the President's Office runs an efficient communication system, Cabinet does not. Many ministries give insufficient attention to the messages flowing from government, and personnel are not sufficiently empowered or resourced (or often even informed) to do this for them.
- There is no coordination of messages between government departments. Advertising campaigns are individually launched, press conferences may clash with one another; sometimes contradictory messages go out. The annual parliamentary press briefing has no centrally defined message. The plethora of corporate images on letterheads also illustrates this point.
- There is also a lack of coordination of messages on one central issue within a department. Rather than operating on a campaign basis, and making all means of communication work together to convey and reinforce the message, production is often ad hoc and there is no corporate follow through (Comtask, 1996b:23-24).

The final report of the Task Group – *Communications 2000: a vision for government communication in South Africa* and its 23 annexures – were submitted to (then) Deputy President Thabo Mbeki in October 1996. The report contained a total of 83 recommendations on the following broader issues, based on the premise that considerable savings to the public purse could be affected through a more modern, streamlined and effective communication system:

- communication structures
- functions and responsibilities (e.g. GCIS and Presidency, bulk buying and outsourcing, research and analysis)
- personnel and training
- improving South Africa's image in the world
- information development (e.g. working in partnership with society, building infrastructure)

- access to information (e.g. Open Democracy legislation, plain language)
- the media environment (e.g. resources and funding for community media, diversity in media ownership).

The Task Group expressed the opinion that “opinion polls and research form an important part of the work of most governments” (Comtask, 1996b:74) and envisaged three kinds of research:

- evaluation of advertising and other campaigns by research companies as commissioned by government, measuring it against targeted objectives
- opinion surveys - a small specialised unit that had to link with Cabinet and departments to ensure that opinion surveys were conducted by the private sector with the purpose to “evaluate ongoing government performance and to solicit the views of the public on matters of concern” (Comtask, 1996b:74)
- a standard media clipping and media summary service that had to be available to all departments and other appropriate clients (e.g. embassies) on a daily basis – this had to be done either in-house or outsourced (Comtask, 1996b:74).

The Comtask report includes two recommendations where reference is made to research. Recommendation 49 reads as follows: “It is proposed that the CSA be responsible for ensuring that research is conducted and that government is kept informed through both large-scale research and opinion polls, internal monitoring of daily performance and a media clipping service” (Comtask, 1996b:74).

Recommendation 45 deals with bulk-buying:

“... responsible for the bulk-buying of advertising space and selecting and contracting advertising, marketing, research and other communication services on behalf of government” (Comtask, 1996b:73).

Comtask argued that Government was not using its substantial buying power in the marketplace to obtain favourable rates when Departments obtained these services individually (Comtask, 1996b:73).

4.2.4 Implementation of Comtask recommendations

On 19 February 1997 Cabinet approved the recommendations of Comtask in principle and requested that a Committee be set up to oversee the transformation of SACS “into a new-look Government Communication and Information System (GCIS)” (SACS, 1998:2). Dr Essop Pahad, at that stage Deputy Minister in the Office of the Deputy President and responsible for SACS, was requested to chair the Committee on the Implementation of the Comtask Report.

The Implementation Committee submitted a Cabinet Memorandum on 26 September 1997 with recommendations “based on the proposals of the Task Group on Government Communications (Comtask) and on further discussions and investigations” (Office of the Deputy President, 1997:1). The Memorandum, discussed by Cabinet on 8 October 1997, proposed the “development of a professional and effective corps of government communicators through the setting up of a system aimed at professionalising and streamlining communications.” The principles on which the Implementation Committee wanted GCIS to be based included:

- the need to develop a communications arm that provides proper support for government and allows it to promote (market) its policies and enter into dialogue with citizens in a coordinated, coherent and planned way – in a manner that benefits the public at large
- the need to build a coordinated communication network to establish a system that works horizontally (between ministries and departments) and vertically (between the three spheres of government)

- the need to develop a corps of highly trained, professional communicators capable of developing and implementing appropriate strategies
- the need to build systems and networks which advance the cause of democracy by developing the capacity of government to provide mass information and enter into two-way communication with the public - focusing particularly on communities with poor access to information
- the need to achieve the above in a way that is streamlined, cost and energy efficient and of a high professional standard (Office of the Deputy President, 1997:1-2).

On 21 January 1998 Cabinet approved the appointment of Mr Joel Netshitenzhe as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Mr Yacoob Abba Omar as the Deputy CEO of the new Government Communication and Information System (GCIS).

At the occasion of a briefing to the parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communication on 11 May 1998, the CEO made it clear that the GCIS derived its mandate first and foremost from the Constitution, which in Section 16 of the Bill of Rights guarantees citizens freedom of speech (Netshitenzhe, 1998:1). In the 1998 Annual Report of GCIS (GCIS, 1999:2) it is explained that, as a consequence of this, citizens do not only have the right to receive information about Government, but also to “communicate their views and activities” to Government. Relevant to this and again reflecting the necessity for government communicators to ‘listen’ to the people, is a statement by Dr Essop Pahad, (then) Deputy Minister in the Office of the Deputy President responsible for government communications at the first Government Communicators Consultative Conference held on 6 May 1998: “Our task, hand in hand with partners in the communication industry including the media, is to ensure that this right is indeed realised in practical life. It is to see that all South Africans receive comment and information that enable them to make rational choices about their lives. It is to see to it that they themselves can pass on information and views about their

activities as they change their lives for the better. They have got the right to know and to be heard” (Pahad, 1998:1). At the same conference Dr Pahad also stated that GCIS strategy should be “based on scientific research rather than what we ourselves want to hear” (Pahad, 1998:3).

On 18 May 1998 history was made in the field of government communications when Dr Pahad delivered SACS’s last Budget Vote speech in Parliament and officially launched GCIS.

4.3 THE GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEM – 18 MAY 1998 TO DATE

4.3.1 Introduction

On the basis of the Comtask recommendations, and the principles of government communication identified by the Implementation Committee (see par. 4.2.4), the newly-appointed top management (Secretariat) of GCIS started a process of consultation with the various elements of government communications even before the official launch of the organisation. These elements of government communications included the Communications Directors Forum (from national government), the Provincial Communication Directors Forum and the Ministerial Liaison Officers (MLO) Forum (GCIS, 1999:6). These consultations, as well as a thorough analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the new organisation, informed the Secretariat in formulating the vision and mission of the new organisation to read:

Vision: A comprehensive communication system on behalf of government to facilitate optimum involvement of the majority of South Africans in the entire process of reconstruction and development, nation-building and reconciliation (GCIS, 1999:3).

Mission: Playing a coordination, facilitating and strategising role for all of government communications, and to provide cost-effective communication services to all of government (GCIS, 1999:3).

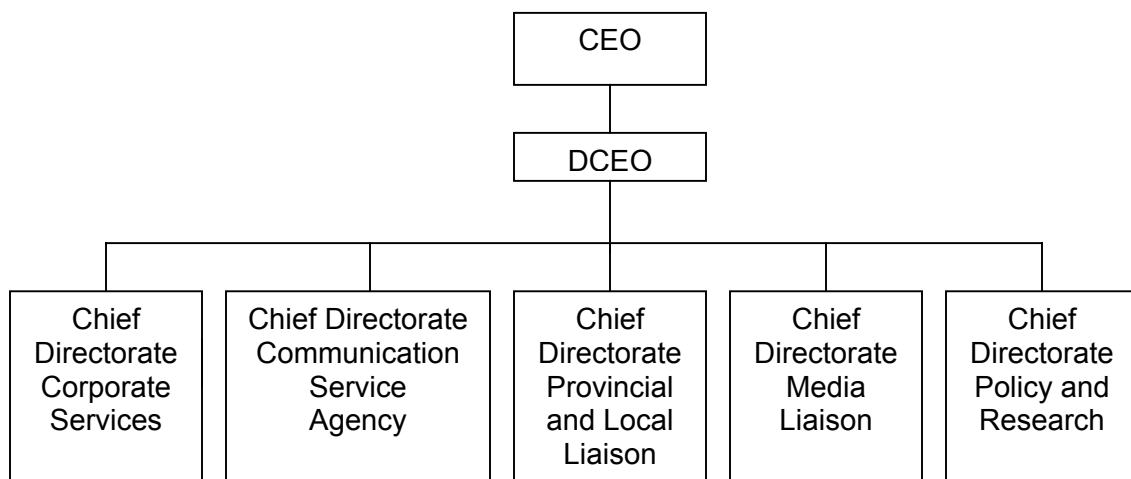
According to the first GCIS Annual Report (GCIS, 1999:6-7) the Secretariat also identified the following eight key priorities for the organisation's first operational year – that is May to December 1998:

- Coherent government message: Ensuring coherence and consistency of various elements of government communication in terms of both message and method of delivery were regarded as the main challenge for government communication.
- Development communication: This is information directed primarily at those in rural areas, townships, the illiterate, the youth and women to empower them both to know their rights and to take full advantage of socio-economic opportunities.
- Restructuring the government communication system to be more cost-effective: The Secretariat held meetings with ministerial, departmental and provincial communication structures to define cost-effective relationships.
- Training of government communicators to improve competence: The establishment of a National Training Board (NTB) for government communicators was one of the immediate Comtask proposals that GCIS had to attend to.
- Better servicing of the media: The Secretariat worked from the premise that GCIS's relationship with the media had to be built on the recognition of the principle that they were partners in communication, sharing a common responsibility and obligations: that of keeping the public informed.
- Better utilisation of Internet technology: This entailed the development of the then GCIS website into a single entry point for government information and the encouragement of government departments to develop their own websites.

- Bulk-buying. Secretariat decided that the Government, through the GCIS, should issue a tender for the handling of placements of all campaign advertising and negotiate the rates, commissions, etc.
- Media diversity: The achievement of a diversity of voices in the media was considered as a critical element in the GCIS vision. One of the priorities of the new organisation was to start discussions and a process to draft legislation on media ownership, distribution channels and printing and to deal with the establishment of the Media Development Agency that would help formulate policy on the distribution of resources to community media.

Besides the Chief Directorate Corporate Services, GCIS had four additional line-functional chief directorates, namely the Communication Service Agency (CSA), Provincial and Local Liaison, Media Liaison, and Policy and Research (see figure 4.1). Committed to the Comtask principle of a lean communication organisation, the Secretariat reduced the establishment from the 501 of SACS to 360.

Figure 4.1: *GCIS – structure, 1998*¹⁴



¹⁴ Researcher's own compilation

4.3.2 Chief Directorate Policy and Research

The Chief Directorate Policy and Research consisted (as is the situation in 2001) of three Directorates, Information Resource Management, Research and Policy.

The responsibilities of Research entailed the following:

- conducting communication and information needs studies and research on specific issues as requested
- testing the impact/success of communication and information campaigns/products/services (e.g. pre- and post-testing)
- conducting communication audits
- evaluating ongoing government performance and soliciting the views of the public on matters of concern
- providing a communication and information research advice service
- documentary research (e.g. demographic profile and media exposure of client groups) (GCIS, 1999: 15).

4.3.2.1 *Research – 1998*

The 1998 Annual Report of GCIS states that: “By conducting surveys, the GCIS established in its first year of existence a formal communication link with its target audiences, impacting positively on the need for transparency within the Public Service” (GCIS, 1999:27).

During 1998 various qualitative and quantitative research projects were conducted on behalf of other government departments and for GCIS. In the case of studies that were not extensive, quantitative research was conducted by staff of the Directorate Research whilst all qualitative and extensive quantitative research projects were outsourced to the private sector.

Highlights of the research conducted in 1998, included:

- Projects at the request of the GCIS Secretariat to assist in the process of transforming government communication and establishing a government communication and information system:
 - an audit amongst government communicators on national and provincial government level to determine human resource capacity, skills of personnel, activities and responsibilities of the communication components and to obtain suggestions to improve government communication. (This audit was conducted in response to Comtask recommendation 54: “it is proposed that an audit and evaluation of existing skills be conducted in order to identify problems and build capacity ...”)
 - an audit (national and provincial governments) to determine expenditure on advertising and research
 - an audit amongst Departmental Heads of Communication and Ministerial Liaison Officers (MLOs) to determine progress in transformation of the communication function
 - an audit on existing or planned Internet publishing
 - an audit amongst national government departments, provincial communication components and other stakeholders to determine spending and initiatives regarding international liaison and marketing
- Other research projects for GCIS:
 - evaluation of the government’s *Midterm Report* in terms of awareness and perceptions
 - evaluation of two consultative conferences for government communicators by means of self-completion questionnaires

- a documentary research report which provided a summary of the results of research projects conducted on the government information needs of people since 1995.
- Research for other government departments:
 - determination of information needs and perceptions regarding various economy-related issues – a focus group study for the Department of Trade and Industry;
 - evaluation of the utilisation and need for more abattoirs to be established country-wide for the Directorate Veterinary Public Health, Department of Agriculture – personal interviews
 - an extensive country-wide internal communication audit for the Department of Correctional Services – self-completion questionnaires
 - a readership study on *Nexus*, the in-house magazine of the Department of Correctional Services
 - an audience research project amongst rural radio listeners for the Department of Agriculture
 - public perceptions regarding government performance for the Presidency by buying into a syndicated survey conducted by a private sector research company.

4.3.2.2 *Research – 1999*

During 1999, the Directorate's activities were "mainly in support of the determination of the information and communication needs of the Government and the public" (GCIS, 2000a: 25). The request for research to support government communication increased and initiatives were taken to pro-actively and constructively contribute to the development of a national government communication strategy and GCIS priorities. Research conducted in 1999 was

used in planning various communication strategies, activities, products, services and structures. Highlights included the following:

- Assessing the communication environment for government communication initiatives and campaigns:
 - including questions in two country-wide syndicates to assess public perceptions regarding government performance and voter registration for the 1999 general election
 - including relevant questions in a country-wide syndicated survey to assess public perceptions regarding the compliance of various systems in South Africa for the change-over to the next millennium (Y2K) for the Department of Provincial and Local Government
 - pre-testing concept advertisements (for radio and television) regarding the process of registration before the 1999 elections and attitudes towards participation in the election amongst the youth by means of personal interviews and focus groups
 - determining public perceptions on the Department of Defence and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) – an extensive study conducted by means of focus groups and in-depth interviews
 - determination of perceptions of chief magistrates, regional heads of the Department of Justice, registrars and regional court presidents regarding the payment of witness fees – a study conducted through self-completion questionnaires for the Department of Justice
 - following a request to the GCIS by the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on HIV/AIDS to assist in the development of a renewed communication campaign, the Directorate, as part of an extensive research process, compiled a report on available communication-related research; included relevant questions in a syndicated survey and started working on two qualitative research projects

- a focus group study was conducted to assess the communication environment for the State of the Nation Address and the impact of government communication.

- Determining information and communication needs:
 - an extensive, qualitative research project (focus groups) country-wide to identify the need for government information amongst the South African population was outsourced
 - assistance with a survey amongst key stakeholders (e.g. investment analysts, the media and tourism sectors) in eight foreign countries to assess attitudes and perceptions within the international community *vis-a-vis* South Africa as pertaining to its attractiveness as a tourism destination and an investment region – to serve as an input in planning for an extensive campaign to market South Africa internationally
 - an audit regarding the competencies and training needs of government communicators at national, provincial and local government level, conducted at the request of the Chief Director: National Training Board.

- Research contributing to GCIS internal processes:
 - an evaluation of GCIS Open Days organised by the Directorate: Project Management
 - a skills/competency audit amongst GCIS staff
 - evaluation of the GCIS *Bosberaad*
 - evaluation of the Government Communicators Consultative Conference III
 - evaluation of a course in project management

- evaluation of a conference on Multi-Purpose Community Centres (MPCCs) in the Western Cape
- documentary research on MPCCs.
- Communication and/or climate audits: Internal communication audits and/or climate audits were conducted within GCIS, and for the Office of the Premier in the Northern Province.

4.3.2.3 GCIS Corporate Strategy – January 2000 to March 2001: implications for research

Towards the end of 1999, the GCIS Secretariat developed a corporate strategy for the organisation for January 2000 to March 2001. The corporate strategy contained revised vision and mission statements for the organisation, as well as specific objectives for the period. The vision statement was reformulated to better reflect the organisation's intention to make a meaningful contribution in an environment where society is working with the government whilst the revised mission statement was more specific than the previous one regarding the contribution of GCIS as a government communication agency:

- Vision: Making an indispensable and widely valued contribution to a society working with the Government for a better life for all, by meeting the Government's communication needs and the public's information needs (GCIS, 2000b:4).
- Mission: As a government communication agency the GCIS's mission is to develop, promote, provide and coordinate:
 - communication strategy for the Government
 - development communication between the Government and the public
 - coherence across spheres and sectors of the Government
 - identification of public information needs
 - excellent media and communication services to the Government

- policies for a democratic communication and information environment
- projection of South Africa's image internationally
- training strategies and programmes for government communicators
- government's corporate identity (GCIS, 2000b:4).

The Corporate Strategy specified the following five objectives for the GCIS for January 2000 to March 2001:

- transform the GCIS into an efficient organisation
- render excellent media and communication services to the Government
- make the Government Information Centres (GICs) a centerpiece of government communication information (the GICs are the provincial offices of GCIS)
- help develop government media, communication and information policy
- promote South Africa in trade, investment and tourism (GCIS, 2000b:4-5).

Furthermore, the GCIS Corporate Strategy for the period January 2000 to March 2001 identified six key strategic issues and various key campaigns. The key strategic issues were issues which GCIS as a whole was responsible for:

- Strategic Issue One: Communication to promote the Government's mandate

This involved the promotion of communication that facilitated the implementation of the government's democratic mandate. It included the development of a national communication strategy, promoting understanding of the communication environment and assistance in the implementation of the national communication strategy through particular strategies for departments, provinces, and campaigns, as well as the concrete realisation of these strategies in communication projects. It also required capacity-building throughout government for developing and

implementing communication strategy as well as overseeing the restructuring of communication structures.

- Strategic Issue Two: Transformation of structures and personnel
These included the training of staff, initiatives to steer GCIS towards a learning organisation, conducting a climate study to help clarify how to keep staff morale high, development and implementation of an incentives system and an internal communication strategy. Another area identified for attention was that of diversity management in terms of race and gender.
- Strategic Issue Three: Information and communication programme
Arguing that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) critically affect the working environment of GCIS, the organisation had to deal with matters pertaining to the Information Economy, the interaction of information and communication technologies and availing these technologies for people-centred development as priority issues. GCIS had to work closely with the Department of Communications on the issue of ICTs, and drive the process of developing media policy and the vehicle for media diversity and development.
- Strategic Issue Four: Identifying and meeting public information needs for government information
The GCIS had to formulate a clear approach to follow up on the qualitative research conducted at the beginning of 1999. GCIS had to spell out the information content of the MPCCs; the training needs of people staffing them; how they were connected to the Subdirector Information Centre (the component handling information enquiries) and how call centre technology could be utilised by the public.

- Strategic Issue Five: Improving service delivery to clients
The organisation had to ensure that a relevant service was provided to clients – a service based on GCIS strengths matched with the needs of the clients. The GCIS had to advise clients on outsourcing services which could be delivered.
- Strategic Issue Six: Corporate issues
There was an urgent need to develop efficient financial management systems, management information systems, clear supplier databases and strategies, and to look at long-term budget reallocation in line with GCIS strategic objectives.

Various key campaigns were identified for the relevant period – some to be *done* by the GCIS, others to be *managed* by GCIS and others where the GCIS had to make input regarding its *outsourcing* or the execution thereof by client departments:

- Campaigns to be *done* by the GCIS:
These were campaigns which Cabinet had allocated to GCIS which originated in the Presidency or which were initiated by GCIS:
 - African Renaissance
 - National Consensus
 - Openings of Parliament
 - Corporate Identity of the Government
 - Multi-Purpose Community Centres (MPCCs)
 - *Official Yearbook of South Africa*
- Campaigns where GCIS had to provide leadership to interdepartmental teams, i.e. GCIS *managed* the campaigns:
 - Job creation

- HIV/AIDS
 - Local elections on behalf of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)
 - Moral Integrity, e.g. Anti-corruption campaign
- Campaigns where the GCIS had to provide input regarding the *outsourcing* or execution by the specific departments:
 - Hanover 2000
 - Awareness on people with disabilities
 - Public Service Negotiations
 - Gun Control
 - E-commerce
 - National productivity
 - Taxi Recapitalisation
 - Y2K
 - Public Sector IT Policy

4.3.2.4 *Research – 2000*

During the calendar year 2000, the Research directorate conducted research projects in support of the GCIS corporate strategy and at the request of government departments and institutions. Some of the highlights of the contribution from Research, categorised according to the key issues and key campaigns in the corporate strategy, included:

- Communication to promote the Government's mandate
A focus group research project that was conducted country-wide was outsourced on behalf of the Presidency. The results of this project provided information to help understand the communication environment and to develop a national communication strategy for Government for the year 2001. The Directorate also subscribed to relevant research reports

available from a private sector research company. In his speech to Parliament on the GCIS Budget Vote on 11 May 2001, Dr Essop Pahad referred to this research: “Most of the trends reported in surveys indicate that there is growing appreciation for the gains of our transition to democracy. Furthermore, there is confidence in this government to bring about a better life for all” (Pahad, 2001:1).

- Transformation of structures and personnel
The Directorate Research conducted a climate study amongst GCIS staff through self-completion questionnaires and personal interviews. The results of the climate study helped to clarify how to improve staff morale and contributed to the formulation of an internal communication strategy.
- Information and communication programme
Using an Online questionnaire, the Directorate assisted in a more extensive initiative to evaluate the official government website, *SA Government Online*. The focus of the evaluation was on content, information architecture, navigation, the search facility, and the design and layout of the site. The results were used to improve the site.
- Identifying and meeting public information needs for government communication
GCIS staff conducted research to identify client needs in terms of government information and services in Kgautswane (Northern Province) and Zwelentemba (Western Cape) where MPCCs were launched. Documentary research was done regarding service delivery at MPCCs and a consolidated research report was produced.
- Improving service delivery to clients
The GCIS product, *Bua News*, aimed primarily at community media, was evaluated amongst clients through telephone interviews and self-completion questionnaires. Two research projects were outsourced to support the initiatives of the country’s international marketing initiative, and results presented at the first meeting of the International Marketing

Council. Furthermore, a private sector research company was commissioned to conduct a telephone survey amongst government communicators to assess the products and services of GCIS. The purpose of this survey was to assist in the process of improving service delivery to government clients and to contribute to the development of the GCIS marketing strategy.

- Corporate issues

Contributions from the Directorate Research to this strategic issue included research to evaluate specific events, e.g. the Budget *Lekgotla* of the GCIS management.

- Key campaigns

Activities of the Directorate Research in the year 2000 supported various key campaigns. Additional to research regarding the MPCC initiative and the campaign to market South Africa internationally, highlights in terms of supporting key campaigns included the following:

- On the basis of the communication plan for the November 2000 local government elections, a research plan was developed. GCIS assisted the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to outsource two research projects in order to enhance effective communication – to make people aware of the elections and to promote the level of participation.
- GCIS was involved in government's efforts to promote public awareness of HIV/AIDS. The organisation was also involved in the launch of the *Partnership Against Aids* initiative on 9 October 1998. This *Partnership* initiative was "aimed at heightening public awareness of the national crisis that HIV/AIDS poses" and "aimed to do so by creating a partnership of all sectors of our society on the basis of a commitment to share responsibility for addressing the problem" (Trew, 1999:2). However, President Mbeki noted soon after his election as President, when he opened Parliament in June

1999, that heightened public awareness yet needed to bring the change of behaviour which was needed. “In the light of the President’s commitment of the government to a renewed national effort, the GCIS was asked to help answer the question why behaviour is not changing as much as it should, and whether government should be communicating in a different way on this matter. Such a daunting research challenge called for some humility on the part of a communications agency. GCIS argued that, if the task of the organisation is to translate knowledge into a message for leaders of our nation and society to communicate, the organisation needs to follow the message of the *Partnership Against Aids* and try to promote a partnership of all those engaged in research related to HIV/AIDS as a national research response to this national crisis” (Trew, 1999:2).

As a result of the GCIS initiative, with the assistance of the Department of Health and the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, such a partnership indeed emerged. The partnership embraced academic researchers, the private sector market research industry and a donor agency. Two extensive qualitative research projects were outsourced – one of it funded by an international donor agency. Three research companies made relevant research results available at no cost. Five of the prominent research companies in South Africa agreed to include relevant questions in syndicated surveys conducted country-wide on a *pro bono* basis.

- Following the launch of the country’s new Coat of Arms on 27 April 2000, the Directorate included questions in a country-wide syndicated survey in June 2000 to determine levels of awareness and perceptions regarding this new national symbol. The results

were used to inform further communication planning in this regard. Contributing to the process to develop a new corporate identity for Government around the new Coat of Arms, a qualitative research project conducted amongst Ministers, Directors-General of national government departments, communicators from the three spheres of government and from other government structures, bodies, commissions and task groups as well as corporate identity specialists was outsourced.

- Questions were included in country-wide syndicated surveys conducted by private sector research companies (in March, May and June 2000) to assess exposure and awareness of the State of the Nation address and communication initiatives (e.g. the pamphlet *A nation at work for a better life, 2000*) in this regard. The results were used to plan communication initiatives around the State of the Nation address in February 2001.
- An extensive research proposal was developed to support the communication strategy for the project *Awareness on people with disabilities* (GCIS, Directorate Research, 2001a).

4.3.2.5 GCIS Corporate Strategy – April 2001 to March 2002: implications for research

At the beginning of 2001, the GCIS Secretariat developed a corporate strategy for the organisation for the financial year April 2001 to March 2002. The vision, mission and strategic objectives of the organisation were again revised to better reflect the responsibility of GCIS to provide leadership and to work with other role-players in meeting the communication and information needs of government and the people (GCIS, 2001a:1):

- Vision: Helping to meet the communication and information needs of government and the people to ensure a better life for all.

- Mission: To provide leadership in government communications and keep the public informed of government's implementation of its mandate.

- Strategic objectives:
 - Providing leadership to government communications by:
 - assisting in the development and implementation of communication strategies for the government, including the Presidency
 - playing a facilitating, strategising, co-ordinating and outsourcing role
 - Establishing a rapid response capacity
 - Keeping the public informed on government's delivery of its mandate
 - Developing strategies for the better utilisation of advances in information and communication technologies in communicating and in the management of GCIS
 - Increasing the resources and capacity available to GCIS
 - Addressing the ongoing transformation of GCIS by paying attention to gender representivity at management level; the recruitment of disabled workers; and running programmes on HIV/AIDS.

The GCIS Corporate Strategy for 2001/2002 again contained information regarding five key issues – issues that the GCIS as a whole is responsible for. All Directorates were requested to examine the impact of these issues on their work, and to plan accordingly for the relevant time period. The key issues for 2001/2002 are:

- Strategic Issue One: Providing leadership in government communications
The GCIS shall do this by:

- Making strategic inputs into the communications programme of the Presidency and encouraging departments to think more proactively on how the Presidency fits into their communication programmes.
 - Drafting of communication strategy for Government. This would require working to the cycle from the January Cabinet *Lekgotla*; overseeing the development of departmental and cluster strategies; and the review of communications work at the end of each year.
 - Managing the corporate identity of Government.
 - Ensuring that Government has a common, positive approach to the media.
 - Prioritising providing leadership in transversal campaigns. An example of this would be the *South Africa Unlimited* campaign (a campaign to market the country internationally).
 - Establishing a strategically informed rapid response capacity.
 - Proactively encouraging departments to run specific campaigns and interrogating more closely the ones being launched.
- Strategic Issue Two: Keeping the public informed
The following measures will be undertaken:
 - The long-term role of the MPCCs shall be clarified. This would include setting out what GCIS's long-term relations with the MPCCs shall be; examining the strategies to be followed to meet increasing public demand for information; and the relationship between MPCCs and the *Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS)*.
 - The further use of the Internet and the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) will be explored to look at the structural and developmental implications for GCIS.

- Special attention shall be paid to the development of the content necessary for keeping the public informed of government's implementation of its mandate.

- Strategic Issue Three: Enhance the quality of government communication
This will be done at three levels:
 - Information products: The GCIS will review the information and communication products it shall be producing for the coming year; set up mechanisms for evaluating the products departments will be disseminating and have a clear strategy to streamline, strengthen and market GCIS's distribution service.
 - Audit capacity: GCIS shall audit communication capacity in government; intervene directly in departments to help develop capacity and benchmark itself against international experiences.
 - New Communicator: GCIS shall develop a manual giving guidelines on how communicators in a democratic South Africa should operate.

- Strategic Issue Four: Improving the climate in GCIS
 - GCIS shall strive to create and maintain an exciting, creative work environment where the contribution of all staff members is valued. We shall expect all managers to have dynamic and healthy working relations with their staff.
 - We shall continue improving on the internal communication system and the physical office environment.
 - We shall also ensure the active implementation of our equity plan and build better relations between management and the employees, and their representatives.

- More attention shall be paid to issues around gender discrimination, HIV/AIDS and disabilities.
- Strategic Issue Five: Improve GCIS strategic capacity and resources
 - GCIS shall strive to improve its strategic role. GCIS shall position itself as providing quality consultancy across a number of areas. This will mean that in the medium term its structures shall become oriented to playing a more strategic role. This will mean more attention being paid to our retention strategy. Furthermore it shall draw on a database of specialists for communication purposes.
 - GCIS shall continue working towards improved better allocations of resources to communicate through the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) processes, while trying to raise funds through donors and establish a trading account.
 - We shall ensure that project management is the responsibility of all line functions and promote the further institutionalisation of the project management based approach of GCIS.
 - GCIS shall contribute to furthering government's use of ICTs. The GCIS shall continue with the implementation of the e-GCIS strategy, ensuring that it is aligned with its business processes. It shall develop a medium term approach to be taken to the use of ICTs in enhancing communication. It shall find ways of enhancing government's web capacity and cohesion with special focus on design and writing, MPCCs, distribution and usage of all possible means of communication (GCIS, 2001a:4-8).

Additional to the five key issues identified in the GCIS Corporate Strategy for 2001/2002, the Secretariat developed the *Government Communication Programme* (GCP) for the same time period. This programme “aims to identify

important events under each of the themes identified in the government communication strategy” (GCIS, 2001b: 1). The themes for 2001/2002 are:

- Effective governance
- Building international partnerships
- Decisiveness on economic growth and job creation
- Fighting crime and corruption
- Visibility of socio-economic programmes.

Additional to these five themes, some transversal and GCIS campaigns were also identified.

4.3.2.6 *Research – 2001*

From January 2001 to middle September 2001, the Directorate Research again conducted various research projects in support of the GCIS Corporate Strategy and in support of the GCP. Some of the research projects were conducted by GCIS staff whilst others were outsourced. Also, research advice and support were provided to various government departments. The service provided by the Directorate Research, categorised according to the key issues in the GCIS Corporate Strategy and the themes of the GCP for the relevant time period, included the following (GCIS, Directorate Research, 2001a):

- Providing leadership in government communications
Questions were included in two country-wide syndicated research projects conducted by means of personal interviews by private sector research companies to assess the communication environment in which government operates. Questions in the syndicated surveys, as well as two telephone surveys conducted in the three main metropolitan areas, provided results on the public’s exposure to the Presidency’s communication programme as well as perceptions in this regard. Focus group research projects conducted in both urban and rural areas in five

provinces improved understanding of the communication environment, public perceptions on service delivery and information dissemination by government as well as expectations in this regard.

- Keeping the public informed

The Directorate provided support to the MPCC initiative by developing a template to be used by MPCC staff to record client statistics, services used and responses to services provided at the MPCCs. A training manual was developed to assist GCIS staff which operate at grassroots level to determine information and development needs in communities and to evaluate the response of clients to services provided. Towards the end of September 2001, an initiative to obtain donor funding for an extensive, baseline research programme in support of the MPCC initiative was still under way. The aim of the research programme is to enhance and promote the availability and quality of services provided by various role-players through MPCCs. The MPCC research programme has various objectives, including:

- assessing awareness and needs with regard to government services and information
- evaluating the availability and utilisation of services provided at MPCCs as well as client satisfaction
- identifying and assessing systems and procedures to promote the sustainability of MPCCs.

Questions to determine the public's needs in terms of government information and communication were included in the questionnaires used for the syndicated and telephone surveys and the discussion guides used for the focus group projects mentioned in the previous paragraph.

- Enhance the quality of government communication

Questions to assess the impact of and response to communication initiatives (e.g. a pamphlet and discussion programmes on radio and television to inform the population about the government's priorities for the

year) were included in a country-wide syndicated survey and a focus group study conducted in the Northern Province. An audit on the capacity and competencies of government communicators was conducted by means of personal interviews with the heads of communication in national government departments. Advice and support was provided to the Subdirectorate Electronic Information Resources to conduct an audit of the websites of national government departments. Some of the GCIS products and services were evaluated amongst the clients or users – e.g. various training courses, the *Government Contact Directory* and the GCIS library.

- Improving the climate in GCIS

Staff from the Directorate Research conducted a study by means of in-depth personal interviews with GCIS staff to evaluate service delivery by the Chief Directorate Corporate Services. Both Corporate Services staff (as services providers) and staff from the line function chief directorates (as clients) were interviewed. The results of the survey are being used to develop appropriate strategic plans to improve service delivery to internal clients and to enhance overall effectiveness of GCIS activities.

Two Budget *Lekgotlas* of the GCIS management were evaluated amongst those who attended. At the time of this research another internal communication audit was planned for execution before the end of the 2001/2002 financial year.

- Improve GCIS strategic capacity and resources

An audit was conducted by means of personal interviews with Directors-General and with heads of communication of national government departments regarding partnerships with civil society in the field of government communication. The audit flowed directly from a decision by Cabinet in March 2001 that, amongst other things, government departments had to emphasise building partnerships with civil society to

facilitate communication around government's policies and programmes. It was intended such partnerships would also constitute part of the broader partnership of all spheres of society with government in order to achieve the goal of a better life for all South Africans.

Research conducted in 2001 to enhance effectiveness of communication and information dissemination, categorised according to the campaign themes of the Government Communication Programme (GCP) for the current period, included:

- Effective governance
Questions to ascertain public perceptions regarding the quality of service delivery by government and the Public Service as well as expectations in this regard were included in two *country-wide syndicated surveys*.
- Building international partnership
A research project was conducted to identify the various initiatives by both government and non-government entities to market South Africa internationally. The aim was to contribute to the process to develop an integrated approach to the international marketing of South Africa. What is meant by partnership in this context is voluntary cooperation without payment of services.

Questions to assess public response to the *World Conference Against Racism* that took place in Durban during September 2001, were included in a country-wide syndicated survey conducted by a private sector research company in October 2001.

- Decisiveness on economic growth and job creation
Public sentiment regarding the government's initiatives to restructure state assets, mass action of organised labour regarding privatisation and government communication in this regard were assessed by means of relevant questions in a focus group research project conducted in two

provinces during September 2001 and by relevant questions in a country-wide syndicated survey.

- Fighting crime and corruption

Research results relevant to this campaign theme were made available from a research product that Directorate Research subscribes to, and by including appropriate questions in discussion guides used for the various focus group research projects.

- Visibility of the socio-economic programme, Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS)

Questions regarding the ISRDS and urban renewal were included in questionnaires or discussion guides of various research projects. Furthermore, research results on public sentiment regarding government performance on a variety of issues (e.g. housing, job creation, health services and land restitution) are available from the research product Directorate Research subscribes to. A research proposal was developed to determine the public's knowledge of, attitudes towards and behaviour relevant to communication on cholera.

- Transversal campaigns

Additional to questions regarding HIV/AIDS included *pro bono* by private sector research companies in syndicated surveys, a research report was compiled to consolidate the findings from various research projects conducted on HIV/AIDS since 1999.

Research regarding the MPCC initiative and the community-outreach (*Imbizo*) campaign also supported some of the transversal campaigns identified.

- GCIS Campaigns

Results from various research projects provided support to evaluate communication initiatives regarding the opening of Parliament and future planning in this regard.

4.3.3 Summary: GCIS – the role of research

Even before the official launch of GCIS, it was clear that research would be an important part of the work of the new organisation and in the broader government communications environment where GCIS needed to provide strategic guidance and advice, as well as contribute to effective coordination in government communications.

Research conducted by GCIS since May 1998 was mainly conducted within the strategic guidelines provided by the GCIS Secretariat, including the GCIS corporate strategy. Research results were used extensively, e.g. in the further process to transform government communication, to strategise for overall government communication and for specific campaigns, to assess the communication environment in which government communicators had to perform their responsibilities, to evaluate ongoing government performance, to assess the impact of various communication and information campaigns, products and services, and to determine the public's information and communication needs.

Initiatives to enhance the cost-effectiveness of research was taken broader than conducting some of the projects in-house. It was done by negotiating international donor funding and *pro bono* work by private sector research companies.

The Directorate Research assisted different government departments, provincial governments and other government institutions by either conducting research projects at their request, by providing support and advice to outsource research to private sector research companies and by rendering research advice.

Current shortcomings in government communication research in South Africa include the following:

- Relevant research is often not conducted or not used appropriately due to a lack of understanding by some government communicators that research can be of incalculable help to enhance the effectiveness of their communication and information dissemination initiatives.
- Due to a lack of coordination and sharing of communication research results, government cannot make optimum use of results from communication research conducted by government role-players, and duplication takes place.
- Communication research mostly takes place as a once-off initiative, and not throughout the campaign – e.g. to test the impact of a communication campaign or product, or to do some pre-testing.
- Government seems not to allocate appropriate funding for communication research.

4.4 SUMMARY

In chapter 4 the researcher provides an overview of the process of transforming government communication in South Africa after 1994. Information is presented on the Conference of Government Communications – regarded as the beginning of the process of transforming government communication, the responsibilities and findings of the Task Group on Government Communications and the process of implementing the Comtask recommendations.

Furthermore, the researcher discusses the strategic framework and priorities within which the GCIS has operated and performed its tasks since its launch in May 1998. Specific attention is given to the research conducted by GCIS to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination

of government information. The researcher points out that research is an important part of the work of GCIS and the broad government communications environment and that the research conducted by GCIS is mainly conducted within the strategic guidelines provided by the GCIS Secretariat.

CHAPTER 5

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE USE OF RESEARCH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The Comtask group came to the conclusion that “the principle of creating a dialogue between government and citizens is well established in many countries” (Comtask, 1996b:43) and that “opinion polls and research form an important part of the work of most governments” (Comtask, 1996b:74).

The researcher’s objective in this chapter is to investigate and record the use of research to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information by other governments

To introduce this chapter, the researcher provides an overview of international trends in government communication and dissemination of government information.

5.2 INTERNATIONAL TRENDS IN GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION – AN OVERVIEW

The Comtask appointed by Thabo Mbeki in 1995 to contribute to the process of transforming government communications in South Africa (see paragraph 4.2.3), made the “identification of best practice in communications within the

international community” (Comtask, 1996b:39) one of its priorities. Members of Comtask visited a large number of countries¹⁵, arguing that it would provide “a very important template of ideas and practices to discuss South African solutions” (Comtask, 1996b:39).

The Comtask group concluded from their visits to these countries, that “most governments have a central information or service provision agency”, and that these bodies were increasingly not spokespersons of government but ensured good standards and centralised the analytic capacity (Comtask, 1996b:41). According to the Comtask report, the responsibilities of these mainly included:

- Corporate buying of advertising space for government: to reduce cost and improve the impact of information campaigns
- Training and development: offering support for the development of the use of new technologies for other government users and communicators
- Research and analysis: from providing a press clipping and/or transcript service to supervising research on public attitudes (opinion polls) and tracking media stories
- Maintenance of a corporate identity for government through standardising imaging
- Core data: providing or coordinating the provision of basic data on the country and ensuring accessibility, for example maintaining a homepage on the Internet
- Publishing, editing and strategic planning services to other “consumers” (departments/parastatals) in government
- Providing press accreditation and support services to the media, especially in developing countries

¹⁵ The countries were: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Britain, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Ghana, Hungary, India, Israel, Malaysia, Senegal, Singapore, Tanzania and the United States of America.

- Visiting services: arranging programmes for foreign visitors (Comtask, 1996b:41-42).

Other observations from Comtask following their visits to central government communication and information agencies include the following:

- The tendency was for the central agency to outsource the production and supply of many required services (e.g. advertising, public relations, video production and research) to the private sector.
- Central government communication structures were becoming more streamlined, do not employ large numbers of people, and operated not in a controlling but in a coordinating capacity.
- An important responsibility was to strategise around policy and appropriate messages.
- In tune with strengthened notions of accountability of government to the electorate, the core group tended to be in direct and constant touch with top management – such as Cabinet and senior politicians and was usually located in the office of the President or Prime Minister.
- The core group of communicators generally consisted of the head of the central government communication agency together with the heads of communication in the various ministries, achieving coordination of government messages.
- The emphasis was on professionalism and top communicators enjoyed comparatively high status and rank: in some cases they were political appointees of the various ministers and in others they were civil servants.
- Substantial cost savings were effected through bulk-buying of services such as advertising and research (Comtask, 1996b:41-42).

The researcher is of the opinion that the Comtask group was correct in arguing that the identification of best practices in government communications within the

international community could provide ideas and practices to discuss South African solutions. Three of the conclusions from the Comtask group of specific relevance to this study are the following:

- The responsibility of the 'central information or service provision agency' in most countries included the service of supervising research on public attitudes or opinion polls.
- The tendency in government communications was to outsource many services – including research – to the private sector.
- Bulk-buying of research services for government could result in substantial cost savings.

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

In paragraph 5.3 the researcher provides information regarding government communication and the dissemination of government information in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom (UK). Specific reference is made to the use of research. According to information available to the researcher, the governments of these three countries make more use of research to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and dissemination of government information than most other governments.

5.3.1 Australia

After introducing the history, role and functions of the central information agency of the government in Australia, the researcher provides information regarding general guidelines provided to government departments. Lastly, in terms of

information activities, specific attention is given to the use of research in the communication campaign development process.

5.3.1.1 The history, role and functions of the Government Communications Unit

Australia's Government Communications Unit (GCU) "traces its origins to the Commonwealth Advertising Division established in 1941 to coordinate government advertising, and to the Information Coordination Branch established in 1982 to improve the delivery of government information. These units merged in 1984 and became the Office of Government Information and Advertising (OGIA) in 1989. In 1997 the OGIA transferred from the Department of Administrative Services to the Department of Finance and Administration. In October 1998 it was established as the Government Communications Unit (GCU) in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet" (Australia, GCU, 2001a).

The role of the GCU is "to provide advice and support on communications issues to the Government and the Ministerial Committee on Government Communications (MCGC) and to manage the Central Advertising System (CAS)" (Australia, GCU, 2001a). To be more specific, the key GCU functions are to:

- provide strategic advice on proposed communications issues to the Prime Minister and the MCGC
- maintain a whole of government overview of current and forecast communications activities
- provide advice to the MCGC on major and/or sensitive campaigns
- provide advice on communications best practice, including research, public relations and advertising, to the MCGC and departments and agencies
- monitor industry developments and trends
- provide a secretariat to the MCGC

- maintain a register of communications consultants (including advertising agencies, public relations consultants, market research companies, graphic designers, writers and the like) interested in undertaking government work which is drawn on by departments and agencies seeking to engage consultants for communication activities
- assist in developing communication strategies and briefs for consultants
- manage the Central Advertising System (CAS) to achieve effective media planning and cost-effective media placement for government advertising (Australia, GCU, 2001a).

Government departments and agencies need to submit their communication and related strategies and projects to the MCGC through the GCU. Projects to be submitted include all advertising, significant and sensitive information activities, consultant selection and communications related research (Australia, GCU, 2001a).

5.3.1.2 *Guidelines to government departments and agencies*

The *Guidelines for Australian Government Information Activities: principles and procedures*, compiled by the GCU, includes the following two principles (a total of ten principles are listed in the document), relevant to the use of research to work towards successful communication and information programmes:

- The Government expects all departments and their information units to employ the highest standards of communication knowledge and techniques in the conduct of their information programs.
- All information programs conducted by departments should be as impartial and as complete as practicable and based on the information needs and capacities of the target audience. Information programs should be based on relevant research, and contain feedback and evaluation mechanisms where possible (Australia, GCU, 2001b).

The GCU also developed the following documents – available on the GCU website - as guidelines to government departments and agencies:

- *How to write a communication strategy*
- *How to write a brief for a market research consultant*
- *How to write a brief for a creative advertising agency*
- *How to write a brief for a public relations consultant*
- *How to write a brief for a graphic design consultant*
- *How to write a brief for an Internet website designer/provider*
- *How to write a brief for a video consultant*

The document *How to write a brief for a market research consultant* identifies as many as twenty steps in the process of writing a research brief, explains what a good research brief is and provides a checklist for writing a research proposal. The guidelines even include a summary of industry standards that apply to different research methodologies such as face-to-face interviews, telephone surveys, audits and observations, recruitment for qualitative research and non-field company standards (Australia, GCU, 2001c).

The guide *How to write a communication strategy* frequently refers to research. The document explains that research is useful in planning a communications strategy with regard to the following:

- if an information campaign is needed at all
- what the campaign is trying to achieve
- who the people are you are trying to reach and where they are
- the existing attitude, knowledge and behaviour of these people
- what the messages are you want to deliver
- how you are going to deliver these messages.

(Australia, GCU, 2001d).

An interesting point made in the guideline document on writing a communication strategy is that at least 10 percent of the budget for a communication campaign should be allocated to research and evaluation: “As a rule of thumb, you will need to allocate at least 10% of your budget to research and evaluation but this will often be determined by the nature and complexity of the campaign. This would be allocated amongst initial research (environmental scanning, audience segmentations, concept testing), tracking the campaign (testing messages and strategies, reporting on coverage and readership of your issue, checking recall) and evaluating the outcomes (checking for change in target audience attitudes, knowledge, behaviour)” (Australia, GCU, 2001d).

5.3.1.3 *Use of research in the campaign development process*

In providing guidance to government departments on the campaign development process, the GCU presents the process sequentially in eight stages, but points out that “some parts of the process may need to be repeated, while other parts may be undertaken concurrently” (Australia, GCU, 2001e). From the following summary of the GCU guidelines for campaign development, it is obvious that the GCU considers the use of research as being of substantial importance to enhance the effectiveness of campaigns – from needs analysis, developmental research, development and refinement of creative and communication strategy, benchmark and tracking research and evaluation:

- Stage 1: Needs analysis
A needs analysis will assist in clearly defining the issue or problem to be addressed. Examining currently available research or literature will assist in clearly defining the nature and extent of the issue. Where insufficient data exists, an additional survey or other research may be required. The GCU is able to provide advice on the need for additional formative research.
- Stage 2: Developmental research

Developmental research is a critical component of the development of any education and information campaign. It allows for the needs of the target groups to be assessed, and can assist in the identification of appropriate strategies to effectively communicate with the target audience. Developmental research is often exploratory in nature, with the prime objective to establish existing levels of knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of the group or groups to be targeted by the intervention. The findings of this research will inform the development of the communication strategy and consultants briefs. The GCU can advise if developmental research is necessary. If so, the client department or agency will need to develop a research brief for consideration and comment by the GCU. The GCU maintains a *Register of Consultants* in the fields of research, evaluation, advertising, public relations, marketing and other areas of public communications, which might be used to develop a list of suitable consultants. If the research is sensitive or the research budget is greater than \$100 000,00 the MCGC needs to approve the research brief before any tender process can be undertaken. The GCU is able to advise whether or not the research brief needs to be approved by the MCGC. For communication research not acquiring MCGC approval, the GCU is still involved in the selection process. It is considered as good practice for consultants to be given the opportunity to attend a *Question and Answer* session prior to submitting their proposal. A GCU officer is involved in attending these sessions, assessing the proposals, and is a member of the selection panel selecting the research consultant.

- Stage 3: Communication strategy development

The communication strategy should define very specific objectives to provide a clear framework within which to formulate strategies, and against which to evaluate outcomes. At this point, key decisions will need to be made, and described within the communication strategy. This will cover the range of integrated information activities to be implemented;

how the external consultants will be used; the available budget; the timeline; the evaluation plan; and the roles and responsibilities of all key stakeholders in the strategy. The communication strategy should clearly articulate how all the various components of the strategy will be coordinated and managed in order to achieve its objectives most efficiently and effectively.

- State 4: Consultant's briefs

Once a strategy has been approved, a consultant's brief will need to be drafted – this may include advertising and/or public relations briefs. The GCU is able to provide assistance with clarifying the briefs, and in developing lists of suitable consultants, based on the briefs.

- Stage 5: Development and refinement of creative and communications strategies

Once the briefs are approved and sent to the selected list of consultants, the process of managing the selection of consultants and refining strategies is undertaken. The advertising selection process includes the usage of research, and the GCU process involves the following steps:

- It is good practice for consultants to be given the opportunity to attend a *Question and Answer* session prior to presenting the advertising creative. A GCU officer is involved in attending the *Question and Answer* session.
- Advertising agencies usually present their concepts and submit their proposals to the evaluation panel on the same day. The evaluation panel consists of representatives of the client department and the GCU. The competing concepts are then tested by a research company consultant (this is normally the same consultant that undertook the developmental research).
- Based on the research results and an evaluation of the proposals, generally at least two agencies are shortlisted to present to the MCGC. The responsible Minister must first confirm the evaluation

report and the recommendation on the shortlisted agencies, and then the shortlisted agencies present their strategies to the MCGC at a scheduled meeting. The research consultant also presents the concept testing results to those agencies.

- The MCGC selects an agency after consideration of the presentation, the proposals, the concept testing research, and the recommendation of the evaluation panel. The client department then enters into a contract with the consultant.
 - Once the creative strategy is developed, the master media planning and placement agency can compile a detailed media plan. The MCGC approves of the plan and, on receiving written authorisation from the client department to book, the master media agency will book the media.
 - Additional concept testing may be needed to ensure the creative materials are performing well against the communication objectives. The MCGC approves all final creative material before it appears in the media, and requires concept-testing results to be presented by the research consultant at the same time.
- Stage 6: Benchmark and tracking research
Prior to the launch of a campaign it is usual that a quantitative survey is undertaken with a representative sample of the target audience in order to quantify existing levels of awareness, understanding and knowledge in relation to the particular issue. At an appropriate point in time after the commencement of the campaign, this quantitative survey will be repeated to assess changes in levels of awareness and knowledge as a result of campaign activity. Depending on the length of the campaign, several rounds of tracking research might be appropriate. The results of tracking research can be used to monitor the progress of the communication strategy implementation and make adjustments to the strategy where necessary, or can be used to inform the development of subsequent

phases of campaign activity. A measure taken after the completion of the campaign can be used to assess the success of the campaign in meeting its communication objectives. While it is good practice that all information activities are evaluated, smaller activities may not require benchmark and tracking research. The GCU will be able to provide advice on appropriate evaluation strategies. Where television advertising is used, it is also good practice to consider benchmark and tracking research. The initial research brief used to select a consultant for the developmental research may have included the need for benchmark and tracking research as well. If that was not the case, a separate brief is provided to the GCU for comment, a list of suitable consultants and possible MCGC approval. Again, the GCU is involved in any selection process.

- Stage 7: Implementation

This phase includes the launch of the campaign, the development and distribution of campaign publications, the placement of advertisements in the media and the implementation of public relations activities.

- Stage 8: Evaluation

The final step in the process is to evaluate the overall campaign to assess the impact and effectiveness of the information activity, and whether or not the various activities met the stated communication objectives. This may take the form of market research with the target audiences as outlined at Stage 6 (Benchmark and trading research). In addition, media monitoring, calls to hotlines (call centers) and hits to a website and so forth, may be other measures of assessing target audience reactions to communication activities. Consideration should be given to evaluating the overall effectiveness of the media campaign in achieving the stated communication objectives. The media agency is able to provide a report, which will indicate actual media placements against planned activity and whether or not any value added media extras were achieved during the campaign (Australia, GCU, 2001e).

The GCU emphasises that “the outcome of the above evaluations may lead to an improvement in the implementation and management of future campaigns and ultimately enhance the overall quality of government communications”, and that “the *Guidelines for Australian Government Information Activities* indicate that the MCGC will scrutinise the formal evaluation of each information campaign” (Australia, GCU, 2001e).

5.3.1.4 *Summary: Government Communications Unit – the role of research*

The provision of communications research advice to government role-players is one of the key GCU functions. All government departments and agencies have to submit their communication related research projects to the MCGC through the GCU – a practice that can contribute to improved quality of government communications research and to eliminate duplication of communication research by different role-players in government communications.

The GCU perceives it as a matter of principle that all government information programmes should be based on relevant research, and that research needs to be conducted throughout the lifecycle of any campaign.

An important and interesting guideline from the GCU is that at least 10 percent of the budget of a communication campaign should be allocated to research and evaluation.

A guideline document was developed by the GCU to assist government communicators in writing a brief to a research consultant and a research proposal.

From the information available, the researcher's interpretation is that from the guidelines and advice available from the GCU, government communicators in Australia should be able to:

- Realise the importance to conduct research at different phases in the lifecycle of any information/communication programme
- Prepare appropriate research proposals and briefs to research consultants
- Motivate for the funds necessary to conduct research to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information.

5.3.2 Canada

The researcher provides information regarding the mandate, roles, structure and responsibilities of the central government information agency in Canada. Reference is made to some of the research that the organisation conducts and to its use.

5.3.2.1 *Mandate and roles of the Canada Information Office*

The Canada Information Office (CIO) was established on 9 July 1996. According to the CIO's Performance Report for the period ending 31 March 1999, "the Government of Canada assigned the organisation at its creation with the mandate to inform Canadians about their country, about each other, about the renewal of the federation and about the role of the Government of Canada in meeting the needs of Canadians through the delivery of programs and services." Its mission at that time was "to contribute to Canadians learning more about their country in order to build a stronger Canada" (Canada, CIO, 2001a).

According to the CIO's *Report on Plans and Priorities* for 2001-2002, the organisation develops "nationally and regionally responsive citizen-focused

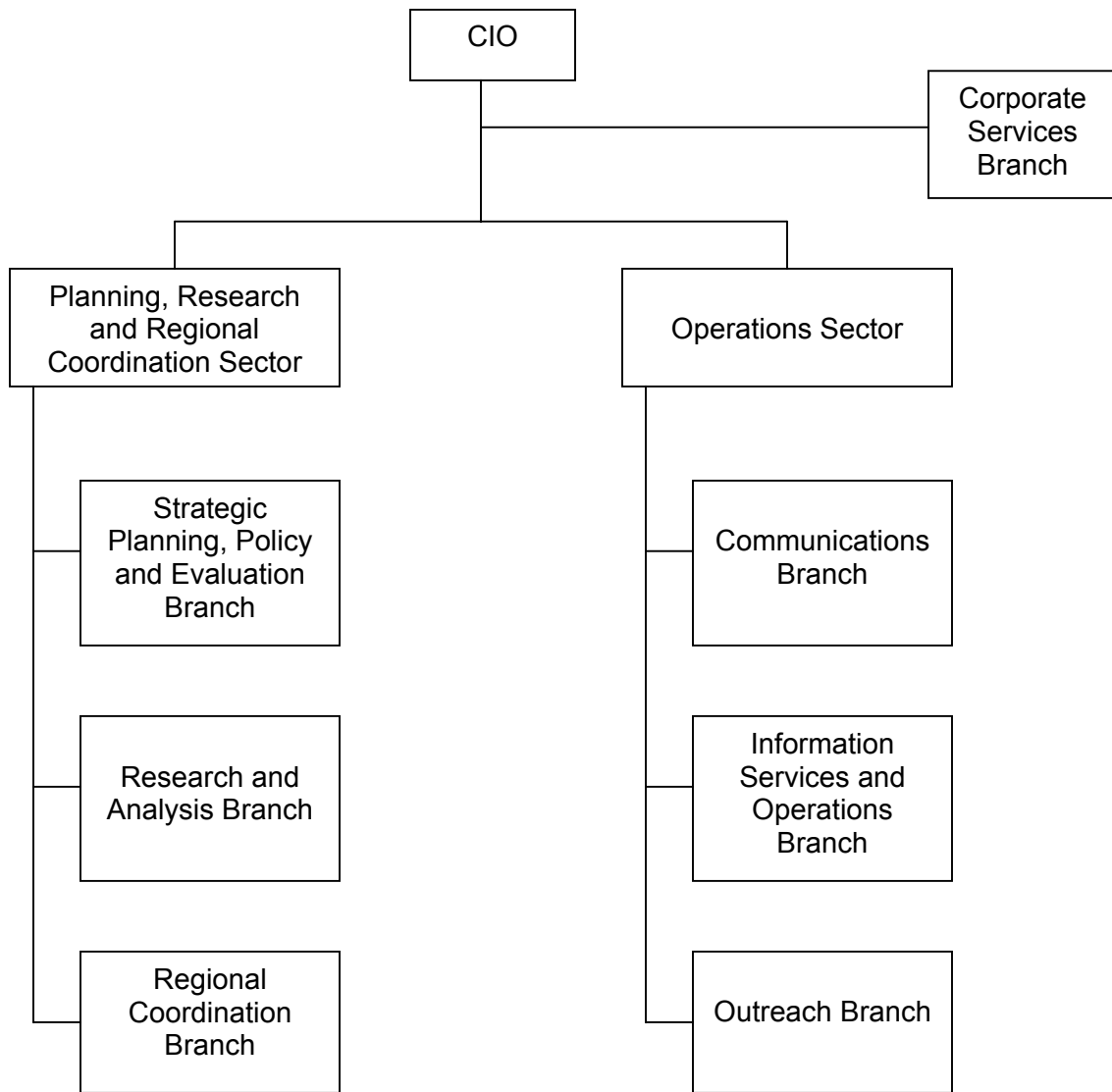
corporate communication initiatives” on the basis of “public opinion and communications research.” These initiatives are most often undertaken in partnership with other government departments and agencies including regional councils of senior federal officials, non-government organisations, and the private sector. Their purpose is to inform Canadians about Canada, particularly the Government of Canada’s priorities, and a wide array of programs and services. These corporate activities complement and provide a context for departmental communications activities. The CIO also provides ongoing advice and support to the Standing Committee of Cabinet on Government Communications (CCC). The Executive Director of the CIO reports to the Chair of the CCC. The CIO provides operational advice and support to the CCC and implements its decisions through a variety of communications, research and community-based activities” (Canada, CIO, 2001b).

In order to improve the coordination of government communication in the regions and to promote a corporate approach to government communications, some new responsibilities were added to the mandate of the CIO, during the year 2000: the coordination of regional communications, fairs, exhibitions and public opinion research (Canada, CIO, 2001b).

5.3.2.2 *Structure and responsibilities*

The CIO has two principal sectors namely the Planning, Research and Regional Coordination Sector, and the Operations Sector. Supporting the activities of these sectors is the Corporate Services Branch.

Figure 5.1: CIO – structure, 2001¹⁶



The responsibilities of the two principal sectors (Planning, Research and Regional Coordination Sector and the Operations Sector), as outlined on the CIO website and in figure 5.1, can be summarised as follows:

¹⁶ Researcher's own compilation

- Planning, Research and Regional Coordination Sector

This sector sets out the CIO's strategic framework, plans and goals, and evaluates, measures and reports on departmental activities. It is also responsible for the CIO's regional coordination function. Through its public opinion and communications research, environmental scanning and analysis, and network of regional coordinators, the Planning, Research and Regional Co-ordination Sector provides strategic advice, evaluations and recommendations that help guide the CIO, other government departments and the ad hoc Cabinet Committee in developing and implementing activities, policies and programs relating to government-wide communications across the country. The Planning, Research and Regional Co-ordination Sector is composed of three branches: Strategic Planning, Policy and Evaluation; Research and Analysis; Regional Co-ordination.

 - Strategic Planning, Policy and Evaluation Branch

This branch sets out the CIO's strategic framework, plans and goals. It also evaluates and measures departmental activities, and accordingly prepares performance reports. The Branch provides strategic advice for the CIO's activities and advises on policies and programs relating to government-wide communications.
 - Research and Analysis Branch

In collaboration with other branches, this branch determines the CIO's research objectives, needs and priorities. It then designs, develops and implements relevant research-related activities and products. These are shared throughout the Government of Canada to increase understanding of the societal trends, factors, issues and events affecting government communications. The branch also coordinates public opinion research for the Government of Canada as a whole in order to ensure concerted planning and sharing in this area of activity.

- Regional Coordination Branch
With a communications office in each province, CIO's Regional Co-ordination Branch aims to make Canadians more aware of the programs and services available to them in communities throughout the country. Regional communication coordinators work closely with senior officials of federal departments to improve corporate communications for the Government of Canada.
- Operations Sector
This sector, in partnership with governmental and non-governmental partners, designs and delivers communications products, services and activities that respond to Canadians' needs and desires for information. Through its media monitoring and tracking of government-related events and co-ordination of Ministerial tours in Quebec, the Operations Sector is able to monitor current and emerging trends that influence the achievement of the CIO's strategic objectives. Through its outreach and community relations programs, the CIO is able to reach out to various segments of the population and inform them about the government's key priorities, programs and services. The Operations Sector is composed of three branches: Communications; Outreach; and Information Services and Operations.
 - Communications Branch
The Communications Branch develops new products and services that respond to Canadians' needs and desires for information about their country and the programs and services available from the Government of Canada. Among the branch's activities are communications planning, advertising and marketing, publishing, media relations, coordination of the federal program of fairs and exhibits and public education projects. The Communications Branch works with a variety of government departments to achieve greater coordination of the government's communications activities

and to ensure that they are relevant and reflect the realities of Canada's various regions and communities.

- Information Services and Operations Branch

This branch is responsible for following media coverage of current events for the Canada Information Office and for the Government of Canada. It regularly prepares and distributes calendars of activities related to those issues. The Branch also assists in the co-ordination of Ministerial tours in Quebec.

- Outreach Branch

Outreach runs a community relations program that helps improve communications between the government and Canadians. The Branch works with decision makers, community and opinion leaders, and associations. Through partnerships with these groups, Outreach undertakes citizen-focused activities at national, regional and local levels to promote Government of Canada programs and services to the public. These activities help inform Canadians about the presence and relevance of government across the country and in their local communities (Canada, CIO, 2001b).

5.3.2.3 *Some of the research conducted by the CIO*

“Research and analysis helps the Canada Information Office and government departments respond better to the information needs of Canadians. The CIO conducts research to find out what's on the minds of Canadians, what information they want, and what form they want it in. They do this through:

- public opinion polls, surveys, and other research
- consultation with citizens and national, regional and local groups
- media monitoring.

The CIO shares their findings to add to understanding of Canadians' communications preferences, their top concerns and priorities, and how they differ across the country and over time. Research findings are available on the CIO website. Armed with their research findings, the CIO works with government departments to plan communications that meet Canadians' needs" (Canada, CIO, 2001c).

Since 1998, the Research and Analysis Branch of the CIO has been conducting quarterly communications surveys amongst Canadians through a private sector research company. The *Spring 2001 Listening to Canadians Communications Survey* was conducted in May 2001 by means of telephone interviews with a total sample of 4 704 adult Canadians aged 18 years and older. The maximum margin of error for the total sample at a 95 percent confidence interval, is 1,5 percent. In addition to the Spring survey, the CIO conducted four sets of focus groups in May 2001 to add further insight into the quantitative analysis (Canada, CIO, 2001d).

Through the *Listening to Canadians Communications survey* "the CIO's public opinion research continues to measure Canadians' views on public policy priorities and their assessment of how the government responds to their priorities. The Spring 2001 survey also focused on the public's evaluation of the government in its role as a provider of a wide range of services to Canadians. The research looked at satisfaction with methods of service delivery, views on the advantages and disadvantages of the different methods, and expectations for future service delivery. The research also continued to track Canadians' use of the Internet and government websites" (Canada, CIO, 2001d).

From the conclusion contained in the *Spring 2001 Communications Survey Report*, it is obvious that the results of this research project can be used extensively for strategic and corporate communication strategy planning:

The survey reveals above all a shifting public environment.

In Spring 2001, Canadians were less optimistic about the short-term prospects for the economy than they were in Spring 2000. This lower level of optimism has negatively impacted on the government's performance assessment on managing the economy and its overall performance assessment.

Canadians gave higher priority to the environment, food safety and Canadian unity. In contrast, the priority accorded to taxation declined. Top-of-mind mentions of health also declined.

There were increased performance evaluations in a number of areas including the environment, food, safety, crime and justice, promoting trade and farm income.

Management of the economy and service ratings appear to be the most important drivers of the government's overall performance evaluation.

For the most part, Canadians were satisfied with the service they received from the Government of Canada. They contacted the government by the method of their choice and the information they received met all or part of their needs.

Awareness of the 1 800 number is increasing among those who use the telephone to contact the government.

Awareness of the government's main website is also higher among those who use the Internet to contact the government.

The Internet is driving Canadians' expectations of improving service delivery in the future, and is part of the reason they believe government service has improved over the past five years. However, focus groups suggest that Canadians are concerned about people without Internet access and the ability of these people to access services. Therefore, in the near future, regardless of changing technology, personal service via the mail, telephone and in person will remain important to Canadians (Canada, CIO, 2001d).

5.3.2.4 Summary: Canada Information Office – the role of research

The two principal sectors of the CIO are the Planning, Research and Regional Coordination Sector, and the Operations Sector.

Through the Planning, Research and Regional Coordination Sector, the CIO coordinates public opinion research for the Government of Canada as a whole and develops corporate communication initiatives for government on the basis of public opinion and communications research. Research results are shared throughout the Government of Canada and increases understanding of societal trends, factors, issues and events affecting government communications.

Through a quarterly quantitative survey outsourced to a private sector research company, the CIO tracks public opinion on various issues relevant in government communications. The results of this research project are available to all Canadians – on the CIO website. Since May 2001 this quarterly quantitative research project is complemented by focus group research – an initiative increasing the understanding gained through the quantitative research.

The Operations Sector works in partnership with both governmental and non-governmental partners to design and deliver communication products, services and activities in response to the information needs of Canadians. The Sector's

responsibilities include media monitoring, tracking government-related events and reaching out to various segments of the population to inform them about the government's priorities, programmes and services.

5.3.3 United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom (UK), both the Central Office of Information (COI) and the Government Information and Communication Service (GICS) have a role and responsibility regarding government communication and the dissemination of government information. The researcher describes the role and responsibilities of both organisations, as well as the use of research by these two organisations in the UK to enhance the effectiveness of government communications and information work.

5.3.3.1 The Central Office of Information

(a) History and statutory background

According to COI's Annual Report for 2000-2001 (United Kingdom, COI, 2001a), the organisation "was established in 1946 after the demise of the wartime Ministry of Information when responsibility for information policy was resumed by departmental Ministers. COI became a common service agency, concentrating expertise to avoid a wasteful duplication of specialists throughout Whitehall and taking advantage of centralised purchasing. In April 1981 the then Prime Minister approved the move to a repayment service, which was introduced on 1 April 1984."

It was only on 5 April 1990, more than forty years after its establishment, that COI became a Vote funded executive agency, and on 1 April 1991

became a trading fund under the Central Office of Information Trading Fund Order 1991 (United Kingdom, COI, 2001a).

On 22 June 1992 Ministerial responsibility for the COI was transferred to the Minister for the Cabinet Office from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Since that date COI has been a department of the Minister for the Cabinet Office, who is accountable to Parliament and its Select Committees for all COI's activities. Taking into account the advice of the Chief Executive, the Minister determines the overall policy and financial framework within which COI operates but does not normally become involved in day-to-day management (United Kingdom, COI, 2001a).

The Chief Executive of COI is also the Accounting Officer and is formally responsible to the Minister for the Cabinet Office for the operations of the agency within the overall framework set out in COI's framework document. COI continues to receive, outside of the trading fund, a small voted provision in respect of central advisory services. This service is accounted for separately through COI's appropriation account (United Kingdom, COI, 2001a).

(b) Purpose, role, aim and objectives

According to its Annual Report for 2000-2001 (United Kingdom, COI, 2001a) the purpose, role, aim and objectives of COI are:

As the government's executive agency for publicity procurement, COI's purpose is to help departments and agencies secure their policy objectives, while achieving:

- Maximum effectiveness; and
- Best value for money.

The role of COI is to offer central government consultancy, procurement and project management in a range of marketing and publicity services, also providing it with a direct representation service to the regional news media. In essence, COI acts as an agent between central government and private sector suppliers. It does not seek to carry out activities for which a sustainable and effective private sector market exists, and regularly reviews and redefines its business in the light of marketplace developments.

The aim of the COI is to enable central government to secure its policy objectives through achieving maximum communication effectiveness and best value for money.

COI's objectives are to improve the effectiveness of and add value to its clients' publicity programmes through its consultancy, procurement and project management services across all communication channels and through its direct representation service to the news media in the regions.

In line with the principles of 'Service First', COI is committed to providing a measurable quality of service to its customers, with specific targets for improvement in its customer satisfaction levels, as well as meeting financial and efficiency targets set by its Minister.

The GICS explains on its website that: The COI is tasked with recovering the cost of the services it provides to its clients, but not with making a profit. To enable clients to budget effectively, it issues cost estimates for the services to be provided and these costs are fixed, unless the brief changes, or there is a clearly viable element to the cost (for example response-handling projects). In most cases the cost of the COI's input

into the project will be shown as a time charge that is added to the cost (net of discounts obtained) of services it buys in on the client's behalf (United Kingdom, GICS, 2001a).

It is important to note that departments are not compelled to use COI services but that the rationale for doing so is based on the value its services can add to the project (United Kingdom, GICS, 2001a).

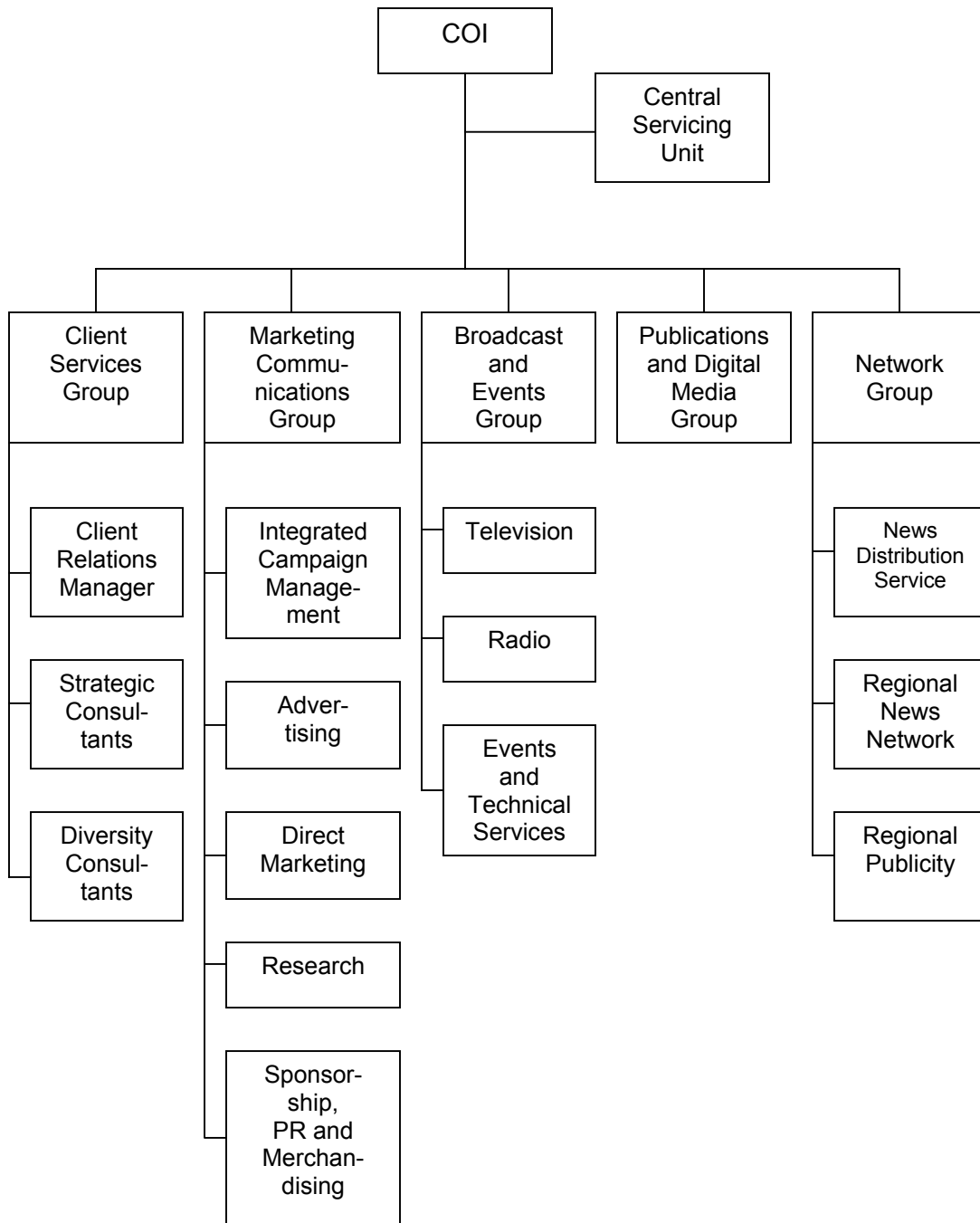
(c) Core services and structure

The COI's core services, according to the 2000-2001 Annual Report of the organisation, are threefold:

- providing strategic advice to departments and agencies on achieving their communications objectives
- providing purchasing and project management services for implementing those strategies
- supplying directly those services which, for propriety or other reasons, can only be provided by a government organisation (such as those provided by the COI Regional News Network (United Kingdom, COI, 2001a).

The COI's services are provided to government departments and agencies through a structure of five line-function or servicing units. The serving units are supported by the Central Servicing Unit, responsible for the administrative and/or corporate services aspects – see figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2: COI – structure, 2001¹⁷



¹⁷ Researcher's own compilation

The COI's services available to clients, as delivered through the different service groups, are:

- Client Services Group

This group offers clients the following:

- a dedicated client relations manager, who if required, will lead an integrated COI client or project team
- strategic consultants who will develop creative, innovative and effective communications and marketing strategies
- diversity consultants who can advise on how best to communicate with minority ethnic communities or with people with sensory impairments or learning difficulties.

- Marketing Communications Group

- Integrated Campaign Management

For an integrated approach COI can provide advice on setting objectives, communication strategy, budget requirements and the inter-media decision. As a communications consultant COI integrate a comprehensive mix of marketing tools to achieve effective results. This service also extends to campaign websites and digital broadcast.

- Advertising

COI project manages advertising campaigns to ensure that client objectives are achieved. From appointing an agency, to carrying out research and analysing the response, COI will initiate a campaign and manage it through to completion. COI's centralised media buying unit also enables clients, whether large or small, to gain maximum value for money.

- Direct Marketing

COI's direct marketing services include telemarketing, response fulfilment, direct mail, household drops and inserts. Clients are assisted in the planning, procurement, project management and

evaluation of all activities. Bulk and complex distributions are also undertaken, as well as database construction and application.

- Research
COI uses its research expertise to create effective and measurable communication strategies. With its in-depth knowledge of the research industry, COI devises, plans and manages strategic, developmental and evaluation research for all types of communication.
- Sponsorship, Public Relations (PR) and Merchandising
COI generates financial and in-kind support for government and public sector initiatives and coordinates editorial activity to promote campaigns through the media. Services include project management, consultancy, strategic and tactical planning, research, editorial services and merchandising.
- Broadcast and Events Group
 - Television (TV)
COI undertakes the procurement and management of TV commercials, public service TV fillers, corporate and specialist videos, video news releases, Digital Versatile Disks (DVDs), Compact Disk-Read Only Memory (CD-ROMs) and websites involving new video footage. COI also markets TV fillers to BBC, Independent Television (ITV), cable and satellite stations and other appropriate outlets.
 - Radio
COI procures and manages the production of radio commercials, audio tapes, live interviews, editorial material, public service fillers and audio material for websites.
 - Events and Technical Services
COI delivers a full service for large and small conferences, seminars, press launches and exhibitions, in the UK and overseas.

Additional services include: supplying and procuring equipment for outside broadcasts; duplicating videos, DVDs and CD-ROMs; and Houses of Parliament TV and audio links.

- Publications and Digital Media Group

COI provides solutions across a broad range of print and digital media to help clients reach diverse audiences and achieve their communications objectives. Services for all print and digital media publications include: project management; writing, editing and proofreading; web production, including websites, CD-ROMs, kiosks and other digital media; graphic design; procurement specialists and print production; branding and design management; translations; information architecture design; web usability and access consultation and testing; parallel publishing; and indexing.

- Network Group

- News Distribution Service (NDS)

COI distributes news releases to national broadcast and print media as well as the main regional groups in the UK. Operating a 24-hour service, news releases are sent by hand, by post or electronically. News is also distributed on the Internet and on CD-ROMs.

- Regional News Network

COI operates a network of 11 regional offices to manage press activity across the UK. Services include: representing clients to regional news media; initiating press releases and writing features for a local audience; organising VIP visits; media monitoring and analysis; media training; emergency media planning; and crisis management.

- Regional Publicity

COI implements regionally focused communications through its countrywide network. Services include: advertising; media buying;

brochures/leaflets; television, radio and video services; and exhibitions (United Kingdom, COI, 2001a).

From the perspective of this study, the following remark by the Chief Executive of the COI in the foreword of the organisation's Annual Report for 2000-2001 is meaningful and encouraging: "Existing services have been in great demand, particularly in the area of research, as our clients and we increasingly focus on measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of communications" (United Kingdom, COI, 2001a).

5.3.3.2 *The Government Information and Communication Service*

The role of the Government Information and Communication Service (GICS) is to help government to fulfill its duty to communicate to the public and to exercise its right to be heard. The GICS has four strategic objectives:

- to explain the working policies and actions of Ministers and their departments, including their executive agencies
- to create awareness of the rights, benefits and obligations of individual citizens and groups of citizens
- to persuade groups of citizens to act in accordance with agreed policies in defined circumstances; and
- to ensure and demonstrate the proper use of taxpayers' money

(United Kingdom, GICS, 2001b).

GICS staff are employed across government – by all government departments, the Prime Minister's office and the Cabinet Office, and in a great many executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies. It is one of the few professional disciplines to do so. Communication directorates in the different institutions "usually comprise two major branches – News and Marketing Communications. The work of the News and Marketing staff is intertwined – the integrations of paid

and free media, coordinated with an organisation's policy, is an essential part of all communication strategies. The aim is to ensure that clear messages are conveyed to the whole target audience in the most cost-effective way" (United Kingdom, GICS, 2001b).

The directorates in the different government institutions do not all look exactly the same. For example, smaller departments or agencies often have multidisciplinary staff, covering both news and marketing (United Kingdom, GICS, 2001b).

The work of the two major branches usually, comprising communication directorates in the different government institutions, is explained on the GICS website:

A typical large News Branch comprises a press office with desks allocated to groups of policies or ministerial responsibilities. Press officers will:

- work with other officials to draw up handling plans for issues or announcements
- answer news media telephone enquiries
- draft and issue press notices and press articles
- organise press conferences
- organise and support the media aspects of ministerial visits.

News branches are open all hours and seven days a week. Their aim is to get maximum positive publicity for announcements and to act quickly and effectively to correct errors and omissions in reporting.

The News branch will often have a coordination and planning unit:

- compiling a detailed forward diary

- liaising with the Strategic Communication Unit (SCU) at 10 Downing Street (Office of the Premier)
- monitoring and contributing to the on-line interdepartmental diary and briefing system (AGENDA) and other electronic briefing systems
- dealing with long-term strategy, campaign extension and the non-news media.

Co-ordination staff work through a range of contacts: press and publicity officers, officials in the Department and its agencies, and Downing Street colleagues. Individual plans complement overall campaigns or presentational strategies that consider how a whole range of departmental issues and messages fit together over time.

The Marketing Communications Branch will use paid publicity to present departmental policies to target audiences, through a range of paid-for techniques. These can include advertising, publications, exhibitions, conferences, films, videos or a mix of some or all.

The Marketing Communications Branch will have publicity desks covering policy areas. They will work with policy officials to draw up direct communication strategies to support policy implementation. Business skills are critical to much of this work and all publicity officers have to be expert project managers. Spending money to market departmental policy in this way needs careful consideration and advance planning. It is only undertaken as part of clear strategy that also maximises the opportunities for free publicity and takes account of the needs of the news media (United Kingdom, GICS, 2001b).

Many Communication directorates now have additional areas of responsibility, e.g. internal communication, website management, the departmental library and public enquiries. A modern directorate's portfolio can therefore include all the

forms of mass communication used to reach internal and external audiences (United Kingdom, GICS, 2001b).

5.3.3.3 *Government communications research in the United Kingdom*

The importance of using research to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information is repeatedly emphasised in official documentation of both COI and GICS. The *GICS Toolkit* provides practical benchmarks for good practice across many GICS fields. It picks up some themes in detail and describes the core standards and facilities that departments and major agencies are expected to provide. With regard to research the *Toolkit* states: “Research is about increasing the change that your publicity campaign will be successful by investigating the target audience, the means of communication, or both” (United Kingdom, GICS, 2001a).

Research is one of the professional services that can be provided to government departments and agencies by COI. Leading research agencies are employed to carry out research on behalf of government (United Kingdom, COI, n.d.: 52). Using their “research expertise and in depth knowledge of the research industry”, COI “devise, plan and manage strategic, developmental and evaluation research for all types of communication” (United Kingdom, COI website, 2001).

The *GICS Toolkit* (United Kingdom, GICS, 2001a) provides the following short description to explain above-mentioned types of research:

- *Strategic research* helps to establish which messages will be most effective in reaching the target audience and which forms of communication should be used. It is usually best achieved by qualitative research. Representative samples of the target market are interviewed in an unstructured way to identify their relevant attitudes, feelings and behaviour relating to the subject of the campaign, and their media habits.

- *Creative development research* establishes the best way to execute or express a communication strategy using a chosen medium. It usually involves qualitative research, looking at early, unfinished versions of advertisements or other types of publicity. The aim is to see which creative route best communicates the agreed strategy.
- *Evaluating research (audience and media)* finds out how well the campaign has performed against predefined objectives. It usually involves quantitative audience research to take robust measurements of spontaneous awareness of the campaign and of the media used, prompted awareness/recognition of the campaign and attitudes, knowledge and behaviour relating to the campaign messages. It can also be useful – especially with lower-budget, PR-based campaigns that are unlikely to be measurable in audience research – to conduct media evaluation. This will provide an objective measure of the extent to which your desired (and other) messages are reported on in the media.

In order to minimise duplication of effort, all “government surveys of the general public” need to be notified to the Office of National Statistics (United Kingdom, GICS, 2001a).

According to guidelines provided in the *GICS Toolkit*, the starting point in the development and evaluation of any campaign needs to be a “review of what is known about similar campaigns and about the target audience. This is best achieved by looking at related past research reports” (United Kingdom, GICS, 2001a). The COI updates a catalogue covering research over a period of ten years twice a year, and send it to clients. “This catalogue can be searched by client, subject audience, date and methodology to find studies that might be relevant. Once departments or agencies contact the COI and inform them about the research findings they are interested in, the COI will contact the relevant

client and check whether they would be comfortable to share the findings” (United Kingdom, COI, 2001b).

It is emphasised that “an effective campaign can only be produced efficiently if a full and clear brief is given to whoever is contracted to do the job” (United Kingdom, COI, n.d.: 22), and that research can play “an important part in informing the brief” (United Kingdom, GICS, 2001a). COI “uses its research expertise to create effective and measureable communication strategies” (United Kingdom, COI, 2001a).

It is furthermore emphasised that research should “preferably (within financial and time constraints) be carried out at key stages to evaluate effectiveness. General research milestones are:

- during the planning stages – to help define the target market and its current knowledge of the subject
- in the creative formulation stage – to ensure that the audience is receptive to the campaign material
- after the campaign has been completed – to measure its effectiveness”

(United Kingdom, GICS, 2001a).

The GICS shares the viewpoint that research should not be a once-off exercise, and emphasise that research results can be useful in planning communications in future:

Ideally, the research process should be seen as continuous; strategic research precedes and feeds into creative development work, followed by evaluation after the campaign, when findings from the whole campaign are fed into an ongoing body of knowledge. Campaign planners can then use this knowledge as reference when starting a new or related campaign. In addition, the results of the

evaluative research should enable realistic targets to be set at the start of the next related campaign (United Kingdom, GICS, 2001a).

The GICS perceives the measurement of performance as essential for “demonstrating value for money and effectiveness, and for reviewing systems and efficiency.” Departments are advised that they should evaluate campaigns against their objectives through:

- tracking research (but watch the cost)
- coverage analysis, records and evaluation reports for Ministers (occasionally through commercial systems; routinely in-house)
- COI regional reports
- surveys of Ministers and clients
- compilation of records and cuttings
- wash-up sessions: lessons learned for manual and training

(United Kingdom, GICS, 2001a).

Providing advice to government communicators with the objective “to make government information and advice more accessible to women”, the GICS emphasises the importance of media research to enable communicators to choose media that can enhance “accessibility and communication” with the target groups: “Readership, circulation, listenership and viewing figures are available for most titles, channels and programmes to help you (and the agencies working on your behalf) select the most accessible media opportunities for your audience. Media research systems such as TGI (Target Group Index) provide broad media preferences that can be analysed in many ways – both demographic and behavioural. Even if you are not placing paid publicity, consulting such data may help you choose which PR opportunities to pursue” (United Kingdom, GICS, 2001a).

Evaluating the success of coverage of a campaign in the media is described by GICS as “a complex exercise, but one that provides valuable data about whether the objectives of your campaign were achieved – in terms of audience reach, content and volume”. It is emphasised that “evaluation needs to be built into planning, not tacked on as an afterthought. If a campaign includes paid publicity elements, make sure that evaluation of all elements is compatible”. GICS furthermore explains to the government communicators that “there are many potential approaches to evaluation: the key is to start with clear objectives. Keep it simple and ensure that results are presented in a clear and understandable form – evaluation is wasted unless the results are read and acted upon. Avoid superficially attractive but meaningless measurements such as advertising value equivalents; results must be credible, verifiable and objective” (United Kingdom, GICS, 2001a).

Three examples of the government communication research conducted in the United Kingdom, are:

- In 1999, towards the end of the previous millennium, the COI managed a monthly research monitor which tracked public concern about the *Millennium Bug* and assessed the impact of the campaign. According to the research monitor, the campaign was shown to have been “extremely effective:
 - around 70 percent of those aware of the Bug recall the campaign
 - public concern about the effect of the Bug has declined
 - nearly 60 percent of people who had received a copy of the booklet claim to have kept it for future reference.

Since the launch of the campaign the number of people who were of the opinion that the government was providing people with enough information about the *Bug* increased significantly” (United Kingdom, COI, 2000).

- Secondly, research conducted into direct mail shows evidence to suggest that “there is a male and female writing style and that men and women react differently to certain features of written communication (bullet points, use of picture, colour etc)” (United Kingdom, GICS, 2001a).

Also interesting is the COI’s Customer Satisfaction Index:

Customer satisfaction is a vital measure of quality. The Customer Satisfaction Index is compiled from the questionnaires the clients complete at the end of each job. Marks range from 1 (not satisfied at all) to 10 (extremely satisfied). The target average mark for 2000-01 was 8.25. This was exceeded, with an average score of 8.34. The COI exceeded targets for response rates and for minimising unacceptable scores (United Kingdom, COI, 2001a).

As part of its *Toolkit* GICS developed a checklist to assist GICS officials to conduct market research and campaign evaluation in marketing communication with the objective “to provide objective evidence from the marketplace with which to help in the development and/or evaluation of a publicity campaign.” The *GICS Toolkit* provides the following:

- find out whether research already exists on similar campaigns or audiences
- consider and plan the use of research at three different stages: strategic, creative and evaluative
- allow time for each of these stages
- revisit the definition of your target audience (this needs to be crystal clear for research purposes)
- revisit your campaign objectives (are these quantifiable and realistic for evaluation purposes?)
- allow time for access to customer or other lists for research purposes

- allow time for design and production of publicity material to be evaluated in research, if appropriate
- allow time for ministerial approval and for Office for National Statistics approval (of large surveys of businesses)
- issue contract

(United Kingdom, GICS, 2001a).

5.3.3.4 *Summary: COI and GICS – the role of research*

Research is one of the many professional communication services that can be provided to government departments and agencies by the COI. According to the COI its research services are in great demand as both the organisation itself and its clients increasingly focus on measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of communication.

Both COI and GICS repeatedly emphasise the importance of using research to enhance the effectiveness of government communication initiatives. Both organisations also emphasise that research should not be a once-off exercise – that relevant research should be conducted at various key stages of any communication initiative. GICS points out that results of evaluative research should enable realistic targets to be set for a next related campaign, and developed a checklist to assist their officials to conduct market research and campaign evaluation.

Although departments are not compelled to use COI services, the services offered can help departments and agencies to achieve maximum effectiveness and best value for money. In order to minimise duplication the Office of National Statistics must be notified of all government surveys conducted amongst the general public. Making available a list of such surveys together with a catalogue

of government communications and information research updated by COI twice a year can contribute to sharing of findings and minimising of duplication.

5.4 GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO RESEARCH - A SHORT DISCUSSION REGARDING THE POSITION IN SOME OTHER COUNTRIES

The researcher shortly discusses government communication and dissemination of government information in various other countries – that is countries that, according to information available to the researcher, do not make use of research to the same extent as Australia, Canada and the UK to enhance effective government communication. Specific reference is made to the application of research – or the absence thereof.

5.4.1 Europe

5.4.1.1 Denmark

In *Denmark* the information service of government is “a mere database and editorial entity that compiles and distributes information documents. It also gives professional advice on communication” (Comtask, 1996c:52-53). Unfortunately the researcher does not have information available regarding the kind of “professional advice” provided. Departments are not obliged to use this service that they need to pay for if used. Every government department in Denmark “has a small information section – three persons for a large department and one or even none for smaller departments. There are no spokespersons in the ministries or departments” (Comtask, 1996c:52). According to the Comtask group, the Ministers themselves are “exceptionally” accessible. Ministers have

weekly press briefings and every Friday at 19:00 the government has a five minute slot on television to relay information. The television corporation has the ultimate say as to what information will be used and how (Comtask, 1996c:52). The Comtask group expressed the sentiment that this five minute television broadcast “fails from a communication point of view” (Comtask, 1996c:52).

The need for appropriate research was obvious from discussions the Comtask group had in Denmark. Senior people interviewed at the information service of government complained that they receive no feedback on the information that is relayed. Furthermore, according to people in the media, “the state floods them with useless information” (Comtask, 1996c:53).

The researcher realises that, since the investigation of Comtask in 1996, some changes may have been introduced in government communications in Denmark – including the use of research to enhance effectiveness. Unfortunately relevant information on the website of the Prime Minister of Denmark is only available in Danish (Denmark, Statsministeriet, 2001).

5.4.1.2 *France*

In *France* the Cabinet’s spokesperson can be any minister – not necessarily the minister responsible for any specific department. “After every Cabinet meeting it is decided what will be communicated at a weekly press conference. The aim is not only to announce government decisions, but to motivate decisions for public consumption. The spokesperson relays information about all departments at the press conference of the Cabinet” (Comtask, 1996c:47). The approach of the *Service D’Information du Gouvernement* (SIG), the information service of the government, is increasingly on centralisation. SIG is part of the Office of the Prime Minister and the director of SIG is in continual communication with the

Prime Minister or his communication staff. The services rendered by SIG include the following:

- liaison with advertising agencies with regard to particular campaigns (the SIG get discount prices for the advertising campaigns of any department)
- organisation of surveys regarding certain matters
- public relations
- passing on of policy information to members of Parliament and to the public service
- passing on of information to the media
- documentation about all aspects of the government
- coordination of different messages from state departments, and
- passing on of information to the public

(Comtask, 1996c:47-48).

Although “organisation of surveys” is listed as one of the services rendered by SIG, no specific information could be obtained in this regard from either the Comtask report or the relevant website. Information regarding the services of the SIG is available on the website of the Office of the Premier – unfortunately only in French (France, Site du Premier Ministre, 2001).

According to discussions the Comtask group had with a prominent advertising agency, the French government “does not communicate, but seems to be more in the manner of decrees from the top” (Comtask, 1996c:46). The advertising agency further suggested that “government communication must abolish one-way communication” and that it “should be moulded in dialogue situations and context, e.g. phone-in television and radio programmes, discussions with businessmen, etc.” (Comtask, 1996c:47).

5.4.1.3 *Belgium*

In Belgium, the Federal Information Service is part of the Office of the Prime Minister. The Board of Directors is “the umbrella body that consists of representatives of ministries and ministries of the political parties represented in Parliament. Under leadership of the director-general (a public servant), the Information Service consists of four main sections:

- distribution of information via the media, Internet, post offices and publications
- the editorial board that has to compile the information
- a section for government campaigns or priorities and projects about focal issues (general socio-economic administrative issues and political decisions of the federal cabinet, and
- a section for documentation and databases”

(Comtask, 1996c:49).

The Federal Information Service outsources many projects to the private sector. Every ministry also has its own departmental and political communication section that is autonomous, but according to the Comtask group, there is a kind of “cautious control” of the communication services of ministries by the office of the Federal Information Service (Comtask, 1996c:49).

No reference was made by Comtask to any research conducted by the Federal Information Service to enhance the effectiveness of their work, but the researcher realises that some changes may have been introduced since the Comtask investigation. Unfortunately no relevant information is contained on the applicable website (Belgium, 2001).

5.4.1.4 Germany

In Germany every department has its own information service standing on two legs: a political leg consisting of the minister and his/her spokesperson and a leg for general government information. Overall government communication is centralised in the *Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung* (Press and Information Office of the Federal Government) in the Office of the Chancellor. The Press and Information Office gathers information that can be of use to the government by means of a 24-hour monitoring system of world media. They provide two documents daily to senior public servants, members of Parliament, ministers and the Chancellor about news in the world media that may be of relevance to the German government. The Office furthermore helps with the coordination and formulation of government's point of view, publishes and distributes official government statements after consultation and is available for press enquiries 24 hours a day. The Office also has a publication section that publishes widely – both nationally and internationally – through the use of private companies (Comtask, 1996c:54-55).

According to the report of the Comtask group the German Press and Information Office “uses opinion polls extensively for feedback” and also “develops further strategy on the basis of the opinion polls” (Comtask, 1996c:55). Unfortunately the Comtask report does not contain any information on whether the German Press and Information Office provides research support and/or advice to the information components of the different ministries and departments. Attempts by the researcher to obtain more and updated information failed – primarily because the information contained on the website (Germany, 2001) is only available in German.

5.4.1.5 *The Netherlands*

In the Netherlands each minister has an information service at its disposal. These services are responsible for handling press contacts, issuing press releases, distributing information brochures, organising mass media information campaigns, handling internal information and developing other information activities in their specific ministry's policy areas. The ministers also have a collective responsibility for government policy as a whole. The Prime Minister's role in coordinating general government policy means that he is also responsible for providing information about this policy (Volmer, 1994:1-2).

The Netherlands Government Information Service or *Rijkvoorlichtingsdienst* (RVD) plays a central role in information about government policy. It forms part of the Ministry of General Affairs which is the Prime Minister's department, responsible for coordinating general government policy. The RVD has a different role than the other departmental information services, providing a coordinating and supporting function and providing services to other information departments. The RVD's involvement in general government policy mostly concerns information about weekly Cabinet meetings. The RVD furthermore provides the Prime Minister, his advisors and senior civil servants within the Ministry of General Affairs with information about developments and issues which may be relevant, either directly or indirectly, to the policy to be adopted (Volmer, 1994:8). The task of the RVD is summarised as follows on the RVD website: "To communicate with the media on behalf of the Prime Minister and the government; to provide public information on government policy, the Prime Minister and the Ministry of General Affairs, and the Royal House; to coordinate, facilitate and advise on public information matters involving more than one ministry; and to provide public information on behalf of all the ministries" (The Netherlands, Government Information Service, 2001).

The RVD has a special department that produces and distributes information material, films, videos and exhibitions for use by government bodies and helps to develop multi-media communication strategies and plays an important role in the exploitation of audio-visual material. Using the RVD can be of financial benefit to departments as the service uses its centralised contracts with the media to obtain bulk discount on advertising for customers (Volmer, 1994:9).

The organisation also provides support to ministries in preparatory and evaluatory research for information campaigns and other purposes. This includes research into specific target groups, advising on the different media available, pre-testing information material and assessing whether information activities have been effective (Volmer, 1994:9).

5.4.2 Africa

5.4.2.1 Namibia

In Namibia each Ministry has a responsibility to make information available regarding its field of responsibility. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information and Broadcasting provides an information service through three sections:

- The Media Liaison division is “tasked with the responsibility of gathering and disseminating news and information emanating from all government institutions to local and foreign media, foreign missions in Namibia and the public.
- The Directorate Print Media and Regional Offices is responsible for the production of printed material and collection, processing and dissemination of information on government policies and initiatives through printed media and through its library and regional offices. One of its key objectives is to plan and execute national information campaigns and publish printed material, including a monthly magazine, *Namibia*

Review, that provides information on government policy and developmental issues (Namibia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information and Broadcasting, 2001).

- The Directorate Audiovisual Media and Namibia Communications Commission (NCC) has to produce and disseminate audiovisual material on the government, its policies, its programmes and actions and to educate and entertain the public, especially in areas where the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) cannot reach. The NCC is tasked with the licencing of telecommunications equipment and frequency management on a national level.

“The Ministry has been a lead player in civic education campaigns on various issues including voters’ education, gender, population, health and international expositions in which Namibia participates” (Namibia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information and Broadcasting, 2001).

No information is provided on any initiatives to get feedback from clients through any means – e.g. perceptions expressed in the media, community meetings or through applying any research methodology.

5.4.2.2 *Botswana*

The role of the Department of Information and Broadcasting in *Botswana* is “to win and retain the consent of the people to the policies, aims and objectives of the government and to *provide feedback*¹⁸.” The other role is “to educate and entertain the people, in accordance with the national development aims and goals” (Botswana, Ministry of State President, 2001).

¹⁸ Researcher’s emphasis

The Department consists of three main media organs:

- the Botswana Press Agency and Publication section resorts under the *Information Division*
- the *Broadcast Division* consists of Culture and Entertainment, and News and Current Affairs
- the *Engineering Division* comprises of the Transmitter and Studio sections and its responsibilities include the planning of the frequencies of the transmitters, making specifications for studio and transmitter equipment as well as technical production and transmission of Radio Botswana programmes (Botswana, Ministry of State President, 2001).

Despite reference to “providing feedback” as being part of the aims and objectives of the Department of Information and Broadcasting, no information is provided on how the Department goes about to provide feedback from the people to the government. No reference is made to any research conducted by the Department of Information and Broadcasting to enhance effectiveness of government communication and information dissemination.

5.4.2.3 *Zambia*

According to information obtained from the website of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services, the Ministry “is responsible for policy information, analysis and coordination, and facilitates mobilisation of resources for effective implementation of media programmes. This involves liaising and networking on all media related issues with the media industry at national, regional and international levels to ensure media responsiveness to the needs of society” (Zambia, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services, 2001). No information is provided on the website regarding the processes followed by the Ministry to formulate policy, to do analysis and how they identify the needs of society.

The Zambia Information Services (ZIS) “serves as the public relations unit of the government. Its roles include carrying out awareness campaigns of national activities, highlighting government policies and providing a feedback mechanism between government and the citizenry. ZIS plays a vital role in the dissemination of information to the public through its six provincial newspapers, ‘Z’ magazine, ad hoc publications, through news as well as the production of videos which are mostly used by the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC)” (Zambia, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services, 2001).

Although it is mentioned on the website that the roles of ZIS include “providing a feedback mechanism between government and the citizenry”, no information is provided to explain how this role of feedback is fulfilled.

5.4.3 Other countries

5.4.3.1 Barbados

The Barbados Government Information Service (BGIS) “is responsible for the dissemination of public information to the various news media and the general public.” The BGIS furthermore “highlights and elucidates various government policies, plans, programmes and projects.” The organisation is “actively involved in training other Departments of government in the public relations discipline, servicing information requests from the public as well as the monitoring of public response to government’s work” (Barbados, Government Information Service, 2001).

Because no information is provided how BGIS monitors public response to government’s work, it is not known whether it is done through applying appropriate research methodologies. Other duties of BGIS include “coverage of Parliament, facilitating members of Cabinet at Parliamentary sittings, press

conferences and briefings for Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and other top public officials. The BGIS also provides press coverage of some overseas activities of government” (Barbados, Government Information Service, 2001).

5.4.3.2 *Jamaica*

The Jamaica Information Service (JIS), positioned in the Office of the Prime Minister, is “the multifaceted information agency of the government that gathers and disseminates information on government policies and programmes, locally and overseas.” As an Information Agency, the JIS provides a full range of information and communication services to government ministries and agencies, including the following:

- public relations programmes
- media consultancy
- research services
- cover national and other news-making events
- news and feature writing
- research, write, design and print sundry publications
- develop and implement advertising campaigns
- speech writing
- produce radio and television shows
- meeting planning
- provide videographic services
- provide town crier services
- provide photography services
- mount exhibitions

(Jamaica, Information Service, 2001).

Although no reference is made to specific research projects conducted, the researcher’s interpretation of the information provided on the JIS website is that

the organisation indeed makes use of relevant research methodologies to enhance the effectiveness of government communication. A question remains whether JIS attends to most of these communication activities through own capacity as opposed to outsourcing it. The perception and question arise from the following statement on the JIS website: “The Jamaica Information Service has the physical infrastructure, equipment, resources and competence to become one of the largest public relations, advertising, research and printing facilities in Jamaica and the Caribbean” (Jamaica, Information Service, 2001).

5.4.3.3 *Hong Kong*

The mission of the Information Services Department in Hong Kong is “to publicise and promote the policies, actions and services of the government to the public in Hong Kong and the wider community abroad. The Department is organised in five divisions: Public Relations, Publicity, Overseas Public Relations, Visits and Information (Hong Kong, Information Services Department, 2001).

The News Sub-division in the Public Relations Division “is responsible for issuing to the media all government announcements, varying from information on matters of government policy to routine notices and weather reports. It channels information to newspapers, news agencies, radio and television stations; deals with press enquiries 24 hours a day; and, in times of emergency, becomes the nerve centre of all communications.” The Media Research Sub-division “monitors the print and electronic media to keep the government informed of public opinion.” Within the Publicity Division, the Promotions Sub-division “is the government’s in-house advertising agency” and “plans and implements major government publicity campaigns and supports promotional campaigns to educate the public on issues of major concern and to create awareness of civic responsibility”. The Creative Subdivision is responsible for all government design

and display services, and film and photographic work. The Publishing Sub-division is Hong Kong's biggest publisher in terms of the volume of publications it writes, edits, prints, sells and distributes on behalf of government" (Hong Kong, Information Services Department, 2001).

Other than the work of the Media Research Sub-division that monitors the media to keep the government informed of public opinion, no reference is made to any research that is conducted by the Department to enhance the effectiveness of their work or the communication of other departments and ministries. Because most of the information products are produced in-house it becomes even more important to conduct research by means of appropriate methodologies amongst the various target groups to ensure successful and cost-effective communication that is sensitive to the profile, needs and perceptions of customers.

5.4.3.4 *India*

In India the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), "through the mass communications media consisting of radio, television, films, the press, publications, advertising and traditional mode of dance and drama, plays a significant part in helping the people to have access to free flow of information. It also caters for the dissemination of knowledge and entertainment to all sections of society, striking a careful balance between public interest and commercial needs, in its delivery of services. The MIB is the apex body for formulation and administration of the rules and regulations and laws relating to information, broadcasting, the press and films. The Ministry is responsible for international cooperation in the field of mass media, films and broadcasting and interacts with its foreign counterparts on behalf of the Government of India" (India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2001). MIB has eleven media units:

- Press Information Bureau
- Research, Reference and Training Division

- Publications Division
- Photo Division
- Registrar of Newspapers for India
- Directorate of Field Publicity
- Song and Drama Division
- Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity
- Films Division
- Directorate of Film Festivals
- National Film Archives of India

(India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2001).

The Research, Reference and Training Division (RRTD) “functions as an information servicing agency for the MIB, its Media Units and their field offices. It serves as an information bank as well as an information feeder service to the Media Units to help in their programming and publicity campaigns. It also studies trends in mass communication media and maintains a reference and documentation service on mass communication. The division provides background, reference and research material and other facilities for the use of the Ministry, its Media Units and others involved in mass communication. The division also looks after the training aspect of the Indian Information Service (IIS) officers in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Mass Communication” (India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2001).

From the information provided in the previous paragraph, it is clear that the Research, Reference and Training Division does not conduct or commission any research within the context referred to in this research project. The functions of the Press Information Bureau include the responsibility to “provide feedback to their assigned Ministries/Departments on people’s reactions being reflected in the media towards government policies and programmes” (India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2001). The functions of the Directorate of Field

Publicity include “[gathering] people’s reactions to various programmes and policies of the government and their implementation down to the village level” (India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2001).

5.4.3.5 *United States*

The United States (US) has no information ministry to inform Americans within the borders of the country about their government’s policies, programmes and initiatives – it is prohibited by law. The White House (Office of the President) has a centralising and coordinating function regarding the provision of information to the media, and identifies stories of the day. The US government relies on a free and critical media to get its message across and to keep the government transparent and accountable (Comtask, 1996c: 7).

The internationally well-known market research company, Gallup, mentions on their website that “the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 mandated that customer satisfaction become a major consideration in determining the manner in which federal agencies are run in the US. Executive Order 12862 of 11 September 1993, states that the standard of quality for services provided to the public shall be: Customer service equal to the best in business” (The Gallup Organisation, 2000).

Unfortunately no information could be obtained from either the report on Comtask’s visit to the US or from any official US website to determine whether the US government conducted any research to determine whether either the population or the media is satisfied with the communication and information service they receive from the government.

The United States Information Agency (USIA) is the foreign communication and information service of the US government. The sole aim of USIA is “to

understand, inform and influence publics outside the USA in the promotion of the national interest of the US and to broaden dialogue between Americans, their institutions and counterparts abroad” (Comtask, 1996c:30). USIA assesses the world’s view of the United States through monitoring the media in each country where they have an embassy. According to the Comtask groups’ report on their international visits (Comtask, 1996c:32) USIA “also commissions public opinion polls on bilateral affairs.”

5.4.3.6 *Brazil*

In Brazil the Department of Social Communication is responsible for the process of informing Brazilian society about government. This Department works directly under the Presidency, headed by a Secretary with the status of a minister. The Secretary has three sub-Secretaries who deal with internal matters and he has a special advisor who is responsible for promoting Brazil abroad with the Department of Foreign Affairs. The responsibilities of the three sub-Secretaries are the following:

- The first deals with administration, and is also responsible for educational radio and television through the Pinto Foundation.
- The second deals with press relations, is the spokesperson for the President and attends Cabinet meetings. He provides information about government with the focus on the President at daily news briefings. With the support of this sub-Secretary, the Secretary attempts to coordinate information between departments and parastatals.
- The third, called the ‘institutional secretary’, deals with government advertising, the corporate image of government, develops a coordinated approach in negotiations with the media for advertising space and also oversees the production of brochures and pamphlets for use overseas (Comtask, 1996c:37-38).

Radio *Nacional* (or Radio Braz) is the state radio station which has five AM, FM and shortwave stations and one television station. It broadcasts in Brazil as well as to North and South America, Europe and Africa in Portuguese, French, German and English. Funding is 20 percent from advertising and the rest comes from government. The principle objective is to transmit government news and to act as a news agency for political and economic news to 400 stations. This is the home of *Voice of Brazil*, a one-hour programme which contains 30 minutes of government news followed by 30 minutes of excerpts of congressional debates. By law all radio stations in Brazil have to broadcast the *Voice of Brazil* at 19:00 each day. The Comtask group that visited Brazil, reports that they “asked everyone about the popularity of the programme and everyone said they switched off when the programme came on” (Comtask, 1996c:37). The Comtask group also remarked that “people in rural areas who did not have access to newspapers and other media listened because it was the only way they could learn what the government was doing” (Comtask, 1996c:37).

According to information available to the researcher, no research is conducted by the Department of Social Communication or by Radio Braz to assess the effectiveness of their initiatives.

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?

One of the secondary research objectives for this research (see paragraph 1.2) is to investigate and record the use of research by other governments to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information.

The most important lessons learnt from this investigation are:

- Corporate communications initiatives for government are developed on the basis of public opinion and communications research in some countries (Canada, Australia, Germany, The Netherlands, Jamaica)
- The provision of communication research advice and support to government is one of the functions of the central information agencies in some countries (Australia, Denmark, Germany)
- Guideline documents to assist government communicators in writing a brief to research consultants and/or to prepare research proposals were developed by the central information agencies in a few countries (Australia, United Kingdom)
- In some countries research to enhance the effectiveness of government communication is coordinated by the central information agency for government as a whole (Canada, United Kingdom, The Netherlands)
- The tendency is to outsource government communications research to the private sector (Canada, United Kingdom, Belgium)
- Bulk-buying of communications research services for government results in substantial cost savings (United Kingdom, The Netherlands)
- In some countries all government departments and agencies have to submit their communication research projects for approval and/or registration to a central office. In some countries these submissions are made to the central information agency whilst in other countries the submission is made to the central statistics agency in government (United Kingdom, Australia)
- Communication research results are sometimes shared throughout the government (Canada)
- In some countries a catalogue of government communications and information research is available to government communicators (Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, India)

- It is a matter of principle in some countries that all government information programmes should be based on relevant research (Australia, Jamaica)
- The importance of conducting research throughout the lifecycle of campaigns and not as a once-off exercise, is emphasized (United Kingdom, Australia)
- The results of evaluative research should assist in planning for future related campaigns, including the setting of realistic targets (United Kingdom, Germany)
- Different research methodologies – e.g. qualitative and quantitative – are used to complement each other in increasing the understanding of the research problem (Australia, Canada)
- Research into the needs of specific target groups is conducted additional to research amongst the broader population (United Kingdom, The Netherlands).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim with this research, as defined in paragraph 1.2, is to contribute towards improving of research used in South Africa – by government in general and by GCIS specifically – in order to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information. In this chapter the researcher reaches conclusions relating to the secondary research objectives (see page 2). The researcher furthermore makes 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. Lastly, the researcher suggests a few areas for further research within the area of this dissertation.

6.2 CONCLUSION

6.2.1 The application of sound theoretical principles

It is critically important that research is conducted in a responsible and scientifically correct way. As much as research can enhance effective government communications and contribute to cost-efficiency, it will be a waste of time and money to conduct research if its reliability and validity are under question. Researchers in government communication need to have appropriate knowledge and understanding of the basic characteristics and types of communication research; they need to be aware of the challenges that face

communication researchers and realise that research needs to be carried out as a systematic process involving the application of various relevant steps to ensure the success and quality of the research project.

The researcher is of the opinion that the majority of government communicators in South Africa do not have appropriate knowledge and understanding of the various aspects mentioned in the above-mentioned paragraph and discussed briefly in chapter 2. Together with inappropriate budget allocation and time constraints, it is sometimes extremely problematic for the knowledgeable communication researcher to assist government communicators towards achieving valid and reliable research results that can be used to enhance the effectiveness of government communications and information dissemination.

6.2.2 The use of research in government communication and information dissemination in South Africa

Available information indicates some sensitivity by government communicators in South Africa in the 1940s and 1950s for the importance to obtain information about people's needs and to obtain feedback from target groups. However, the first scientific research to enhance the effectiveness of the South African government's communication initiatives was only conducted in 1973.

With the establishment of the Directorate Research Coordination at the Bureau for Information, the South African government started making use of communication research to a growing extent. However, the researcher is of the opinion that the Bureau's research initiatives were originally primarily in support of the government's political interests and communication needs and not aimed at improving government information in the interest of the people. Since 1987, however, some research projects were aimed at determining the public's needs in terms of government communication and enhancing the effectiveness of some

initiatives to disseminate government information. From 1989 the Bureau assisted other government departments to conduct communication research, and its research also supported government communication and information dissemination in this regard to the public during the process of political transformation and democratisation in the country.

The request for research to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information increased during the period of SACS's existence (1991-1998). A growing number of research projects were conducted at the request of other government departments and to enhance the effectiveness of government communication campaigns. Most research projects conducted by SACS from 1991 onwards were conducted to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information regarding the process of negotiations and democratisation in the country and in support of communication by the SACS regional offices to promote inter-community relations.

Since the launch of GCIS in 1998, the importance of using research to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information has been emphasised more than ever before. The results of relevant communication research projects are used in the development of government's corporate communication initiatives. The corporate strategies of GCIS provide the strategic framework within which research is conducted. Research support is provided to other government role-players and inter-departmental initiatives in order to enhance effective communication and information dissemination.

There are various shortcomings in government communication research in South Africa at present. The research is often not conducted or used appropriately to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and information

dissemination initiatives. Furthermore, the results from communication research conducted by government are not used to the optimum due to a lack of coordination and sharing. Communication research is mostly not conducted throughout a campaign and it seems as if government is not allocating appropriate funding for communication research.

6.2.3 The use of research in government communication and information dissemination in other countries

In recent decades an ever-increasing number of governments all over the world are making use of research to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information. This includes governments in both developed and developing countries.

The researcher came to the conclusion that researchers in government communications in South Africa can learn some lessons from other countries in terms of the use of research to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information – see paragraph 5.5.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

What can be done in South Africa to improve the use of research to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information? On the basis of the aforementioned conclusions and the information contained in the previous chapters – in terms of the secondary research objectives – the researcher is of the opinion that the following recommendations could be considered:

- The value of research to enhance the effectiveness of government communication and the dissemination of government information needs to be conveyed and explained not only to government communicators, but also to senior management in other government departments
- As a matter of principle, all government communications initiatives should be based on relevant research. This includes research regarding communication campaigns, products, services and so forth.
- Research needs to be conducted throughout the process of any communication campaign, project or product and not as a once-off exercise. Research throughout the process is critically important to enhance effectiveness. This research can include needs analysis, developmental research, research to refine the creative and communication strategy, benchmark research, tracking research and evaluation to assess impact.
- Research needs to be conducted to assess the needs of people in terms of government information (on what topics do they want to receive information from government), as well as the way or medium they would prefer government to use to provide them with the information (e.g. radio, personal).
- In order to enhance the effectiveness of government communication, research also needs to be conducted to assess the communication environment. This will include research to assess public perceptions regarding the performance of government, to determine priority issues they would like government to attend to, and to ascertain whether government's overall communication is perceived as sufficient (or insufficient), as objective (or subjective) and so forth.
- Researchers in government communication need to conduct relevant research not only amongst the broader or general population, but specifically attend to the information deprived and on specific groups

towards whom a communication initiative or product might be aimed at (e.g. the youth, women or elderly).

- Communication research by government needs to be conducted on the basis of sound theoretic principles, as a systematic and properly planned process – in a scientific way, providing objective, valid and reliable results.
- The research methodology should be determined on the basis of the research question or objectives. A combination of methods can sometimes contribute to a better answer to the research question or objectives.
- Research reports need to be prepared in order to help the client to make informed decisions on the basis of the results. Results need to be analysed and interpreted objectively.
- Consideration needs to be given to the possibility of coordinating or registering (not to control) all government communication and information research from one point in government – e.g. GCIS or Statistics South Africa. Such a practice will not only contribute to the elimination of duplication, but can also contribute to improve quality and sharing of relevant research results.
- The possibility of bulk-buying of all government communication and information research needs to be explored and facilitated. This may result in substantial cost-savings and enhance the affordability of research services.
- Public Service procurement procedures need to be reconsidered to enable timeous response to requests for research. The establishment of a panel of research companies, and reconsideration of existing delegations may be useful in this regard.
- Cabinet, government communicators, senior management in government departments and other role-players need to be briefed on relevant

research results on a regular basis. An annual conference on government communication research should also be considered.

- Researchers in government communication need to develop guidelines that can be used by government communicators on how to brief a research consultant, how to prepare a research proposal and so forth.
- Training of government communicators needs to include the basic principles of research and create understanding that research can enhance the quality of their work.
- Researchers in government communication need to develop a strategy to help departments to obtain appropriate funding to enable them to conduct communication research.
- A register of research companies and organisations that can be approached to conduct communication and information research for government needs to be compiled, updated regularly and made available to government communicators.
- A catalogue of research conducted in government communication needs to be developed in a searchable database format and updated regularly.
- Question and Answer sessions should be considered where researchers interested in submitting quotations or tendering for government communication research may clarify the research objectives with clients prior to preparing and submitting their proposals.
- Effective communication between the research suppliers and government clients is of major importance. Researchers need to understand the government communications environment. Consideration should be given to briefings for research suppliers on relevant issues on at least an annual basis – e.g. on government's Programme of Action (priorities), the national government communication strategy and relevant research results.
- The different role-players in government communication need to explore opportunities of working together when conducting research on certain

critical issues – e.g. the International Marketing Council (IMC), Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Investment South Africa (TISA), Tourism South Africa and GCIS on initiatives to market South Africa internationally; the Department of Health, Medical Research Council (MRC), Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), Statistics South Africa and GCIS on HIV/AIDS.

- Government communication researchers need to become more constructively involved in professional organisations like the Southern African Marketing Research Association (SAMRA), the Research Users' Forum (RUF) of SAMRA, the African Society for Advertising and Communications and even the European Society for Marketing Research (ESOMAR) and the World Association of Public and Opinion Research (WAPOR).
- The possibility of a SAMRA convention or an ESOMAR or WAPOR conference on government communication and information research should be explored.
- Government communication researchers in South Africa need to reach out to government communication researchers in other countries – specifically those in Australia, Canada and the UK – to learn from their experience and to share insight.

6.4 FURTHER RESEARCH RECOMMENDED

In this research, the study was demarcated to research conducted by the GCIS and its predecessors – 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. The research also provided a brief theoretic overview of research in communication, and recorded information

regarding government communication and information dissemination in other countries with specific reference to the use of research to enhance effectiveness.

Potential areas for further research regarding this broader theme include the following:

- An audit of communication research conducted by government departments in South Africa, including themes, methodologies and target groups for research.
- An evaluation of communication research conducted by government departments in South Africa, including specifically an evaluation of the research process from a theoretical and professional perspective.
- Research regarding the utilisation and application of research results, including an investigation regarding the sharing of research results amongst government communicators and the management of relevant research results as a corporate asset for government.

ANNEXURE

A COMPOSITE CODE OF ETHICS FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCHERS

A COMPOSITE CODE OF ETHICS FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCHERS¹⁹

PRINCIPLES

1. GENERAL ISSUES RELATED TO THE CODE OF ETHICS

1. The social scientist(s) in charge of a research project is (are) responsible for all decisions regarding procedural matters and ethical issues related to the project whether made by themselves or subordinates (7)
2. Teachers are responsible for all decisions made by their students related to ethical issues involved in research (1)
3. All actions conducted as part of the research should be consistent with the ethical standards of both the home and host community (1)
4. Ethical issues should be considered from the perspective of the participant's society (2)
5. If unresolved or difficult ethical dilemmas arise, assistance or consultation should be sought with colleagues or appropriate committees sponsored by professional associations (2)
6. Any deviation from established principles suggests: (a) that a greater degree of responsibility is being accepted by the investigator, (b) a more serious obligation to seek outside counsel and advice, and (c) the need for additional safeguards to protect the rights and welfare of the research participants (2)

(continue ...)

¹⁹ Reinard, 2001:16-19

2. DECISION TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH

7. Research should be conducted in such a way as to maintain the integrity of the research enterprise and not to diminish the potential for conducting research in the future (3)
8. Investigators should use their best scientific judgment for selection of issues for empirical investigation (1)
9. The decision to conduct research with human subjects should involve evaluation of the potential benefits to the participant and society in relation to the risks to be borne by the participant(s) – a risk-benefit analysis (2)
10. Any study which involves human subjects must be related to an important intellectual question (4)
11. Any study which involves human subjects must be related to an important intellectual question with humanitarian implications, and there should be no other way to resolve the intellectual question (2)
12. Any study which involves human participants must be related to a very important intellectual question if there is a risk of permanent, negative effects on the participants (2)
13. Any study involving risks as well as potential therapeutic effects must be justified in terms of benefits to the client or patient (2)
14. There should be no prior reason to believe the major permanent negative effects will occur for the participants (1)
15. If the conduct of the research may permanently damage the participants, their community, or institutions within their community (such as indigenous social scientists), the research may not be justified and might be abandoned (2)

(continue ...)

3. CONDUCT OF THE RESEARCH

16. All research should be conducted in a competent fashion, as an objective, scientific project (4)
17. All research personnel should be qualified to use any procedures employed in the project (2)
18. Competent personnel and adequate facilities should be available if any drugs are involved (4)
19. There should be no bias in the design, conduct or reporting of the research – it should be as objective as possible (4)

4. EFFECTS ON AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PARTICIPANTS

INFORMED CONSENT

4.1 General

20. Informed consent should be used in obtaining participants for all research; investigators should honor all commitments associated with such agreements (10)
21. Participants should be in a position to give informed consent; otherwise it should be given by those responsible for the participant (2)
22. Informed consent should be used if the potential effects on participants are ambiguous or potentially hazardous (7)
23. If possible, informed consent should be obtained in writing (1)
24. Seek official permission to use any government data, no matter how it was [sic] obtained (1)

(continue ...)

4.2 Provision of Information

25. Purposes, procedures, and risks of research (including possible hazards to physical and psychological well-being and jeopardisation of social position) should be explained to the participants in such a way that they can understand (7)
26. Participants should be aware of the possible consequences, if any, for the group or community from which they are selected in advance of their decision to participate (1)
27. The procedure used to obtain the participant's name should be described to him or her (1)
28. Sponsorship, financial and otherwise, should be specified to the potential participants (2)
29. The identity of those conducting the research should be fully revealed to the potential participants (2)
30. Names and addresses of research personnel should be left with participants so that the research personnel can be traced subsequently (1)
31. Participants should be fully aware of all data gathering techniques (tape and video recordings, photographic devices, physiological measures, and so forth), the capacities of such techniques, and the extent to which participants will remain anonymous and data confidential (2)
32. In projects of considerable duration, participants should be periodically informed of the progress of the research (1)
33. When recording videotapes or film, subjects have the right to approve the material to be made public (by viewing it and giving specific approval to each segment) as well as the nature of the audiences (1)

4.3 Voluntary Consent

34. Individuals should have the option to refuse to participate and know this (1)
35. Participants should be able to terminate involvement at any time and know that they have this option (3)
36. No coercion, explicit or overt, should be used to encourage individuals to participate in a research project (6)

(continue ...)

5. PROTECTION OF RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF PARTICIPANT

5.1 General Issues

37. The dignity, privacy, and interests of the participants should be respected and protected (8)
38. The participants should not be harmed; welfare of the participants should take priority over all other concerns (10)
39. Damage and suffering to the participants should be minimised through procedural mechanisms and termination of risky studies as soon as possible; such effects are justified only when the problem cannot be studied in any other fashion (8)
40. Potential problems should be anticipated, no matter how remote the probability of occurrence, to ensure that the unexpected does not lead to major negative effects on the participants (1)
41. Any harmful aftereffects should be eliminated (4)
42. The hopes or anxieties of potential participants should not be raised (1)
43. Research should be terminated if danger to the participant arises (3)
44. The use of clients seeking professional assistance for research purposes is justified only to the extent that they may derive direct benefits as clients (1)

5.2 Deception

45. Deceit of the participants should only be used if it is absolutely necessary, there being no other way to study the problem (3)
46. Deception may be utilized (1)
47. If deceit is involved in a research procedure, additional precautions should be taken to protect the rights and welfare of the participants (2)
48. After being involved in a study using deception, all participants should be given a thorough, complete, and honest description of the study and the need for deception (5)

(continue ...)

49. If deception is not revealed to the participants, for humane or scientific reasons, the investigator has a special obligation to protect the interest and welfare of the participants (1)

5.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

50. Research data should be confidential and all participants should remain anonymous, unless they (or their legal guardians) have given permission for release of their identify (15)
51. If confidentiality or anonymity cannot be guaranteed, the participants should be aware of this and its possible consequences before involvement in the research (4)
52. Persons in official positions (studied as part of a research project) should provide written descriptions of their official roles, duties, and so forth (which need not be treated as confidential information) and be provided with a copy of the final report on the research (1)
53. Studies designed to provide descriptions of aggregates or collectivities should always guarantee anonymity to individual respondents (1)
54. “Privacy” should always be considered from the perspective of the participant and the participant’s culture (1)
55. Material stored in databanks should not be used without the permission of the investigator who originally gathered the data (1)
56. If promises of confidentiality are honored, investigators need not withhold information on misconduct of participants or organisations (1)
57. Specific procedures should be developed for organising data to ensure anonymity or participants (1)

(continue ...)

5.3 Benefits to Participants

58. A fair return should be offered for all services of participants (1)
59. Increased self-knowledge, as a benefit to the participants, should be incorporate as a major part of the research design or procedures (1)
60. Copies or explanations of the research should be provided to all participants (2)
61. Studies of aggregates or cultural subgroups should produce knowledge which will benefit them (1)

5.4 Effects on Aggregates or Communities

62. Investigators should be familiar with, and respect, the host cultures in which studies are conducted (1)
63. Investigators should cooperate with members of the host society (1)
64. Investigators should consider, in advance, the potential effects of the research on the social structure of the host community and the potential changes in influence of various groups or individuals by virtue of the conduct of the study (1)

6. INTERPRETATIONS AND REPORTING OF THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

65. Investigators should consider, in advance, the potential effects of the research and the report on the population or subgroup from which participants are drawn (1)
66. Participants should be aware, in advance, of potential effects upon aggregates or cultural subgroups which they represent (1)

67. The interests of collectivities and social systems of all kinds should be considered by the investigator (1)
68. All reports of research should be public documents, freely available to all (4)
69. Research procedures should be described fully and accurately in reports, including all evidence regardless of the support it provides for the research hypotheses; conclusions should be objective and unbiased (14)
70. Full and complete interpretations should be provided for all data and attempts made to prevent misrepresentations in writing research reports (6)
71. Sponsorship, purpose, sources of financial support, and investigators responsible for the research should be made clear in all publications related thereto (3)
72. If publication may jeopardise or damage the population studied and complete disguise is impossible, publication should be delayed (2)
73. Cross-cultural studies should be published in the language and journals of the host society, in addition to publication in other languages and other societies (2)
74. Appropriate credit should be given to all parties contributing to the research (9)
75. Full, accurate disclosure of all published sources bearing on or contributing to the work is expected (8)
76. Publication of research findings on cultural subgroups should include a description in terms understood by the participants (2)
77. Whenever requested, raw data or other original documentation should be made available to qualified investigators (1)
78. Research with scientific merit should always be submitted for publication and not withheld from public presentation unless the quality of research or analysis is inadequate (1)

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