INVESTIGATING CORPORATE REPUTATION OF THE EASTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late mother, my wife and my children. May you stay in love and trust the Almighty and know that without His love, we can do so much.

ABSTRACT

There is currently paucity of academic work on the public sector reputation management the world over. Most literature has studied corporate reputation from the private sector perspective. The extant literature amply shows that reputation is equally important for the public sector organisations because they experience more or less the same challenges as the private sector organisations. Luoma-aho (2015) argues that public sector reputation still remains an underused resource, and much of the reputation literature concentrates on corporations. Therefore, this study addresses this knowledge gap by investigating the reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

An extensive literature review and empirical data indicate that concepts such as *public views of corporate reputation, media coverage and emotional attachment* influence the reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The study is premised on the legitimacy theory. Guthrie (2006) states that legitimacy theory relies on the notion that there is a 'social contract' between a company and the society in which it operates. Specifically, it is considered that an organisation's survival will be threatened if society perceives that the organisation has breached its social contract. Where society is not satisfied that the organisation is operating in a legitimate manner, society will revoke the organisation's 'contract' to continue its operations. Furthermore, legitimacy is achieved by demonstrating that companies' activities are concordant with social values. If a company cannot justify its continued operation, then, in a sense, the community may revoke its contract.

This study followed an interpretive basic qualitative research approach and it sought to gain an in-depth description of the public sector reputation from the point of view of the Eastern Cape citizens. It emphasises the role of qualitative research as directed at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of research participants by learning about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, and perspective.

Furthermore, the study is exploratory as it seeks to explore and understand the research phenomenon and requires the researcher to undertake an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon. The data for the study were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observations. For the in-depth interviews a semi-structured interview schedule was developed as the research instrument, which provided an important means to probe participants and seek fresh insights on the phenomenon. The study included participant observations of two community engagement sessions, which enabled the researcher to observe the views of the general public towards the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

A purposive sampling was used for the selection of study participants. The researcher selected five organised structures that represent community members from diverse backgrounds. They comprised business, media, youth, NGOs and government officials from contrasting geographical areas of the Eastern Cape, who work closely with the Eastern Cape Provincial Government and had perspectives on its reputation. Three representatives from each structure participated in the interviews and a total of 15 of participants were interviewed.

The transcribed field notes were analysed through manual and automated data analysis, for which Leximancer Software was used. Leximancer provided a text analytics tool that could be used to analyse the content of collections of textual documents and to display the extracted information visually. The study shows that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government lacks effective systems to manage its reputation. Literature has shown that good reputation results from all perceptions and assessments that employees and the public form about an organisation with regard to the performance, quality of services, innovation, workplace environment, leadership, governance and citizenship of the organisation. Research findings have furthermore revealed that people have negative views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The poor perceptions about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government are primarily influenced by its inability to provide quality services. This further reflects poor performance and lack of effective leadership. The provision of the quality services is adversely impacted by the perceived poor governance, which manifests in the proliferation of cases of malpractices and unethical conduct within government institutions.

The study shows that relations between the media and the Eastern Cape Provincial Government are poor, and this is largely typified in the persistent negative media coverage of government. Poor communication is identified as the main trigger of the media's negative reporting. The study has revealed that there is poor public emotional attachment to the Provincial Government. Due to perceived poor performance and lack of services, people generally hold a negative view of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The study shows that people do not hold positive feelings about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, and trust in government has considerably deteriorated. This study extends reputation literature by showing that public feelings and trust can enhance emotional attachment to government, thus guaranteeing a formidable public sector reputation.

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ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
ECSECC	Eastern Cape Social and Economic Consultative Council
EU	European Union
IPSOS	Institut de Publique Sondage d'Opinion Secteur
MDGs	Millenium Development Goals
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
NAMR	National Automated Archival Information Retrieval System
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NPM	New Public Management
RQ	Reputation Quotient
SARS	South African Revenue Services
STASSA	Statistics South Africa

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. INTRODUCTION

While public sector reputation management increasingly occupies centre stage in the public discourse, it has not yet received adequate attention in academic literature. Waeraas and Byrkjeflot (2012) argue that this lack of attention is in spite of the fact that on a global scale, most public sector organisations have been subjected to persistently negative reputations related to poor service delivery, mismanagement and ethical misconduct, among other allegations. Similarly, Asongu (2013) asserts that corruption remains the most daunting challenge for the majority of African countries, and it is a major obstacle to economic progress, social welfare, service delivery and good governance on the continent. These allegations further relate to the perceived public sector's failure to address issues of society, and the general ineffectiveness of various public policies that are presumably designed to address the expectations of the electorate. The perceived challenges of governments the world over are compounded by reported cases of scandals, which expose them to endless public scrutiny. The public sector organisations must further strive to meet the diverse needs of the electorate in order to gain legitimacy. In this context, the managing and nurturing of corporate reputations should inevitably receive priority attention by public sector organisations.

The terms 'public sector' and 'government' are used interchangeably in this study, which is informed by Luama-aho's (2008) premise that distinctions between different types of public sector organisations are often blurred, and hence many scholars have resorted to applying continuums instead of categorisations in their studies of public sector organisations. The above author further states that in general terms, the public sector consists of governments and all publicly controlled or publicly funded agencies, enterprises, and other entities that deliver public programmes, goods, or services.

For the purpose of this study, the public sector consists of an expanding ring of organisations, with core government at the centre, followed by agencies and public enterprises. Organisations, both profit and non-profit, are beginning to realise the indispensability of effective reputation management to mitigate against the effects of scandals and the erosion of legitimacy. For example, a study by Fombrun and Van Riel (2004) indicates that reputation management has been found to contribute to organisational stability, profit, performance and employee loyalty, and to ease recruitment and decrease transaction costs. Goldstein (2010) concurs with the above authors and states that corporate reputation can be a key contributor to an organisation's success and it can just as easily be a contributing factor to an organisation's failure as well.

Sanders and Canel (2015) assert that reputation has emerged as a central concept for public sector public relations, raising issues related to governments' responsibility and legitimacy and citizens' trust in their local governments. However, there is paucity of research on the role of corporate reputation within public sector organisations in South Africa, and this study seeks to address that gap. Corporate reputation for the public sector is an important area to do research on because public sector organisations' reputation depends on stakeholders' perception of their services.

That said, the topic of corporate reputation within the public sector is new and not much discussed (Konieczna, 2010). As will be shown later in this study, much empirical work conducted on corporate reputation has merely focused on the private sector, and very little attention has been given to the public sector. This study seeks to close the gap by investigating how the public view public sector corporate reputation, with specific reference to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, which is outlined in the next section as the context of the study.

Against this background, this Chapter is organised as follows. The Chapter starts with a discussion of the context of the study, followed by a review of public sector corporate reputation from both international and South African perspectives. The next section delves into the issues of the definition and conceptualisation of corporate reputation. Different reputations for different stakeholders is discussed as a manifestation of the dynamism of the concept of corporate reputation.

The next section focuses on the conceptualisation of the research problem and importance of the study. This is followed by the description of the research design and methodology, and delimitations. Ethical considerations of the study are highlighted in the succeeding section. This concludes with presentation of how the study chapters are demarcated.

1.2.   BACKGROUND

The mandate of the public sector is to improve the general welfare of society by delivering public goods and services to individuals, and to private and other public sector organisations, playing a critical role in both the country and the global economy (Fourie & Poggenpoel, 2018). Public sector organisations the world over are seized with the constitutional obligation of meeting the basic need of electorate. In this regard, Waeraas and Byrkjeflot (2012) posit that public organisations are valuable political assets that can be used to generate public support to achieve the delegated autonomy and discretion from politicians to protect the agency from political attack, and to recruit and retain valued employees.

That said, the level of public support is largely contingent on the extent to which the public sector organisations can fulfil their political mandate of providing services to the citizens. Luoma-aho (2007) notes that publics 'expectations of their public services and their public officials appear to impact in particular ways on the content of public sector reputation, although it should be noted that the research underlying these findings has been exclusively conducted in the Nordic cultural context characterized by high levels of trust in authorities and a strong welfare state.

This study seeks to investigate how the Eastern Cape Provincial Government strategically manages corporate reputation in its endeavour to retain its legitimacy. This section specifically reflects on the Eastern Cape as the context of the study. While literature consistently notes that public sector reputation has received limited attention in academic literature relative to the private sector, however, it would appear that public sector organisations are increasingly under pressure to manage their reputations. In this section, reputation is reviewed from both the international and South African perspectives as a validation of nascent role.

1.2.1. Eastern Cape Government as the context for the study

The study takes place in the Eastern Cape Province, which is located in the south-east of South Africa, bordering Free State and Lesotho in the north, KwaZulu-Natal in the north-east, the Indian Ocean along its south and south-eastern borders, and Western and Northern Cape in the west. The Province encloses 169 580 km², constituting 13,9% of the total land area of the country, making it in surface area the second largest province (after the Northern Cape) of the country (Statistics South Africa, 2010). It is divided into two metropolitan areas, five district municipalities and 38 local municipalities. According to the Statistics South Africa Report (Stats SA) (2016), the Province has an estimated 6 996 976 people who live in the Eastern Cape. This represents just over 13, 3% of South Africa's population, according to the Eastern Cape Socio Economic Consultative Council (ECSECC) (2018).

At the dawn of democracy in 1994, three separate governments (Ciskei, Transkei and the former Cape Province) were integrated to form the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The map below shows three administrations that were fused to establish the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, which is the subject of this study.

Figure 1.1: Former administrations of the Eastern Cape
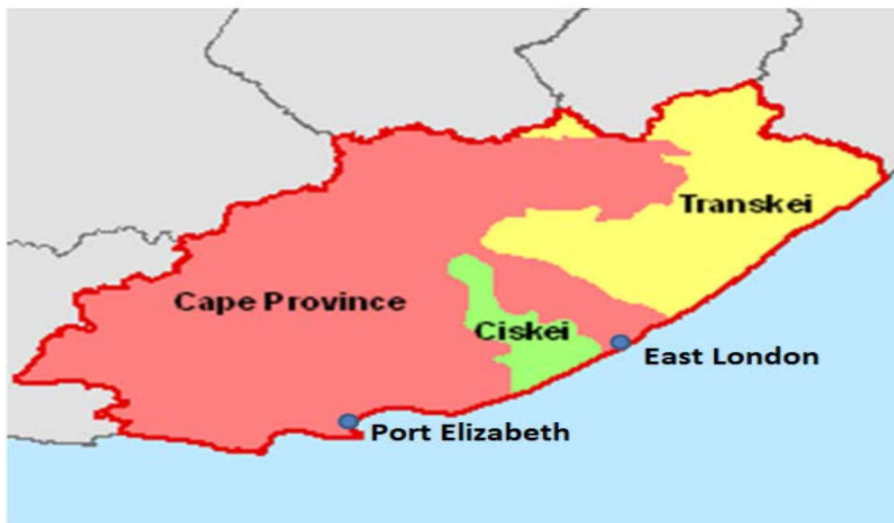
Source: Hamann and Tuinder (2012)

Hamann and Tuinder (2012) postulate that years of democracy and consistent economic growth since the end of apartheid have helped the Province prosper in some parts, while other areas have stagnated in poverty and underdevelopment.

The above authors further note that apartheid policies, economic failure and corruption meant that very little economic and infrastructural development took place in the homelands. This has resulted in spatial dualities and inequalities within the Eastern Cape Province, such as urban industrial areas versus marginal rural areas (often locked into dependence on social grants and remittances from migrant labour); and the well-developed commercial farming sector contrasted with struggling subsistence farming.

According to the ECSECC report (2014), the economy of the Eastern Cape, in common with the rest of South Africa, is both developed and underdeveloped. The two urban industrial manufacturing centres (Nelson Mandela Bay and Buffalo City municipalities) have first-world components, while the rural hinterland, particularly in the former homeland areas of the Transkei and the Ciskei, is characterised by poverty and is generally underdeveloped. In addition, ECSECC's Eastern Cape Quarterly Review of the Labour Market Report (2018) states that the official unemployment rate increased in the Eastern Cape by 0, 5% and the Province continues to have the highest unemployment rate in the country at 36, 1%. The Report further indicates that the unemployment rate among young people aged 15–34 increased from 34, 6% in 2008 to 49, 9% in 2018, implying that one in two young people in the labour force did not have a job.

The low socioeconomic status of the Province reflects clearly in the outward pattern of migration and high levels of mortality at different age groups (Makiwane & Chimere-Dan, 2010). Hamann and Tuinder (2012) concur and state that the Province has the highest rate of permanent net out-migration of any Province in South Africa, which reflects a country-wide trend of long-term outward migration from poorer provinces to the comparatively economically viable provinces of Kwazulu Natal, Gauteng and the Western Cape. A study conducted by Poswa and Levy (2006), shows that the majority of people that leave the Eastern Cape report a lack of employment, poor education and deteriorating health care as reasons.

Mpehle (2012) argues that despite progress in the provision of housing and basic services by the government since 1994, the Eastern Cape still has some of the highest rates of poverty and unemployment in the country.

Makiwane and Chimere-Da (2010) add that of the 21 million people living in poverty in South Africa, nearly 3, 8 million live in the Eastern Cape, which means that of 40, 5% of South Africa's population and 54, 8% of the Province's population live in poverty. The high levels of poverty in the Eastern Cape are exacerbated by the deteriorating education system, and as reported by Makiwane and Chimere-Da (2010), the quality of education in the Province is among the poorest in the country. Makiwane and Chireme-Da (2010) further argue that poverty in the Eastern Cape Province is a national disaster. The authors recommend that, in addition to existing policies and programmes, extraordinary measures by the government and all the development partners are required in order to break the shackles of structural poverty and their consequences among the population of the Province.

That said, the advent of democracy in South Africa brought legitimate hope to millions who were previously marginalised. Mpehle (2012) adds that the new government transformed the public service by developing and enacting policies that would ensure fairness and equity in the provision of services. For example, in all its election manifestos, the ruling party (African National Congress - ANC) has consistently stressed its commitment to provision of services to previously disadvantaged communities of the country.

Conversely, Matebesi and Botes (2017) argue that various communities have increasingly suffered the brunt of poor service delivery in the Eastern Cape, where government has glaringly failed to deliver basic services. Mpehle (2012) observes that despite government's introduction of policies to address the anomalies of the past, and change in the provision of some basic services in certain communities being visible, in general, service delivery throughout the nine provinces of the country is perceived to be proceeding slowly, is minimal and is not adequately visible. More importantly, Mpehle (2012) argues that the Eastern Cape has failed in service delivery, and corruption is in abundance in the tendering and procurement processes, which is robbing citizens of quality services.

A noteworthy empirical discovery made by Mpehle (2012) in his investigation of service delivery challenges in South Africa, is that there is a communication gap between the elected and the electorate. Politicians often think they know what communities need, and they then support programmes that are irrelevant.

Cloete (2004) has observed that a citizenry well-informed about policy problems identified by the government, and about the government's strategies for dealing with those problems, would potentially have more trust in a government if those strategies are perceived to be the best to protect and promote citizens' interests under the circumstances. In the same vein, the IPSOS (Institut de Publique Sondage d'Opinion Secteur) Report (2010) argues that constant engagement and communication can improve the reputations of provincial governments in the long-term.

While little empirical work has been done on public sector reputation, Mwangi and Mberia (2014) argue that public sector organisations are beginning to understand the importance of their reputation, since its benefits are vital for their survival; from this perspective, a good organisational reputation among the stakeholders is acknowledged as reputational capital. It is worth noting Waeraas and Byrkjeflot's (2012) argument that the public image of government is surrounded by a pessimistic fog of distrust, cynicism, and contempt. Fairbanks, Plowman and Rawlins (2007) also note that there is a drastic decline in the public trust of government. Further, the authors argue that this distrust is an outgrowth of poor communication between governments and its publics, where publics feel that they are not well informed about government actions. However, Batista (2003) postulates that government reputation can be improved by the explanation of what government does and how it serves the interests of the public, incorporating customers' input into decision-making processes and enhancing public satisfaction.

The above accounts elaborately demonstrate that the Provincial Government has not done enough to meet and fulfil the socio-economic demands of the citizens. It also shows that there is limited communication between government and citizens. However, this begs a question of how the reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is strategically managed? This study seeks to unravel this question, by investigating the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. That said, reputation is a ubiquitous phenomenon, and it is crucial to also review corporate reputation, with specific reference to public sector reputation, from an international perspective, which is discussed in the next section.

1.2.2. Public sector reputation: an international perspective

The review of literature for the study shows that a fair amount of research among international academics has focused more on for-profit organisations and much less on public sector corporate reputation. While corporate reputation remains acutely understudied within the public sector environment, there is consensus among scholars (Fombrun, 2001; Mazzola, Ravazi & Gabbioneta, 2006) that every organisation has a reputation; whether good or bad. To this end, Waeraas and Byrkjeflot (2012) argue that for many public organisations that struggle with a negative image related to rule-orientation, bureaucracy, and inefficiency, reputation management is a promising tool.

The mandate of the public sector is to improve the general welfare of society by delivering public goods and services to individuals, and to private and other public sector organisations, playing a critical role in both the country and the global economy (Fourie & Poggenpoel, 2017). This means that the private sector is composed of the business sector, which is intended to generate a profit for the owners of the enterprise; and the voluntary sector, which includes charitable organisations. The public sector concept has received considerable attention in administration literature. The focus of this study is the Eastern Cape Provincial Government as a public sector organisation, and public sector will be used in this thesis to refer to the government that is responsible for the provision of public goods at a provincial level and which has no interest in profits.

Stevenson (1954) is among the first scholars in the United States of America (USA) to show early interest in public sector corporate reputation and who produced a paper on public sector reputation management registering his concern about the reputation of government, which had been overlooked. Henceforth, the USA has experienced an exponential growth of interest among scholars in public sector corporate reputation management. For example, US scholars Carpenter and Krause (2012) examined the application of organisational reputation to public administration. The authors pointed out that understanding how organisational reputations are formed and subsequently cultivated is fundamental to understanding the role of public administration in a democracy.

The work of Luomao-aho (2008) in Finland underscores the rise of interest in public sector corporate reputation. Luamoa-aho undertook a quantitative survey of stakeholder assessments of the reputation of public sector organisations in Finland and the study discovered that those public sector organisations with more traditional functions (legislation and authority functions) are by reputation labelled bureaucratic, whereas those with more modern functions (research and semi-commercial functions) are by reputation more flexible. The author further stresses that knowing the reputational strengths and weaknesses of each type of public sector organisation provides a deeper understanding of how stakeholders perceive different types of organisations, and hence enables suitable allocation of public resources. However, Finland still experiences the paucity of research on public sector reputation, and Luomoa-Aho's study represents limited academic work in this area.

In Italy, Raguseo, Mosconi and Ferro (2011) analysed how reputation management is used by public administrations in order to change and sometimes improve their service delivery, and as noted by Briggs (2006), an organisation's reputation is only as good as the service it delivers to the community. The authors report that reputation management is increasingly acquiring importance and its diffusion is rising due to the widespread diffusion of the Internet among citizens and companies, which has now reached a critical mass capable of establishing itself as a media reference.

Some studies have been conducted on online communication's influence on corporate reputation. For example, Zufall (2014) argues that while social media has shifted organisational communication from one-way communication to free conversation, organisations have lost their power to control what is being said about them in the world, and this can lead to threats for an organisation in many cases and in many ways. In essence, online communication can potentially enhance public sector reputation or be detrimental to its existence.

An important public sector tier is local government councils, which play a leading role in the delivery of services in lieu of their proximity to citizens. However, Cahill, Batista and Kawalek (2004) observe in their study that the wider society continually discusses, analyses and debates the problems of local government; the majority perceiving local authorities with distaste. The above authors further note that the deep-seated negative perceptions that local authorities are remote, wasteful, under-performing and inefficient bureaucracies, suggests a wider agenda of change that is necessary, including that of the recovery of government reputation.

In this regard, a study conducted by Puente, Garcia and Mazagotos (2013) in Spain shows that, to consolidate the reputation of their cities, local authorities and/or city planners should identify the interests and expectations of the city's stakeholders and consider those interests in all its decisions. A reputational analysis of Scandinavian countries in 2004 presented a significant theoretical development in public sector reputation. Aperia, Brønn and Schultz (2004) carried out a Reputation Quotient (RQ) study in three Scandinavian countries (Norway, Denmark & Sweden). It is worth noting that while these three countries "are often seen as homogeneous" (Schultz, Nielsen & Boege, 2002), the study discovered that countries had diverse reputational dimensions and showed differences in relation to how much they communicate about their activities to the public. For example, the study found that Norway had the lowest reputation, which implied lack of trust in government.

Similarly, in assessing public sector reputation management in the European Union (EU), Valentine (2013) observes that public sector organisations have more difficulties than do corporations in managing their reputations because they have trouble in connecting with their publics emotionally; in presenting themselves as unique; and in communicating as coherent organisations. Silva and Batista (2007) add that the building of government reputation requires a stronger customer-focused orientation; a better government performance of day-to-day management and operating activities; more efficient and effective communication with the public; and a greater emphasis on recognition. In view of the perspectives of the above authors, the execution of effective and coherent communication in the public sphere is a bedrock of public sector corporate reputation.

As noted by Walle 2012, many government organisations are concerned with their citizens' dissatisfaction with services and they take matters into their own hands by adopting image-building concepts such as reputation and brand management. That said, there are, for example, different perceptions about corporate reputation between Chinese people and western people (Zhang & Schwaiger, 2009). In the Western European context corporate reputation is market-oriented (Lewis, 2001), whereas for Chinese, reputation is not obtained from the marketplace but conveyed from the top, i.e. official recognition (Fan, 2007).

In his conceptual analysis of Chinese government reputation, Fan (2007) concludes that Chinese CEOs (Chief Executive Officers) pay less attention to the impact of corporate reputation on its ability to help withstand a crisis than CEOs in America, Europe or Asia. Chinese CEOs are more concerned with the service issues, unethical corporate behaviour and criticism from the media, and customers are seen as being major threats. This is an interesting trend in Chinese public sector reputation management, in view of increasing leadership scandals that governments have to deal with, and which adversely impact corporate reputation.

While there is general consensus in literature that there is limited theoretical and empirical work on public sector reputation management, the international reputation perspectives outlined above are not exhaustive. The next section highlights the corporate reputation of the South African public sector by reviewing the existing literature on the topic. This study is being conducted in the South African public sector context focusing on the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, and it is therefore imperative to reflect on the existing academic work from a South African perspective.

1.2.3. Public sector reputation: a South African context

Citizens have a life long relationship with government, interacting with a broad range of public agencies and departments in many different circumstances from birth to death (Da Silva & Batista, 2007). The longevity of the relationship is incumbent upon the perceived corporate reputation of the government, and it should take the initiative to quell the negative perceptions that might have a bearing on its image and reputation by promptly responding

to expectations of the public. In the same vein, Da Silva and Batista (2007) stress that governments must seek to improve responsiveness in order to challenge the popular criticism that public departments are bureaucratic, slow and incapable of taking immediate action.

That said, there is a dearth of research on the corporate reputation of the public sector in South Africa in general, and in the Eastern Cape Province, in particular. This is notwithstanding the fact that both the South African and the Eastern Cape Provincial Governments are not immune from reputation-threatening incidents, and inevitably reputation management should be on the government's priority list. Whilst corporate reputation is touted in literature as a key strategic asset of all organisations, the review of literature shows that there is limited scholarly work on public sector corporate reputation in South Africa. However, the limited studies that have been undertaken on this topic have – to a large extent – focused on the private sector and higher education sector.

The establishment of BrandSA has been a step in the right direction as an endeavour to constantly assess the reputation of the country. However, its research initiatives focus mainly on nation brand, which, according to De Kock (2014), is a composite construct that aims to present a coherent image and country message to international audiences. The author further points out that nation brand research aims to inspire new ways in which we can analyse the brand, its reputation, and the challenges it faces as it strives to deepen interactions across the world.

BrandSA research largely focuses on external stakeholders, and very little attention is paid to the South African public's perceptions of the government, and therefore its reputation. Country brand is largely related to the country's ability to attract tourism and investment in order to grow the economy. That said, Baneke (2011) carried out a literature study on the corporate reputation of public tertiary institutions in South Africa. The results of the study paint a picture necessitating a proactive stance on maximizing the appeal of the institutional brand so as to recruit desirable students and to ensure that the institution's strategic goals are achieved. The study further shows that corporate reputation has a role to play in relationship construction between the institution and key stakeholders, as well as in increasing the exposure of the institution in the community it serves.

Schultz and Werner (2011) identify the following strategies for effective reputation management:

- maintain a favourable reputation in the workplace and marketplace;
- enhance and build the organisation's good name and reputation;
- establish acceptable practices, policies, procedures, systems and standards that will avoid damage to the organisation's reputation;
- establish guidelines for dealing with a situation where the company's reputation has been tarnished; and
- Prepare and equip the management team to take full responsibility for managing the company's reputation.

Closer to South Africa, similarly, Fisher (2014) conducted an exploratory study in Zimbabwe, in which the aim was to investigate the impact of brand reputation management on brand value within the higher education sector in Zimbabwe. Incidentally, the study came to the same conclusion that there is a relationship between brand reputation management and brand value of higher education institutions. The ability of the tertiary institutions to attract students largely depends on the perceived reputation of the institution. Furthermore, Kwatubana's (2014) exploratory study furthermore focused on perceptions of reputation in black township schools in South Africa. The study revealed that reputation is multi-dimensional and that there are main reputational signals that stakeholders focus on when making reputational judgments, which include academic performance, organisational climate and emotional appeal.

The multidimensionality of corporate reputation is further noted by Jensen, Kim and Kim (2012): "reputation is most accurately conceived in terms of attribute-specific assessments because actors play different roles that relate them to different audiences and each role comprises different role expectations that allow multiple reputations to coexist within the same audience". Each organisation deals with stakeholders that have varied expectations, which must be uniquely fulfilled, thus building trust.

In a conceptual paper, Cloete (2007) focuses attention on the building of trust between government and the citizenry. The author notes that interaction between government and citizens on the basis of this information; the responsiveness of government to optimise its public services delivery outputs; as well as outcomes against the background of the constraints it faces, have the potential to improve trust in government. Whilst generally there has been limited studies on public sector reputation in South Africa, it is noteworthy to observe that there is no existing empirical data or conceptual framework on public sector reputation with specific reference to the Eastern Cape government. This study seeks to close the gap by investigating corporate reputation within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, and by so doing, providing a conceptual framework for effective corporate reputation management.

1.2.4. Definition and conceptualisation

For many years now, especially over the last decade, there has been growing interest in defining and measuring corporate reputation in business and academia (Feldman, Bahamonde & Bellido, 2014). Fombrun and Foss (2001) add that measures of reputation have in recent years proliferated, encouraging chaos and confusion about a company's reputational assets. The authors argue that the result has been a veritable cacophony of ratings, few of which are directly comparable. In this section, attention is turned to definition and concept confusion, and different reputations for different stakeholders.

i. Definition and concept confusion

Although it has been a common topic in literature, Lange, Lee and Dai (2011) contend that at the current stage in the study of organisational reputation, a definitive definition of the construct has yet to emerge in spite of numerous attempts to describe and integrate the definitions in use. This limitation in the conceptualisation of the concept happens at the backdrop of the growing academic and practitioner interest in corporate reputation.

For example, since the inception of the Corporate Reputation Review journal in 1997, the number of scholars active in the area of corporate reputation has grown substantially, with heightened research outputs. However, scholars such as de Castro, López and Sáez (2006) raise their concern that without a uniform definition, the construct of organisational reputation has been assessed and applied in such a variety of ways that the development of theory is weakened and generalisation across studies is limited. Barnett, Jermier and Lafferty (2006) add that it seems clear that without a unified approach to the concept itself, we cannot effectively or efficiently advance research on corporate reputation.

MacMillan, Money, Downing and Carola (2005) argue that definitions are fundamental to anything purporting to be meaningful scholarship and finds the reputation field wanting in this respect. Furthermore, the authors call for more definitional clarity, more well-developed data sets and more explanatory and predictive theory. As shown earlier in this study, to further exacerbate confusion in the conceptualisation, Fombrun and Van Riel (1997) have defined corporate reputation from the perspective of six distinct academic subject areas. As illustrated in Table 1.1 below, all six academic areas conceptualise corporate reputation from diverse perspectives, each with their own traditions of doing research and analysing the phenomenon.

Table 1. 1. Categorization of corporate reputation literature

Discipline	Categorization of reputation
Accountancy	Reputation seen as an intangible asset and one that can or should be given financial worth.
Economics	Reputation viewed as traits or signals. Perception held of the organization by an organization' external stakeholders.
Marketing	Viewed from the customer or end-user's perspective and concentrating on the manner in which reputations are formed.
Organizational behaviour	Viewed as the sense-making experiences of employees or the perception of the organization held by an organization's internal stakeholders.
Sociology	Aggregate assessment of a firm's performance relative to expectation and norms in an institutional context.
Strategy	Reputation viewed as assets and mobility barriers. Since reputations are based on perception, they are difficult to manage.

Source: Adapted from Fombrun and Van Riel (1997)

Barnett *et al.* (2006) contend that perhaps the most fundamental barrier to the creation of "one vision, one voice" relates to the confusion concerning the concepts of identity, image, and reputation. The above view is corroborated by various scholars (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Rindova, Pollock & Hayward 2006) who also raise concern that definitions and uses are at times quite divergent, and reputation can easily be conflated with related concepts such as image, prestige, legitimacy, and status.

Wæraas and Maor (2015:02) argue that this terminology confusion creates a challenge for researchers who seek to describe and analyze the significance of reputation and reputation management in the private as well as the public sector. Scholars such as Smaiziene and Jucevicius (2009) are of the opinion that the common language of conceptualizing relationship between image and reputation is not yet found. But they argue that the differences and links between the constructs of corporate reputation and image are interpreted in a contradictory way.

Another area of confusion among scholars, as observed by Smaiziene and Jucevicius (2010), relates to whether corporate reputation should be conceptualized as a unidimensional construct or as a multidimensional one. The above authors state that corporate reputation as unidimensional (or a monolithic construct), is concurrent with a number of limitations in the context of reputation management issues and therefore is not sufficient in developing reputation management strategies and instruments, and in preparing reputation auditing systems and measurement methodologies. Essentially, a unidimensional construct emphasises a single stakeholder approach, ignoring a broad spectrum of stakeholders who have specific interests in the organisation.

Smaiziene and Jucevicius (2010) argue that the unidimensional approach to a company's reputation is not sufficient and has many limitations that emerge in the context of reputation measurement and management issues. They acknowledge the multidimensional nature of corporate reputation as one of the most important principles in reputation management. Their view is supported by other researchers (Aula & Mantere, 2008; Inglis, Morley & Sammut, 2006; Prabowo & Ruffian 2019; Tammomiabi & Orianza 2019) who are also of the view that

reputation varies among stakeholder groups; multiple stakeholders might have different reputations towards a company. Concomitant with the above view, Şantaş, Özer, Saygili and Özkan (2018) refer to positive or negative, weak or strong emotional reactions about corporation held by the public, investors and employees. The above authors further view corporate reputation as the overall evaluation held by the corporation's stakeholders over a period of time based on the images arising from the corporation's behaviours and communications.

Gotsi and Wilson (2001) sought to elucidate the definition of the concept, and accentuate that corporate reputation can be broadly merged into two dominant schools of thought, which are analogous and differentiated. As illustrated in Figure 2.1, the analogous school of thought views corporate reputation as synonymous with corporate image, while the differentiated school considers the term as separate.

Figure 1.2: Analogous and differentiated schools of thought
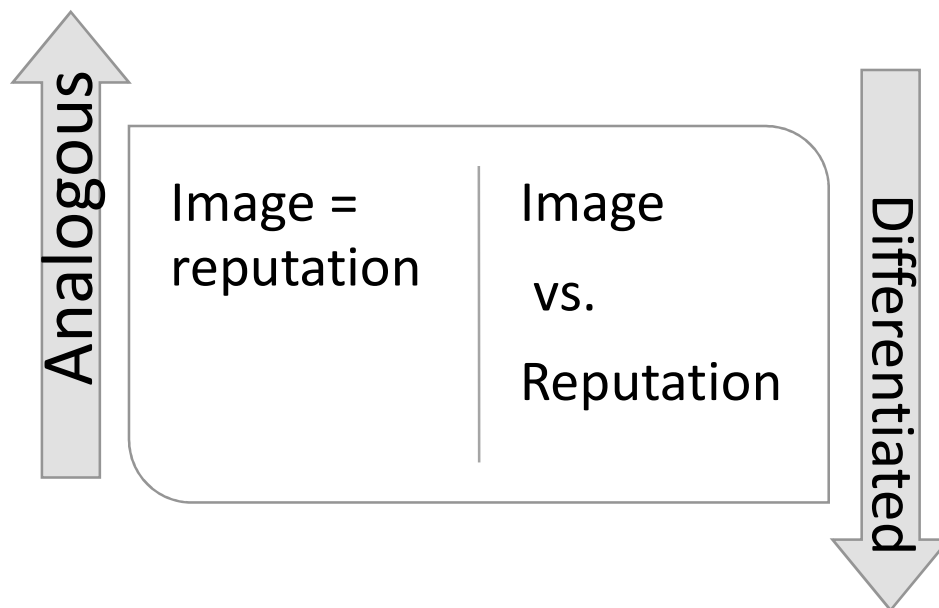
Source: Researcher's concept based on literature

In seeking to demystify the corporate reputation concept, Barnett *at al*. (2006) undertook a rigorous review of many definitions of corporate reputation present in the literature and categorised them based on their similarities through their seminal 'reputational landscape' work.

However, the authors still could not come up with an all-inclusive or integrative definition of corporate reputation, hence, there remains no common approach to the conceptualisation of corporate reputation, and scholars continue to present divergent views in this regard, which makes it an interesting area of further research.

It should, however, be admitted that, as noted by Balan (2015), despite the universal acknowledgment of the importance of corporate reputation and its great potential to impact the success of corporate strategy, corporate reputation as a research object still lacks deeper conceptualising. The research work undertaken by Fombrun and Van Riel (1997) appears to be the first effort in unifying the disparate knowledge base surrounding the concept of corporate reputation and the seeking for a comprehensive definition. Fombrun and Van Riel (1997), as the leading authorities in the area of corporate reputation, sought to remedy the lack of systematic conceptualisation of corporate reputation by tracing diverse streams of literature that explore different facets of the construct. More importantly, Fombrun and Van Riel (1997) sought to emerge with an integrative view of corporate reputation, which is discussed in the next section.

ii. An integrative approach

To mitigate salient fragmentation in the conceptualisation of corporate reputation, Fombrun and Van Riel (1997) propose an integrative view in the conceptualisation of corporate reputation. They, therefore, propose the following conceptualisation:

> *"Corporate reputation is a collective representation of a firm's past actions and results that describe the firm's ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders. It gauges a firm's relative standing both internally with employees and externally with its stakeholders, in both its competitive and institutional environments".*

While this definition claims to encapsulate the essence of corporate reputation as a concept, Balan (2015) argues that it is still understood as a concept of a multidisciplinary richness and broad meanings and continues to be variously defined.

Scholars are consistent in their acknowledgment of the indispensable role of corporate reputation, however, "the task of defining corporate reputation and developing a clear understanding of the concept becomes ever-more challenging" (Balan, 2015). Jansen *at el*. (2011) further argue against the integrative approach to reputation definition that it limits reputation research in at least three different ways:

- First, the emphasis on integrating different reputation definitions has resulted in reputation definitions being isolated from broader established theoretical frameworks that are necessary to provide guidance and rigor in empirical applications of a particular reputation definition

- Second, reputation definitions that aggregate assessments across all attributes and audiences are, in contrast, not only empirically unmanageable, they typically result in assessments that at best represent diffused general impressions or sentiments among diverse audiences and at worst a meaningless average of different assessments that is not assignable to any particular audiences.

- Lastly, the integrative definition of reputation as overall assessment almost guarantees disconnect between how reputation is defined and how it is measured in empirical research.

The next section reviews literature on how different stakeholders may hold different reputations of the same organisation.

1.2.5. Different reputation for different stakeholders

There is dearth of research on the concept of different reputations for different stakeholders. However, a substantial amount of academic work has been undertaken on corporate reputation and stakeholder management, albeit with more emphasis on the private sector. Stakeholder theorists propose that organisations do not have one reputation but instead a number of reputations, with different groups viewing issues and events in different ways (Cornelissen & Thorpe, 2002; Şantaş, *et al*. 2018, Svenson, 2001). In this regard, Lü, Jing and Cao (2014) posit that various stakeholders may hold different expectations towards a company - as a response, many firms have used different strategic tools to meet various stakeholders' expectations in order to establish a favourable corporate image, and, in turn, to establish a good corporate reputation.

In the same vein, Bahr and Gellecum (2010) send a caveat that it is important to include the views of varied stakeholders in developing reputation measurement and to understand the different emphases placed on different components of reputation by stakeholders.

It is also worth noting, as postulated by Wæraas and Moshe Maor (2015:02) that generally, stakeholders include all internal and external stakeholders, and they all have different requirements and expectations regarding the institution. That said, Casado, Peláez and Cardona (2014) highlight a strategic approach through which companies can achieve sustainable relations with their publics, which includes: (1) managing to align, in their management models, the interests of the organisation with the perception stakeholders have of the company; and (2) integrating ethical and professional corporate values in the behaviour of the company toward its audience, generating a climate of trust and credibility that is sustained over time.

Luoma-aho (2008) emphasises that reputation consists of individual assessments, so measuring assessments requires measuring opinions; and assessments may change over time; and different stakeholders may have very different opinions of the organisation being assessed. In the same way, Foreman and Argenti (2005) contend that a solid reputation among different stakeholders is something all brands need to take care of, given that it can help organisations when having to deal with hostile environments; it is an important source of goodwill when dealing with crises; it can be a competitive advantage; and it can allow the organisation to attract the best employees and to ensure their loyalty.

Stakeholders are inherently heterogeneous, and wittingly or unwittingly they bring different perspectives to corporate reputation. As noted by Luoma-aho (2008), differences between stakeholder groups' views must be taken into account when assessing corporate reputation. Furthermore, Cornellisen (2014:46) advises that while the interests of stakeholders are intricately varied, and at times even at odds with one another, it is important that an organisation provides each stakeholder group with specific information and builds a strong reputation across exchanges with all of these stakeholders.

Fourie and Poggenpoel (2017) confirm that the public sector has a wide range of stakeholders, and each of these stakeholders has its own interest, resulting in a variety of expectations which are imposed on the public sector.

1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The problem statement for the research is stated as follows:

Reputation is an important phenomenon for government organisations. The inadequate management of reputation manifests in cynical attitudes, which involve prevalent beliefs that government policies and public officials are inept and corrupt, and the consequences of this disillusionment are public alienation and disengagement (Silva & Batista, 2007). Mohamad and Abu Bakar (2008) are of the view that corporate reputation is still neglected in many government organisations. This is notwithstanding the increasing attention and public views about the operations of government as the sole provider of public goods.

For example, generally, media reports show that there are widespread views that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is the worst performing government in South Africa in many respects. The general public has negative views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government and is of the opinion that it lacks capacity to meet the expectations of the Eastern Cape citizens. The negative public views manifest in various forms, for example, the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has experienced higher levels of service delivery protests in relation to other provinces (Matebese & Botes, 2017). Protesters often cite the lack of accountability of government officials, along with the absence of public participation, as factors that further aggravate their service delivery complaints (Nkomo, 2017). Matebese and Botes's (2017) study further shows that protest activity in the Eastern Cape has increased where communities hold views that there is poor quality of basic services such as water, electricity provision and the shortage of housing.

The negative public views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government are further heightened by increasing negative media coverage. According to Malila (2018), media are

the main source of information and are an indispensable precondition for government accountability. That said, the Eastern Cape Provincial Government operates under increasing scrutiny by the media, among others. It suffers from an immense image deficit due to negative media publicity, which invariably impacts its corporate reputation. As noted in the Eastern Cape Socio Economic Consultative Council (ECSECC) Report (2015) the constant negative media publicity of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government amply demonstrates the positioning of the Government in the minds of various stakeholders, which is reflected in the deteriorating corporate reputation of the Government. Lui, Horsley and Young (2012) are of the opinion that coverage of negative issues is especially prominent in media coverage of governments, with some arguing that media publicity of governments has changed from healthy scepticism to automatic negativity. More importantly, Einwiller, Carroll and Korn (2010) posit that stakeholders depend more on the news media to learn about reputation dimensions that are difficult to directly experience or observe and for which the news media are the main source of information.

Negative media coverage furthermore has the propensity to influence citizen's emotional attachment to government. For example, as noted by Lui *et al*. (2012), negative media coverage, such as scandal stories, erodes confidence in the government and increases cynicism. It can cause citizens to avoid participating in government and create the overall impression that all public sector organisations and their employees behave badly. Einwiller *et al.* (2016) argue that publics today do not only want to participate, they also show and express emotion for better and worse. The above authors further argue that we have moved into a time of emotional publics, where feelings toward organisations range from love to hate, and the different stakeholders have several ways of showing their emotions and recruiting others to join in and comment on their feelings, for example through social media and different hate-sites and fan groups. Emotional attachment is reflected in the levels of trust that citizens have in government. From this perspective, citizens' trust in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has plunged dramatically (Chingwete, 2016). The number of service delivery protests in the Eastern Cape is manifested in the declining trust in Government, which further reflects in citizens' poor emotional attachment to the Provincial Government.

In seeking to emphasise the indispensable role of corporate reputation in the public sector context, Masum and Tovey (2011) argue that, given that we currently find ourselves in a "reputation society" where decision making is characterized by increasing emphasis on track records, scholarly attention to the corporate reputation of public sector organisations is warranted. A need, therefore, exists to investigate the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government to determine, among other things, how it is effectively harnessed to improve the performance of this Government.

The purpose of this study is, therefore, to explore and describe perceptions of the Eastern Cape public about the corporate reputation of the Provincial Government as it endeavours to enhance and sustain efforts to fulfil its constitutional mandate of meeting the expectations of the citizens through the provision of public goods.

The problem statement translates into the primary research question and secondary research questions, which are outlined next.

1.3.1. Primary research question

The primary research question that will guide this study is stated as follows:

- How can the reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government be managed strategically?

1.3.2. Secondary research questions

The secondary research questions are as follows:

Research question1:

What are the publics' views about the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Government?

Research question 2:

What is the impact of media coverage on the Eastern Cape Provincial Government?

Research question 3:

What is the public's emotional attachment to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government?

1.4.   IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

Corporate reputation is one of the most important intangible assets of an organisation, and various literature sources (Carrol 2013:06; Guru, Sanjeevaraja, Gopala & Parashivamrthy, 2013; Mohamad, Bakar, Halim & Ismail, 2014) argue that its sustainability is contingent on the prevailing corporate communication practices of the organisation. However, the extant studies on the role of corporate reputation have neglected the public sector, and placed a premium on private sector studies. This study is, therefore, an attempt to make a scholarly contribution by narrowing the literature gap in previous research on public sector corporate reputation.

Findings of the study make a contribution by advancing existing knowledge on how public sector organisations build corporate reputation to enhance their performance. The proliferation of media platforms has further obliged the global village to prioritise transparency, and public sector organisations are under immense pressure to show that they can effortlessly provide information to citizens. Citizens are becoming impatient because of the non-delivery of services and as a result, public sector organisations need to nurture and manage relations with citizens in order to gain their trust. The trust of citizens in the public sector is a manifestation of a good reputation and it can only be achieved through consistent communication with citizens; keeping them aware of programmes and initiatives that affect their socio-economic status. However, very few public sector organisations seem to be aware of the effect of corporate communication on their reputations.

This interpretive study has utilised a theoretical framework as researcher's lens with a view to develop a conceptual framework informed by emerging concepts. Following McHugh's (2014) approach, the findings of the study have been integrated with existing literature to develop a new strategic framework for public sector reputation management. Considering that to date "quantitative methods have dominated a great amount of studies in the field of reputation management" (McHugh, 2014) a qualitative method has been used as a novelty within this area. The study intends to further offer a comprehensive synthesis of the concept of corporate reputation management, as well as its implications for the organisations who seek to actively manage their reputations.

This study's contribution is significant as it addresses gaps in the literature on corporate reputation in the public sector. Research has essentially provided an understanding about the dimensionality and operationalization of corporate reputation from the point of view of ordinary citizens. The study also makes a contribution to both theory and practice by addressing the role of corporate reputation within public sector organisations, as well as providing new results on public sector reputation. Importantly, constructs, concepts and propositions that have emerged from the study will provide a foundation for further extensive quantitative investigation of the phenomenon.

In accordance with Babbie and Mouton (2014:80), the study will develop new hypotheses about the existing phenomenon and determine priorities for future research. The goal of this study is exploratory, therefore, the qualitative approach offers an opportunity to gain an in-depth insight into the community of the Eastern Cape's experiences and perspectives on how they view or perceive the corporate reputation of government as it pursues its service delivery goals. The results of the study provide public sector organisations with both a theoretical and a strategic framework on how they can build strong, good reputations, thus improve practice. Furthermore, by identifying key dimensions which are more effective in influencing corporate reputation, research findings will be used by managers as a basis for the equitable allocation of applicable resources.

The research design for the study is described in the next section.

1.5.   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research design and methodology represent an approach the study will take to collect data in order to answer the research questions.

1.5.1. Qualitative paradigm

This study uses a qualitative research paradigm. Moriarty (2011) postulates that qualitative research is directed at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of research participants by learning about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, and perspectives.

Further, according to Rechtie and Lewis (2012:05), qualitative methods are used to address research questions that require explanation or understanding of social phenomena and their contexts. This is in line with this study, as it also sought to investigate the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Government by answering the research questions.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016:14) have identified the following characteristics of the qualitative research paradigm, which are in line with this study:

- Studying people in their natural settings and understanding how they make sense of their world
- Understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspectives, not the researcher's
- Studying how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their world, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences
- Rich description of experiences and views of participants that have been interviewed or observed
- Gather data to build concepts and themes that constitute the findings of the study
- Researcher being the primary instrument for data collection and analysis
- Data in the form of field notes and quotations from interviews and observations to be included in support of the research findings
- The consideration of various sources of data in order to improve the scientific soundness of research results.

This research encapsulates the characteristics of the qualitative paradigm that Merriam and Tisdell (2016:14) consider essential for qualitative research. For example, this study takes place in the natural settings of the participants and has used both in-depth interviews and observation as sources of data, which has improved the scientific soundness of the research results. The qualitative research paradigm uses a variety of research strategies, which include: basic qualitative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, narrative analysis, and qualitative case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:23). However, this study uses the basic qualitative research strategy. The above authors accentuate that in this strategy, researchers simply describe their study as a basic qualitative study without declaring it a particular type of qualitative research.

Thus, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 24) qualitative researchers conducting a basic qualitative study would be interested in:

- How people interpret their experiences;

- how they construct their worlds, and

- What meaning they attribute to their experiences.

The overall purpose of the qualitative research strategy is to understand how people make sense of their lives and experiences. Similarly, in this study the researcher seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government's corporate reputation.

The following are the key design elements of this study:

Empirical study: Researchers conduct research to discover new knowledge and to gain a richer understanding of the social world (Neuman, 2011:21). This is a scientific study that entails the collection of data through in-depth interviews and participant observation. The data have been analysed through thematic and Leximancer analysis through which research findings have been generated.

Exploratory study: Although a given study can have more than one purpose (Babbie & Mouton, 2014:79), this study will use the exploratory approach. The goal of this study is to explore the research phenomenon and it, therefore, requires the researcher to undertake an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon. Exploratory studies usually lead to insight and comprehension rather than the collection of detailed, accurate, and replicable data (Babbie & Mouton, 2014:80). This approach is in line with the study's goal of gaining an in-depth understanding and description of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government's corporate reputation from the perspective of the research participants.

Basic and applied research: This research seeks to "advance general knowledge and understanding of the fundamental nature of social reality" (Neuman, 2011: 24).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016:03) assert that basic research is motivated by intellectual interest in a phenomenon and has its goal as the extension of knowledge. Concepts and themes from this study contribute to scientific knowledge and a theoretical framework consisting of existing theories on the public sector corporate reputation, which is an under-investigated area. Ritchie and Lewis (2003: 24) state that applied research is concerned with using the knowledge acquired through research to contribute directly to the understanding or resolution of a contemporary issue. This study culminates in the development of a strategic framework that will inform public sector organisations on how they can practically improve corporate reputation management.

Cross-sectional: This study is cross-sectional, and Neuman (2011:36) defines cross-sectional research as any research that examines information on many cases at one point. Corporate reputation is experienced over a long period of time, however, for the purpose of this study, the Eastern Cape Provincial Government's corporate reputation is studied within a specific time frame culminating in the declaration of the research findings.

Primary research: Hox and Boeiji (2005) define primary data as data that are collected for the specific research problem at hand, using procedures that fit the research problem best. This study gathered primary data through in-depth interviews the researcher conducted with 15 participants that represented five organised Eastern Cape structures, and observations of two community engagement sessions which the Office of the Premier had facilitated. The researcher used audio recording and field notes to collect data.

Qualitative research: Qualitative research studies human action in its natural setting and through the eyes of the actors themselves, together with an emphasis on the detailed description and understanding of the phenomena within the appropriate context (Babbie & Mouton, 2014: 278). Further, Tuli (2010) adds that qualitative research is oriented toward discovery and process, has high validity, is less concerned with generalizability, and is more concerned with deeper understanding of the research problem in its unique context. The researcher developed a semi-structured interview schedule, which was administered to source qualitative data in order to answer the research questions.

Sampling procedure: This study used non-probability, purposive sampling. Bryman (2012:416) asserts that purposive sampling essentially has to do with the selection of units with direct reference to the research questions being asked, and the idea is that the research questions should give an indication of what units need to be sampled. The researcher purposefully selected five organised structures (business, media, youth, NGOs and government officials) from contrasting geographical areas of the Eastern Cape, who work closely with the Provincial Government and would have perspectives on the Provincial Government's corporate reputation. Three representatives from each structure participated in the interviews and a total of 15 participants were interviewed. For observation, the researcher selected two community engagement sessions that the Office of the Premier had facilitated, which enabled the researcher to observe the views of the general public towards the Provincial Government.

1.5.2. Qualitative inquiry strategy: exploration

Three inquiry strategies dominate social science research, which comprise exploration, description and explanation. Although a given study can have more than one purpose (Babbie & Mouton, 2014:79), this study used the exploratory approach. The investigation of the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is a relatively a new area, and an exploratory approach will "provide a basic familiarity with the topic" (Babbie & Mouton, 2014:79). Furthermore, exploration is an appropriate strategy, considering that the concept of corporate reputation is a widely researched phenomenon within the private sector, but there is dearth of research about this topic within this sector. The study will, therefore, be "breaking new ground within the public sector, and will almost yield new insights into the topic of research" (Babbie & Mouton, 2014:80). The next section looks into the research design as an important element of the research process.

1.6.   DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to the scientific body of knowledge on the role of corporate reputation of the public sector. However, inherently, as in all scholarly studies, the study is susceptible to certain limitations, which should be given attention during the interpretation of results and

the drawing of conclusions on the findings of the study. Further, this is a qualitative, interpretive study that relied on a small sample, and therefore its findings cannot be generalised. A purposive sample was used to identify participants that would potentially provide an in-depth insight into the study phenomenon.

While the study is not intended for generalisation to the population, constructs and concepts that emerged from the study will provide a perfect foundation for a quantitative survey of the same phenomenon. The researcher was undertaking a study of this magnitude for the first time, and as noted by Yin (1994: 14), a qualitative study can be a complicated process for novice researchers. Researcher biases might influence the analysis and interpretation of the research data. However, to mitigate against potential bias, the researcher adopted reflexivity to ensure, the researcher was proactive about personal biases, choices and preconceived ideas that might adversely affect the collection and interpretation of data.

This is a cross-sectional study of which the data captured the linkages between variables at a particular time, and it may not be generalised to other times. However, to understand the views of society on the public sector corporate reputation over time, longitudinal collection of data would be necessary. The task of transcribing audio-recorded interviews was time consuming, as the researcher needed not only to record what was said, but also had to try to give an indication of the tone in which it was said and the participants' non-verbal communications. Furthermore, the study involved translation of some interviews from Xhosa to English, which was also time consuming for the study.

1.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study identified in-depth interviews and observation as data collection strategies. Scholars equate the two data collection strategies with some ethical implications. For example, Orb, Laurel and Wynaden (2000) have alluded to the fact that in qualitative research, questions of ethics arise within the context of the shifting focus of the study, the unpredictable nature of the research and the trust relationship between the researcher and the participant.

The literature stresses that potential ethical conflicts exist in regard to how a researcher gains access to a community group and in the effects the researcher may have on participants. In conducting research, the researcher was confronted with issues of anonymity, confidentiality and privacy, which the researcher guaranteed to research participants. The table below illustrates the key elements that will constitutes ethical considerations for the study.

Table 1.2. – Ethical factors

Elements	Mitigation
Anonymity	Researcher assured participants anonymity should they wish to remain anonymous, and also used codes for purposes of data analysis.
Privacy	Sought permission to meet the participants.
Confidentiality	Assured the participants of confidentiality. Keep information confidential at all times.
Informed consent	A consent form signed before the study.
Voluntary participation	A letter requesting participation sent to participants, which clearly explained that they have a right not to participate in the study.

Source: Researcher's conceptualisation

The researcher sought consent before accessing the research setting, and ensured that participants were comprehensively appraised of the research process. The researcher also advised them that they have a right not to participate or withdraw from the study, so that they did not feel obliged to participate in the study.

Ramos (1989) identifies three types of problems that may affect qualitative studies: the researcher/participant relationship, the researcher's subjective interpretations of data, and the design itself.

1.8. DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

This thesis is organised into the following eight chapters:

Figure 1.3. Thesis conceptual demarcation
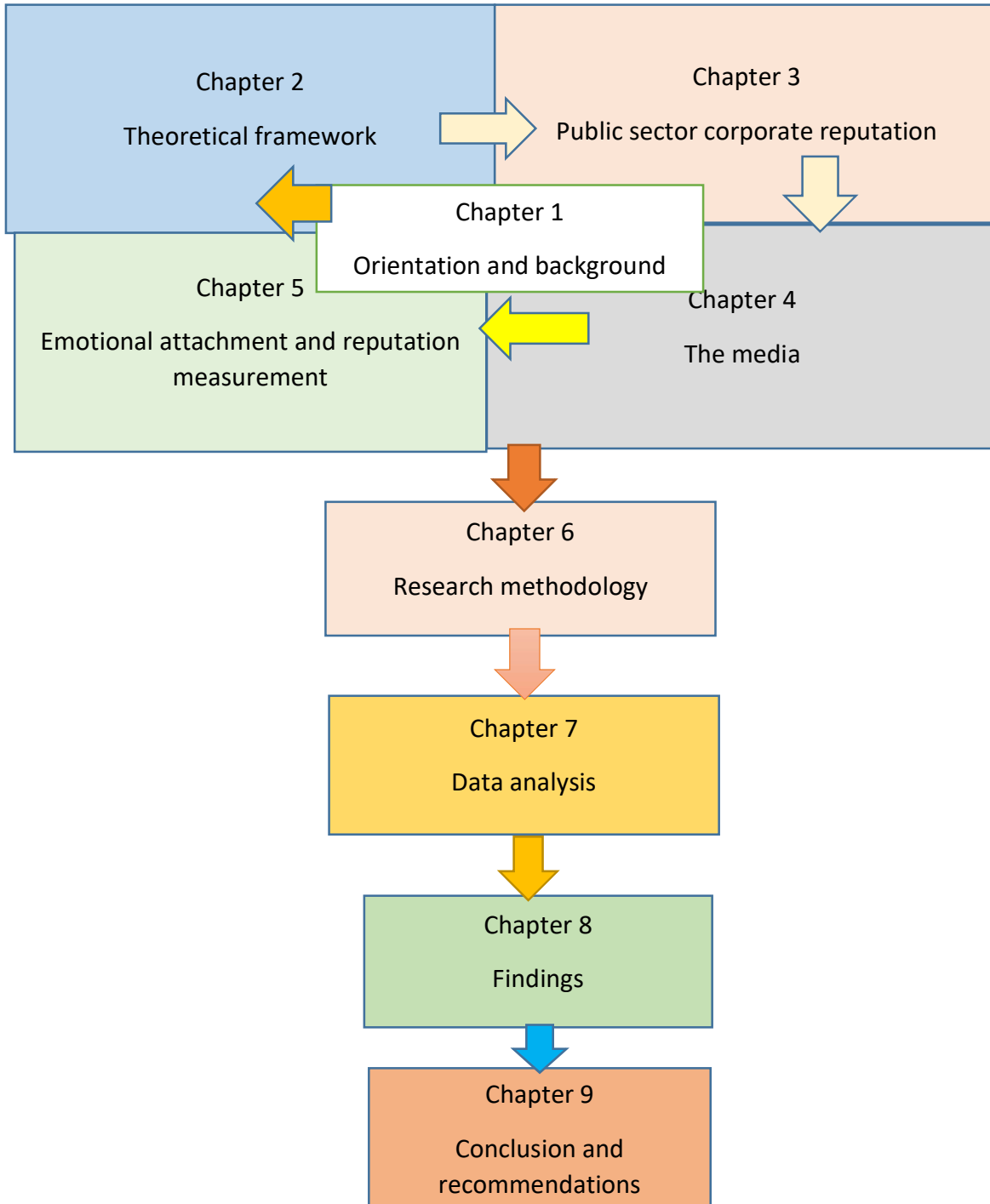
Source: Researcher's conceptualisation

Chapter One: Orientation and background

This Chapter presents the orientation and background to the study. It gives an overview of the entire study, including research activities that will be undertaken. It highlights the background to the concept of corporate reputation. Research conceptualisation, including the problem statement and research questions are highlighted. The remainder of the Chapter discusses the significance of the study, describes research methodology, limitations and ethical considerations for the study.

Chapter Two: Theoretical framework

This Chapter outlines the theoretical framework for the study. The theoretical approach of this study is underpinned by legitimacy theory, as it is applicable to corporate reputation management. The next section discusses the world views that inform the research strategy for the study. The primary domain of the study is communication management, which is discussed in the next section. The latter section outlines aspects of the three academic fields, which comprise strategic communication, corporate communication and media relations. This is followed by the discussion of the theories and models that guide the study.

Chapter Three: Public sector corporate reputation

The first section discusses the determinants of corporate reputation with specific reference to the public sector. The next section outlines conceptual determinants of the public sector, which are crucial in influencing stakeholders' perceptions about an organisation. The public sector operates in an environment of a myriad of stakeholders, and to illustrate this, the next Chapter discusses the stakeholder management from the public sector perspective. Various perspectives of public sector corporate reputation, including how organisations manage their reputations, the need to build reputation, how it is formed, and its value to the survival of an organisation, are addressed here.

Chapter Four: The media

The first section deals with the media coverage of government and how it impacts its reputation. This is followed by a discussion of the role of the media in government, with specific focus on media and democracy, the media watchdog role, government exposure to the media, and government favourability and familiarity. The next section highlights the value of media reporting for government, which is succeeded by a discussion of new media and its impact on public sector reputation, specifically focusing on social media, its reputational risks and potential spill overs. This Chapter concludes with the discussion of media related concepts that impact public sector reputation, which include issue management, crisis management and change management.

Chapter Five: Emotional attachment and reputation measurement

This Chapter first discusses the emotional attachment of stakeholders to a brand, which is followed by a discussion of the genesis of the RepTrak Pulse view. Dimensions of RepTrak Pulse are discussed as the drivers of emotional attachment. The Chapter concludes with a discussion of literature on the variety of practices applicable to the measuring of corporate reputation and major approaches to measuring corporate reputation.

Chapter Six: Research methodology

This Chapter outlines the processes that the researcher followed to collect the data so as to answer the research questions. The Chapter starts by discussing the research design for the study. This is followed by a description of the sampling process, which essentially identifies purposive sampling as the main sampling approach for the study. The population for the study is described next. This is followed by the presentation of a sample size for the study. The following section delineates the research participants, highlighting how they participated in the field study. Data collection procedures are outlined in the next section, which is followed by the research procedure. The latter entails the detailing of the strategic approaches that were followed to enhance the study's scientific soundness. This is followed by a discussion of the data analysis procedure that comprised thematic analysis and the utilisation of Leximancer Software.

Chapter Seven: Data analysis

This Chapter represents results from 17 field studies, of which the data were collected from three business representatives, three government officials, three Non-Governmental Organisations, three media houses, representatives from three youth structures, and two observations of government community engagement sessions. A total of 15 in-depth interviews and two participant observations from two government community engagement sessions. For the in-depth interviews, participants comprised of eight females aged between 23 and 59 years, and seven males aged between 24 and 60 years. For the observations, more than 300 people participated, which included majority of women and young people.

Chapter Eight: Research findings

This Chapter seeks to present perceptions of the participants about the Provincial Government reputation backed by the literature review. As part of the report presentation, the researcher first answers the three secondary research questions, after which the main research question is answered. Finally, the research problem is then addressed. As part of this Chapter, a conceptual framework for the corporate reputation management of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is presented, and management implications and suggestions for future research are provided.

Chapter 9: Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter mainly focuses on conclusions that have emerged from the rigorous synthesis and synchronisation of literature and empirical data. The conclusions primarily pertain to the research questions, managerial implications of the study and future research opportunities.

1.9.   CONCLUSION

This Chapter has provided the background to this study, accentuating the significance of undertaking this study within the public sector context. Unlike the private sector, corporate reputation management within the public sector context has received very limited academic attention. Henceforth, this study has adopted a qualitative research paradigm, in order to receive in-depth insight into the phenomenon of corporate reputation management in the public sector.

The Chapter has outlined the research approach that the study will follow in order to answer the research problem that drives the study. The primary and secondary research questions were distilled from the research problem. The choice of a qualitative research paradigm has enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth perspectives from the research participants.

This Chapter also reflected on the potential ethical implications of this research paradigm. The Chapter further highlights the fact that the study has sought to develop a conceptual framework that will be the main contribution to the public sector corporate reputation management scholarship.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This Chapter is dedicated to the theoretical perspectives of corporate reputation. In order to explore the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, a theoretical framework that lays a foundation for the study, is critical. Significantly, this framework, therefore, provides a scientific bedrock for the study of the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

This Chapter starts off by outlining the meta-theoretical conceptualisation of the study. The theoretical approach of this study is underpinned by legitimacy theory as it is applicable to corporate reputation management. The next section discusses the world views that inform the research strategy for the study. The primary domain of the study is communication management, which is discussed in the next section. The following section outlines aspects of the three academic fields, which comprise strategic communication, corporate communication and media relations. This is followed by a discussion of the theories and models that guide the study. The Figure below further depicts how this Chapter is structured.

Figure 2.1: Theoretical framework
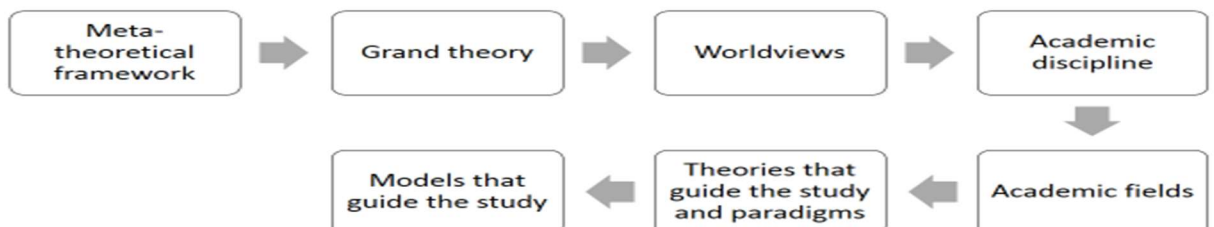
Source: Researcher's conceptualisation

2.2. METATHEORY

The theoretical framework includes various theories that are used as a basis for the study. This framework illustrates theories employed in the research and how the study is conceptualised, and is presented below.

Table 2.1: Metatheoretical framework of the study

General research question	How can the reputation of the Eastern Government Provincial Government be managed strategically?		
Meta theory	Legitimacy theory		
Worldviews	Sociological view, organisational view		
Paradigms	Impressional, relational		
Academic discipline	Communication management		
Academic Fields	Strategic communication	Corporate communication	Media relations
Theories	Critical theory Social exchange theory Uncertainty reduction theory	Reputation theory Signalling theory Attachment theory	Agenda setting theory Ray's hierarchy of effects Media systems dependence theory
Models	Arena model & SPIRIT model		
Concept	Eastern Cape Provincial Government corporate reputation		
Constructs	Public views of corporate reputation	Emotional attachment	Media coverage
Variables in items of semi-structured interview schedule	Quality of services Innovation Performance Citizenship Workplace Governance Leadership	Overall impression Feelings Trust Admire	Media coverage Media relations Watchdog role Social media Reputational risks

2.2.1. Study's meta-theoretical framework

In this section legitimacy theory is introduced as a meta-theoretical framework that has guided the study and further provided basis for the interpretation of the research findings for this study.

i.   Legitimacy theory

Legitimacy theory is relevant for this study because like all other organisations, the Eastern Cape Provincial Government survives and operates in the context of a society made up of values and norms. Therefore, it is crucial that society grants the provincial government a license to operate. Legitimacy theory has mainly been used to study corporate social performance and environmental disclosures (Cugenesan & Ward, 2006; Guthree & Michelon, 2009; Rodrigues & Branco, 2006; Tiling 2004), however, its characteristics are relevant for this study. There are some scholars, albeit a very limited number, that have used legitimacy theory to explain social and environmental reporting within the public sector (Rahaman, Lawrence & Roper, 2002), to demonstrate how a government entity in Australia used information reporting to meet expectations of its stakeholders so as to enhance reputation (Sakim & Schneider, 2009); and to study citizens' trust in a police department in the Republic of Ghana (Gau, 2011).

Samkim and Schneider (2009) argue that a lack of legitimacy could have political repercussions. In concurrence with Samkim and Schneider, Moir (2001) states that society grants legitimacy and power to organisations, and those who do not use the power in a manner which society considers responsible, will tend to lose it. A caveat by Wæraas and Sataøen (2012) is that the drawbacks of losing legitimacy are greater than those of improving reputation. Similarly, failure to conform in a manner that is consistent with the expectations of society can revoke the organisation's social contract, which in turn may potentially lead to the organisation's own demise (Othman & Arshad, 2014), and thus culminate in the delegitimisation of government in the society. Suchman in Patel, Xavier and Glen (2005) furthermore states that stakeholders act as sources of external or internal legitimacy, depending on their relationship to the organisation.

As one of the proponents of legitimacy theory, Suchman (1995) laments that many researchers employ the term legitimacy, but few define it. He further argues that even those who manage to define the term, only cover a limited aspect of the phenomenon as a whole and devote little attention to systematising alternative perspectives. To this end, Suchman (1995: 574) defines legitimacy theory as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions". Scholars such as Deephouse and Suchman (2008); Rahaman *et al*. (2002) and Wangombe (2013), have corroborated Suchman's definition of legitimacy theory. Several scholars have highlighted characteristics, which are the hallmarks for legitimacy theory, and they relate to the study as the table below illustrates.

Table 2.2: Characteristics of legitimacy theory as related to the study

Characteristics of legitimacy theory	Description of the characteristics	Relationship to the study
Relationships with stakeholders	Creating relationship with customers/ stakeholders based on quality service, dialogue, innovation and learning (Michelon, 2009; Nguyen & Mutum, 2012)	The survival and legitimacy of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is determined by the degree to which it has built relationships with citizens. The extent to which the Provincial Government is able to establish sustainable relationships with citizens will ensure that it receives unequivocal support and enjoy legitimacy, thus creating a positive reputation.
Socially constructed	Reflects a congruence between the behaviours of the legitimated entity and the shared (or assumedly shared) beliefs of some social group (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Tregigda, Milne & Kearins, 2006)	Stakeholders construct meaning of their interaction with the Provincial Government based on the congruency between their value systems and that of government which seeks legitimacy, and where there is perceived lack of congruency, government loses public support, and experiences poor reputation.
Societal expectations	A company operates in society where it agrees to perform various socially desired actions in return for approval of its objectives, other rewards, and its ultimate survival (Mousa & Hassan, 2015)	In order to be granted legitimacy, the Provincial Government must meet the expectations of its citizens. Failure to meet citizens' expectations may result in the loss of legitimacy; losing support of the people or being voted out which

		is a manifestation of unfavourable government reputation.
Trust	Belief that an organisation is reliable and is associated with such characteristics as consistency, competency, honesty, fairness, being responsible, helpful, and benevolent. Further recognises and protects the rights and interests of the people through application of what is good for the society in order to increase cooperation and expand ultimate benefits (Hosner, 1995; Kabadayi, Alan & Erdebil, 2011; Morris & Kellner, 2010)	Citizen Trust in the Provincial Government is central, for it enables and authorises it to operate. The survival of Government is largely determined by the level of trust it commands, which in turn enhances good reputation.
Communication	Communication is one of the most important links between an organisation and various publics. It is the key factor in the creation, implementation, monitoring and reporting of all corporate activities (Guru, 2013; Mousa & Hassan, 2015).	It is through communication that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government can maintain or regain its legitimacy in the eyes of society by disclosing information about its actions and performance. Where it communicates effectively, there is likely to be a perceived good reputation and vice-a-versa.
Responsiveness	Society is dynamic and expectations evolve over time. This necessitates the organisation to be responsive to changes in the environment in which it operates (Samkim & Schneider, 2009)	Organisations that promptly respond to the needs of its stakeholders strengthen their reputations. Government deals with stakeholders characterised by diverse expectations, and in order to enhance its reputation government, it must be adequately capacitated to deal with such individual expectations.
Accountability	The duty to provide an account or reckoning of actions for which an organisation is held responsible for its actions (Samkim & Schneider, 2009; Tregigda *et al.* 2006)	Citizens are interested in how the Provincial Government resources are used to achieve public benefit. In order to build a formidable reputation, Government should accept accountability for their actions. If it fails to comply with the demands of society, it may face threats to its legitimacy and consequently to its survival.
Media exposure	The news media can shape the public agenda by influencing public opinion, and the nature of the coverage the media provides to an issue can also shape stakeholder perception. For example, if an issue is framed negatively by the media, stakeholders are also likely to view the issue	Citizens rely on media reports on the activities of the Provincial Government, and as a consequence media coverage can potentially influence the reputation of the Government in a remarkable way.

	negatively. (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Samkim & Schneider, 2009)	
Social contract	Any social institution and business, without exception, operates in society via a social contract, expressed or implied, whereby its survival and growth are based upon: the delivery of some socially desirable ends to society in general and, the distribution of economic, social, or political benefits to groups from which it derives its power. The social contract is used to represent the myriad expectations society has about how an organisation should conduct its operations (Deegan, 2000; Makela, 2012; Mousa & Hassan, 2015; Suchman, 1995)	The Eastern Cape Provincial Government exists if society perceives it to be operating in accordance with the societal norms and values. In other words, government provides public goods accordingly, and effectively communicate its programmes. Breach of the social contract may delegitimise an organisation, which can manifest into an unfavourable reputation.

Source: Researcher's construct based on literature review

Ali and Rizwan (2013) emphasise that under legitimacy theory, a communication medium can be used as a tool by companies to communicate information about their operations and activities (practices) to meet society expectations and to maintain its license to operate in the society (legitimacy). Invariably, society is often in dire need of information about plans and broad practices of an organisation, and ordinarily it is through communication that the organisation will consistently receive recognition and trust from society to reinforce its legitimacy. Therefore, as noted by Patel *et al.* (2005), the management of legitimacy rests heavily on communication between organisations and their environments. Furthermore, in seeking to emphasise the significant role of communication in strengthening legitimacy, Cornelissen (2004) contends that companies need to be judged as 'legitimate' by most, if not all, of their stakeholders in order to survive and prosper, and corporate communications is the management function that works the hardest to achieve that.

When organisational legitimacy is called into question, public support and the media's positive portrayal of the organisation may diminish (Marcus & Goodman, 1991). Mousa and Hassan (2015) concur that, consistent with legitimacy theory, a company operates in society where it agrees to perform to various socially desired actions in return for approval of its objectives, other rewards, and its ultimate survival. However, some scholars have challenged the sufficiency of legitimacy theory as a lens to explain corporate reputation.

For example, Hybels (1995) has questioned the ability to directly measure the legitimacy. Legitimacy theory has also largely been used to describe and explain corporate social responsibility reporting and very few scholars, if any, have used it to directly explain public sector corporate reputation.

2.2.2. Corporate reputation world views

World-views can be defined as "a set of shared basic beliefs about how researchers view that which they study" (Du Plooy, 2001:19). Various world-views are used to understand and evaluate the different world-views that influence corporate reputation management, which include sociological and organisational worldviews.

i.   Sociological world view

The sociological worldview is relevant for this study as it emphases the relationships that an organisation has with its stakeholders. For example, Fombrun and Van Riel (1998) assert that organisational sociologists point out that rankings are social constructions that come into being through the relationship that a focal company has with its stakeholders. Tout and Govender (2015) add that the sociological view regards reputation as a social construct that is built through the relationships that an organisation has with its stakeholders. Consistent with the above authors, Balan (2013) is of the view that sociologists draw attention towards the fact that reputational rankings emerge as a natural consequence of a process of an aggregated evaluation of a company's performance, which takes place in a social cognitive context.

Fombrun and Van Riel (1997) sum up the sociological view of corporate reputation by stating that reputations are indicators of legitimacy: they are aggregate assessments of firms' performance relative to expectations and norms in an institutional field. In other words, reputations is a social phenomenon that is constructed through sustainable relations between a company and its stakeholders.

ii.   Organisational world view

The organisational worldview is pertinent to this study, because it places employees at the centre of organisational reputation, as they are the focal point in the organisation's stakeholder engagement processes. Organisational theorists generally view reputations as emergent features of companies that are rooted in the shared understandings of employees and managers (Albert & Whetten in Fombrun, 2005). Fombrun and Van Riel (1998) add that to organisational scholars corporate reputations are rooted in the sense-making experiences of employees. Employees are considered to be the ambassadors of corporate reputation (Adeosun & Ganiyu, 2013) and as noted by Balan (2015), corporate culture appears to exert an influence on staff's perceptions and attitudes.

Villegas (2009) argues that reputation management must begin at home, inside every company and that employees are the best ambassadors – or the worst – and reflect the authentic interaction between management and employees. The organisational perspective of reputation emphasises the invaluable role of employees in shaping the reputation of an organisation. Invariably, employees become the first point of contact for all potential stakeholders, therefore, the impression they create impacts on the organisation's reputation. In the same way, Dortok (2006) observes that employees play a key role in helping companies achieve their business results. The more employees and customers stay happy, the stronger the reputation of an organisation will become.

2.2.3. Communication management as an academic discipline

Steyn and De Beer (2012) define communication management as the management of communication between an organisation (institution) and its internal and external stakeholders, and other societal interest groups, and is performed at the functional level of an organisation. In specific reference to the pivotal role of communication management, Rensburg (2014) accentuates that communication management (public relations) in all its contexts, is of paramount importance to creating and maintaining effective relationships with all stakeholders. Further, the author postulates that communication management can play a role here and should be utilized more appropriately and strategically.

Communication is at the heart of organisational performance (Riel & Fombrun, 2007), and has become an important component of organisational development in modern society (Guru *et al*. 2013).

For the purpose of this study, the academic fields associated with communication management include: strategic communication, corporate communication, and media relations. These academic fields are elaborated in the succeeding sections.

2.2.4. Academic fields

The academic fields within which this study is conducted include strategic communication, corporate communication and media, which are discussed next.

i. Strategic communication

Strategic communication has become increasingly important as a vehicle for managing the reputation of public sector entities (Sataøen & Wæraas, 2016). As a consequence, there is pervasive interest among scholars, as well as practitioners, in the strategic role of communication (Gupta, 2011). Literature assigns to strategic communication the role of a management instrument with the task to "harmonize all consciously used forms of internal and external communication with its stakeholders (Van Riel, 1995).

Further, there is a widespread belief in the management world that in today's society the future of any one company depends critically on how it is viewed by key stakeholders, such as shareholders and investors, customers and consumers, employees and members of the community in which the company resides (Cornelissen, 2005). In response to this expectation, a company is obligated to harness communication and to make an effort to reposition it as a strategic function. More importantly, literature emphasises that the aim of strategic communication is to build a strong reputation of the company and therefore, it also has the function of corporate governance (Milas, Boric & Zigic, 2014).

Notwithstanding myriad studies that scholars have conducted on the strategic role of communication, there is still enormous concern in literature about the strategic role of this process. For example, Zerfass and Sherzada (2015) note that the role of the communications executive is still embryonic as an established function and indicates a gap between the perceived importance of communications and soft as well as hard indicators of its relevance in organisations. In their study of the role of corporate communication, De Wet, Steward, and Van Rooyen (2012) report that the role of communication within the organisation is still perceived as being largely related to publicity, which supports their limited comprehension of strategic integrated communication. Furthermore, Zarfass and Sherzada's (2014) study found that, generally, management view communication less as a strategic function, but more as transmission of their objectives.

Considering the above concerns, strategic communication is still treated as an after-thought in many organisations; ignoring the critical role that it plays in sustaining organisations in the current fierce competitive environments. That said, Guru *et al.* (2013) posit that strategic communication is an instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonized as effectively and efficiently as possible, so as to create a favourable basis for relationships with groups upon which the company is dependent. Similarly, Argetini (2005) argues that companies succeed when communication emanating from their various business units are not only consistent but also aligned with and supporting the company's overall strategy.

Siano, Confetto, Vollero and Siglioccolo's (2012) caveat is worth noting: "the only way to overcome the existing fragmentation of communications in most organisations and thereby to create economic value is to adopt a strategic approach to the management of communication". Literature has consistently shown that communication plays an invaluable role in establishing and sustaining stakeholder relations, which is critical in building reputation. According to Milas *et al*. (2014), in the process of carrying out its task, strategic communication establishes and maintains reputation and it is responsible for shaping the external presentation of a company; as such, it is an important function of corporate governance, and reputation is therefore essential for the long-term survival of the company. The next section discusses corporate communication as an academic field.

ii.   Corporate communication

Cornelissen (2014:5) defines corporate communication as a management function that offers a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favourable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organisation is dependent. This definition is in line with Gupta's (2011) argument that with increased competition, digitalization of the world, emergence of pressure groups and consumer activism it is becoming increasingly vital for organisations to manage relationships with stakeholders like customers, investors and employees (Gupta, 2011). Cornelissen (2014) further emphasises the invaluable role of corporate communication in the current global environment, which is characterised by scandals and financial crises. The author states that senior executives of many large organisations and multinationals nowadays consider protecting their company's reputation as one of their most important strategic objectives.

In reference to the critical role of corporate communication, Steyn and De Beer (2012) assert that it assists in solving or avoiding conflict between organisational behaviour and the public's perception of how societally responsible organisations should operate. A cord that keeps a company in synch with its stakeholders is communication and as noted by Nkempu (2010), corporate communication has been identified as the most important means of forming formidable stakeholder relations. Good stakeholder relations often translate to good corporate reputation and according to Fombrun (2005) good reputations develop when corporate leaders are transparent in the way they conduct company affairs. Consistent with the above view, McCoy and Black (2002) point out that the foundation stone of a good reputation for an organisation is good relationships with its constituents; whether it persistently pursues relationship building goals through planned and measured programmes, based on an understanding its stakeholders, or not.

Cornelissen (2004) adds that there is a widespread belief in the management world that in today's society the future of any one company depends critically on how it is viewed by key stakeholders such as shareholders and investors, customers and consumers, employees and members of the community in which the company resides.

Building and sustaining relations with critical stakeholders is largely embedded in the appropriate communication practices that a company pursues. In seeking to delineate the key dimensions of corporate communication, Cornelissen (2004:23) posits that corporate communications as a management function offers a framework and vocabulary for the effective coordination of all means of communications with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favourable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organisation is dependent.

Van Riel and Fombrun (2007) view corporate communication as the set of activities involved in managing and orchestrating all internal and external communications aimed at creating favourable starting points with stakeholders on which the company depends. A thread that runs across all of the above definitions is the consideration of the management role of corporate reputation. That said, Podnar's (2015:04) caveat in his latest publication on corporate communication is worth mentioning that authors tend to use the term corporate communication mostly in a profit-making organisational context, however, the term can be expanded outside profit-oriented organisations offering products and services, to a number of other organisations such as NGOs, political parties, not-for-profit organisations, and government institutions.

Steyn and De Beer (2012) stress that in its strategic role, corporate communication assists the organisation to earn the necessary approval – its license to operate – from those affected by and affecting its operations (obtaining legitimacy and earning trust from stakeholders and society).

iii.   Media relations

The relationship between government and media the world over has predominantly been characterised by tension and antagonism.
Tella and Franceschelli (2011) contend that this salient adversarial relationship occurs against the backdrop of a large proportion of information that the media provides to policymakers and they influence the conclusions reached by potential voters.

Organisations should prioritise strengthening strategic relations with various media institutions in order to enhance their reputations. Media relations entail strategic efforts that organisations pursue to strengthen working relationships with various media institutions in order to build and sustain corporate reputations. In this regard, Jo and Kim (2004) assert that favourable relationships with the media affect the corporate image positively, and good relationships bring about loyalty and loyal customers.

De Beer and Rensburg (2010) are of the view that the media fulfils a variety of important functions in society, including framing information, influencing opinion, providing entertainment, setting an agenda of issues and others. Invariably, the media is the source of information for stakeholders, and as observed by Rindova *et al*. (2007) often sets the agenda for public discourse and affects reputation accumulation. The above authors further state that the attention and interpretations that the media give to the firms they focus on become inputs into the sense making processes of other stakeholders, thereby having the potential to affect a firm's reputation with these audiences. As a critical source of information, Besley and Burgess (2000) argue that the media can play a critical role by informing voters about the actions of incumbents which they might otherwise be unaware of.

Often the public rely on the media to access information on the action of the incumbent government, especially where there is perceived lack of transparency. In this regard, Liu *et al*. (2012) send a caveat that more effective communication can lead to more favourable media coverage that ultimately shapes citizen trust in government.

Communicators must be forthright in making the information available in order to reinforce relations with the media, to further guarantee favourable coverage.

2.2.5. Theories that guide the study

This section presents a theoretical framework that provides a lens for the study, and will act as a strategic basis for the interpretation of research findings.

I.   **Strategic communication**

Theories that will be discussed under this academic discipline include critical theory, uncertainty reduction theory and social exchange theory. The discussion will start with reference to the relational paradigm.

Relational paradigm

Chun (2005) posits that the relational paradigm is based upon stakeholder theory which recognises that different stakeholders may have different expectations of a company. Based on this view, organisations deal with multiple stakeholders, who display diverse opinions about the organisation. Goldstein (2010) adds to the above viewpoint that organisational stakeholders can be internal or external and, depending on the industry and/or firm, each group is different and will likely have distinct views of the organisation, but all constituencies are important. As a result, before a firm can begin to formulate any sort of reputation management programme, it must know who its stakeholders are.

This paradigm emphasises differences between the views of different stakeholders but also contains the idea that internal and external views are linked (Chun, 2005). However, Chun further argues that in the case where stakeholders have different views of the same company, an unfavourable reputation may contaminate a favourable reputation. Therefore, any reputation incongruence or gap between the external and internal views has been seen as important in reputation management. Considering that the relational paradigm acknowledges that a reputation is the result of the assessment by multiple stakeholders, which includes the views of both internal and all relevant external stakeholders, not just shareholders (Chun, 2005:93), the relational approach is relevant for this study, which investigates the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

Critical theory

Critical theory is compatible with this study as it accentuates the pivotal role of citizen participation in the decision-making process through two-way communication on socio-economic and political issues that affect them.

Ngwenyama and Lee (1997) posit that critical theory views people not as passive receptacles of whatever data or information is transported to them, but as intelligent actors who assess the truthfulness, completeness, sincerity, and contextuality of the messages they receive. People must be afforded an opportunity to reflectively engage with the information that is being availed to them. Amudavalli (2005) asserts that critical theory is always particularly concerned with inquiring into the problems and limitations, the mistakes, the contradictions and incoherence, the injustices and inequities in how human beings operate within particular kinds of structures and hierarchies of relations with each other, facilitated and regulated by particular kinds of institutions.

With reference to the role of critical theory within the communication field, Craig (2009) argues that communication that involves only the transmission-reception or ritual sharing of meanings is inherently faulty, distorted, and incomplete. The author further asserts that in order for social order to be based on genuine mutual understanding (as distinct from strategic manipulation, oppressive conformity, or empty ritual), it recurrently becomes necessary for communicators to articulate, question, and openly discuss their differing assumptions about the objective world, moral norms, and inner experience.

Froomkin (2003) states that critical theory claims to provide a guide to human action, at least in some general (as opposed to strictly personal) areas — such as the definition and achievement of social justice and the correct regulation of human interactions — by helping people understand their true interests and by helping them escape from ideological coercion. In the same way, Jablin and Putman (2001:29) have opined that the central goal of critical theory in organisational communication has been to create a society and workplaces that are free from domination and where all members can contribute equally to produce systems that meet human needs and to lead to progressive development.

In this regard, Amudavalli (2005) is of the view that critical theory questions and challenges the conviction that what is, or what is in the process of becoming, or what appears to be, or what is most commonly understood to be, or what is dominantly conveyed to be, is also at the same time right and true, good and just, and necessary and inevitable: critical theory does not, at least automatically, accept any of this.

<u>Uncertainty reduction theory</u>

Uncertainty reduction theory is relevant for this study as it highlights the importance of reducing uncertainly through rigorous communication. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government has an obligation to deliver timely information in order to alleviate uncertainty thus strengthening relations with citizens. Although this theory is mostly applicable to interpersonal relationship contexts, it is equally pertinent to the context of the citizen-government relationship scenario.

Uncertainty is epistemic, future-oriented, and refers to a lack of knowledge concerning how to act with predictable outcomes (Aspers, 2018). According to Berger and Calabrese in Redmond (2015), when people interact with strangers, they experience uncertainty because they do not really know what to expect. The authors further observe that, as the interaction proceeds, people gain information that quickly reduces their uncertainties. Furthermore, to reduce such uncertainties, they seek information, and uncertainty is also aroused in relationships when someone behaves in an unexpected manner and violates people's expectations. Thompson, Bevan and Sparks (2012) are of the view that uncertainty occurs when details of the situation are ambiguous, complex, unpredictable, or probabilistic; when information is unavailable or inconsistent; and when people feel insecure in their own state of knowledge or the state of knowledge in general. That said, the uncertainty reduction theory proposes that the process of reducing uncertainty is predicated on eight axioms as outlined in the Table below.

Table 2.3: Original Axioms

Axiom 1.	Given the high level of uncertainty present at the onset of the entry phase, as the amount of verbal communication between strangers increases, the level of uncertainty for each interactant in the relationship will decrease. As uncertainty is further reduced, the amount of verbal communication will increase.
Axiom 2	As nonverbal affiliative expressiveness increases, uncertainty levels will decrease in an initial interaction situation. In addition, decreases in uncertainty level will cause increases in nonverbal affiliative expressiveness.
Axiom 3	High levels of uncertainty cause increases in information seeking behaviour. As uncertainty levels decline, information seeking behaviour decreases.
Axiom 4	High levels of uncertainty in a relationship cause decreases in the intimacy level of communication content. Low levels of uncertainty produce high levels of intimacy.
Axiom 5	High levels of uncertainty produce high rates of reciprocity. Low levels of uncertainty produce low reciprocity rates.
Axiom 6	Similarities between persons reduce uncertainty, while dissimilarities produce increases in uncertainty.
Axiom 7	Increases in uncertainty level produce decreases in liking; decreases in uncertainty level produce increases in liking.
Axiom 8	Shared communication networks, or shared ties, lessen uncertainty. On the other hand if you share no common relations your uncertainty intensifies.

Source: Redmond (2015)

Leising and Cartmell (2009) observe that individuals in uncertain situations are likely to feel discomfort, and information seeking is a viable solution to that discomfort in many contexts. Further, the authors argue that openness and a forthcoming attitude with information help the organisation minimise or avoid damage to its reputation. That said, as uncertainty is reduced, the parties feel more comfortable with each other and thus like each other more, resulting in more intimacy (Sanders & Wiseman, 2008). Thompson *et al*. (2012) are of the view that it is communication that can generate understanding (or a reduction of uncertainty) and thus serve as the basis of relationship development. Organisations should strive to reduce uncertainty through vigorous communication by providing timely information on issues pertinent to people's development. This theory clearly demonstrates that the uncertainty due to lack of government information has the propensity to adversely impact the relationship between people of the Eastern Cape and the Provincial Government.

However, Yoo (2004) suggests that the quantity of information is a major determinant of reducing the uncertainty level. Thompson *et al.* (2012) corroborate the above view and postulate that communication is the primary vehicle for reducing uncertainty.

<u>Social exchange theory</u>

Social exchange theory is relevant for this study as it underscores the significance of the mutual relationship between the Eastern Cape Provincial Government and its citizens, which is pivotal for effective corporate reputation. In order for the Eastern Cape Provincial Government to gain support from the citizens as voters and for citizens to receive efficient services, there has to be a certain degree of mutual relationship. According to Adam and Sizemore (2016), social exchange theory suggests that people form and maintain relationships based on what benefits or resources those relationships can bring them and in general, social relationships are pursued when the transaction of benefits is rewarding to both parties.

Similarly, Liang, Lui and Wu (2008) note that social exchange theory stipulates that individuals regulate their interactions with other individuals based on a self-interest analysis of the costs and benefits of such an interaction. The authors further emphasise that people seek to maximize their benefits and minimize their costs when exchanging resources with others. In such exchanges, people help others with the general expectation of some future returns, such as gaining desired resources through social reciprocity. Social exchange theory posits that organisations are forums for transactions (Croponzo, Prehar & Chen, 2002) and further suggests that trust and dependence of the partner on the alliance may be influential in understanding the flexibility of relationships in organisations (Ybarra & Wiersema, 1999).

Cosmides and Tooby (1987) posit that the ability to successfully engage in social exchange depends on the structured processing of specific kinds of information. Communication is a significant connexion that holds an organisation and its stakeholders together. Relationships among team members will develop and function smoothly if the team has built good communications (Wu, Lin & Lin, 2006).

However, the above authors send a caveat, accruing to social exchange theory: mutual commitment and the cooperative relationship are unable to thrive if there is a lack of mutual trust. In order to sustain a relationship the Provincial Government and its citizens must engender mutual trust through meaningful communication.

II.   Corporate communication

Under the corporate communication academic discipline reputational, signalling and attachment theories are discussed. This discussion will however start with reference to the impressional paradigm**.**

Impressional paradigm

This paradigm has greater interest in the stakeholder's emotional association with the firm, which will influence the firm's long-term financial performance (Chun, 2005). Further, the typical terms used in the impressional paradigm are identity, image and personality. Chun (2005) adds that in this paradigm, reputation is assessed in terms of stakeholders' perceptions or impression of the organisation, rather than any financial performance. Invariably, many studies in the marketing discipline fall within this paradigm. In the marketing literature the focus is on ideas related to customers and corporate image, while those grounded in the organisational literature, focus on the relationship between employees and their organisation (Chun, 2005). This paradigm is relevant for this study as it accentuates stakeholder emotional association with the organisation, which is an important construct of this study.

Reputation theory

Reputation theory is relevant for this study as it emphasises the pivotal role of managing corporate reputation within an organisation. Reputation is increasingly a ubiquitous phenomenon in both business and public sector organisations.

In this regard, Cahill *et al*. (2004) note that the importance of reputation is widely known and documented in the corporate world. It is understood that customers assign firms' reputations based upon the perceived quality of goods and services that they experience when interacting with them. Jansen *et al*. (2011) reinforce the above view and add that reputations are formed when external audiences evaluate how individual actors meet specific role expectations, which means that actors do not have full control over their reputations and that reputations are difficult to change once formed.

Various scholars (Geller, 2014; Iwu-Egwuonwu, 2010:7-26; Rhee, 2003) place more emphasis on good reputation, while Fitcher and Renumber (2007) argue that bad reputation is a liability to an organisation. Organisations that stakeholders perceive as untrustworthy experience a bad reputation. Reputation is directly linked to the organisation's performance (Neville, Bell & Mengu, 2005) and is seen by many commentators as an important asset which could be used as a competitive advantage and a source of financial performance (Morley & Sammut, 2006). The study by Wang and Smith (2010) indicate that high-reputation firms experience superior financial performance and a lower cost of capital. Good reputation enhances an organisation's strategic ability to exceed expectations in its performance.

Aperia and Black (2004:155) note that reputation can be good or bad, strong or weak. Reputations matter because they create value (Aperia & Black, 2004:155). The foundation stone of a good reputation for an organisation is good relationships with its constituents; whether it persistently pursues relationship building goals through planned and measured programmes, based on understanding its stakeholders, or not (McCoy & Black, 2002).

Burke (2011) furthermore accentuates that good corporate reputation is enhanced by intangible things that it does, such as delivering better products and services, being seen as a good place to work, and the building of trust with internal and external stakeholders. In the same way, Remenyi and Batista (2003), in reference to good reputation, state that governments with good reputation might maintain existing businesses and attract new ones for the respective regions, which could maximise job offers and minimise unemployment.

Signalling theory

Signalling theory is pertinent for this study as it highlights the importance of information that organisations use to signal their reputations to their stakeholders. It emphasises that all forms of communication that the Provincial Government uses are signals that reinforce its corporate reputation. Signalling theory draws on the informational role of the reputation, which appears to be essential in gaining the audience's trust and confidence in the products and services offered by the company (Fombrun & Riel, 1997). Smaiziene and Jucevicius (2009) concur with Fombrun and Van Riel that signalling theorists focus on the informational content of reputation. They treat reputations as information signals that increase an observers' confidence in the firm's products and services.

In his conceptualisation of corporate reputations, Fombrun (2005) implicates the above views when he accentuates that advertising campaigns, media relations, charitable contributions and conference calls with analysts all constitute strategic projections that companies use to signal their attractive features to potential customers, investors and employees and through which they build reputation. It can be deduced from this conceptual analysis of signalling theory that all communications that the company engages in act as signals of what the company is all about, what it stands for and what actions it espouses to fulfil its stakeholder's expectations.

Attachment theory

Attachment theory is relevant for the study because it focuses on the relationship between the stakeholders and the organisation, which is largely influenced by the emotions that result from service experiences. Although attachment theory has been considered a major theory in personality research and psychology in general; only recently have organisational researchers focused their attention on its influence in organisational contexts (Byrne, Albert, Manning & Desir, 2017). In the context of psychology, attachment theory suggests that early relationships between an infant and a caretaker impact children's personality and lifestyle, and shape their working models about themselves, others, and relationships (Aharony, 2016).

Byrne *et al.* (2017) add that in view of the attachment theory, individuals are born with an innate need to form close relationships with their attachment figures (i.e. parents or key caregivers) and seek ways to fulfil this need. As a result, these early attachments influence cognitive, emotional, and behavioural response patterns, and more importantly when the infant's needs are satisfied, s/he develops a secure bond toward the attachment figure, accompanied by a positive view of the self (Aharony, 2016).

That said, Levy and Hino (2016) are of the view that although attachment theory focusses on human relationships, research studies indicate that consumers may attribute human characteristics to brands, and may have a relationship with brands, just as they do with people. According to Men and Robinson, (2018) great brands always make an emotional connection with the intended audience and they reach beyond the purely rational and purely economic level to spark feelings of closeness, affection, and trust. In this regard, Roos and Friman, (2008) assert that emotions are considered particular labels of affect, and may change for the worse, or for the better, during the service relationship - thus, emotions constitute a special dimension of customer relationships.

Levy and Hino (2016) corroborate the above viewpoints and state that a perceived higher level of service quality, which strives to go beyond the customer's expectations, can create a positive emotion of pleasant surprise and delight among customers, leading to higher satisfaction levels. Thomson, MacInnis and Park (2005) concur with the above view and state that consumers who are emotionally attached to an organisation are also likely to have a favourable attitude toward it. The authors further add that an individual who is emotionally attached to an organisation is likely to be satisfied with it, and this satisfaction might provide a basis for emotional attachment.

III.   Media relations

Various theories are used as lenses to study media relations, however, agenda setting, Ray's hierarchy of effects and media dependence apply in this study of media relations.

Agenda setting theory

Agenda setting theory is compatible with this study, as the media predominantly influences what people should pay attention to in the public discourse and how they perceive the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. People receive an enormous amount of information about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government from various media houses. The media sets the agenda in the public discourse through proactive coverage of government issues.

The extant literature on agenda-setting theory recognises Lippmann's seminal work which he produced in 1922, in which he discusses how media messages influence the "pictures in our heads". However, as noted by Coleman, McCombs, Shaw and Weavers (2007), it was 50 years later that scholars such as McCombs and Shaw gave the now-familiar name to the phenomena Lippmann described, and since then agenda-setting has become one of the major research themes in the field. McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar and Rey (1997) have conceptualised agenda-setting within the Lippmann's perspective, and have theoretically defined it as a detailed social science theory about the transfer of salience of the elements in the mass media's pictures of the world to the elements in the pictures in our heads.

Similarly, Meijer and Kleinnijenhuis (2006) view agenda-setting as the process of the mass media presenting certain issues frequently and prominently with the result that large segments of the public come to perceive those issues as more important than others. Cornellisen (2014:148) further emphasises that the agenda-setting hypothesis underlying the theory is that the frequency with which the media report on a public or political issue determines that issue's salience in the minds of the general public.

Mass media preserves power to influence opinions of the mass population and to set the agenda for public discourse. As noted by various scholars, the agenda-setting theory distinguishes two levels of agenda setting. The first level of agenda setting posits that the company must achieve some degree of visibility for the public to think about (Fan, Geddes & Flory 2011; McCombs *et al*. 1997; Ragas 2013) and the focus is on the degree to which it readily comes to mind when a particular topic is being discussed (Coleman *et al*. 2009:148; Cornellisen, 2014; McCombs & Venezuela, 2007).

Furthermore, Meijer and Kleinnijenhuis (2006) postulate that the hypothesis with regard to the first level of agenda-setting predicted that more media coverage about a firm would result in a higher degree of public awareness of that firm. The first-level agenda setting determines the publics' level of awareness of the firm, and the extent to which they can promptly associate issues to related firms. In contrary to the first-level agenda setting, the second-level goes a step further (Cornellisen 2014:148) and focuses on how people understand the things that have captured their attention (Coleman *et al*. 2009). Cornellisen (2014) further posits that the second-level agenda setting suggests that news coverage not only reports facts and neutral observations, but also conveys feelings through its stance and tone on the issue. Based on Cornellisen's view, Ragas (2013) adds that the public form impressions based on the information disseminated through news media.

An empirical investigation conducted by Kjae and Morsing (2011) indicates that there is a positive correlation between the degree to which companies are described in a positive light by the news media and the degree to which their reputations are perceived to be positive. The authors' viewpoint indicates the degree to which the news media agenda may affect corporate reputation, and further suggests that the cognitive and affective aspects of agenda setting are related to the awareness and evaluative aspects of corporate reputation.

In contrary, Fombrun and Shanely (1990) found a negative relationship between media attention and corporate reputation. That said, both scholars ignore the fact that some organisations may occupy media space through negative media coverage, and the public would easily associate their issues with negativity.

Invariably, as noted by Coleman (2009), extensive news coverage of negative issues may contribute to a significant drop in reputation ratings. However, Kjae and Morsing (2011) raise an important dilemma that it is difficult to determine whether changes in corporate reputation are directly affected by media agenda setting, or whether there are intervening variables or even reverse causation. This dilemma presents a serious empirical gap.

It is worthwhile to note Neuman, Guggenheim, Jang and Bae's (2014) observation that agenda-setting theory has undergone a process of reconceptualization due to the proliferation of digital media and online publics. The rapid evolution of online communication platforms has presented publics with a vast amount of information (Takeshita, 2005) and interactive opportunities to engage in the content-creation process and to collectively construct their own agenda to determine what issues are important to be included for discussion (LOU, 2014). The public is currently exposed to myriad media outlets that enable them to engage with organisations in their own accord, and agendas are set outside the traditional media platforms.

Based on the above theoretical perspective, the impact of agenda-setting theory on reputation cannot be over-emphasised, however, safe to conclude with Cornelissen's (2014:150) view that agenda-setting may also explain why certain companies are generally better known and listed more highly on reputation rankings than others.

Ray's hierarchy of effects

Advertising and marketing practitioners and academics have accorded Hierarchy of Effects a theoretical status (Barry, 2012). For example, Ray (1973) is the pioneer of the Model of Hierarchy of Effects and he proposed in his learning hierarchy model, which was essentially an extension of the model proposed by Lavidge and Steiner (1961), that for high involvement products (such as automobiles) the consumer is obligated to enter into a learning process of first thinking (cognition) then feeling (affect) before acting (behaviour) in order to make a satisfying choice.

In seeking to trace the evolution of Ray's Hierarchy of Effects, Neuman and Guggenheim (2011) find in their study that the effects theory evolves from a starting point of a simple model of persuasion and transmission and has accumulatively added in turn analytic constructs of audience motivation and disposition, the socially situated context of the mass communication process, the character of the technical channel of communication and the political and institutional context of communication, and the impact of media messages on the salience and cognitive organisation of opinions and beliefs.

Applying Ray's model to corporate reputation, Einwiller *et al*. (2010) postulate a hierarchy of effects in a way that the cognitive reputation dimensions precede and influence the affective dimension, which in turn can have an impact on a person's behavioural intention and behaviour. In view of their approach, the authors add that cognitive reputation dimensions that are considered important by stakeholders exert a stronger influence on the affective reputation dimension and stakeholders' behavioural intentions, than cognitive reputation dimensions that are considered not so important.

The model emphasises the power of the media's influence, and scholars (such as Carroll & McCombs, 2003; and Kiousis, Popescu & Mitrook, 2007) posit that the third-party sources like the news media are considered particularly influential. In the same breath, Norris (2000) identifies three conditions under which the news media could influence aggregate public opinion, which are:
  i.   If there is extensive media coverage of an issue;
  ii.   if the coverage displays a consistent directional bias; and
  iii. if the public is willing to take its cues for the new media.

That said, the study conducted by McCombs and Reynolds (2002) shows that there is plenty of evidence that the media has a strong influence on people's perception of which issues are important and which problems they want their government to do something about. The media sets the agenda in the public discourse; oftentimes extensive and sustained negative media coverage would significantly impact the organisation's reputation.

Media systems dependence theory

Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) are proponents of Media Systems Dependence. The theory proposes an integral relationship among audiences, the news media and the larger social and economic system. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) define dependency as 'a relationship in which the satisfaction of needs or the attainment of goals by one party is contingent upon the resources of another party'.

While Media Systems Dependence has received ample attention in literature, it has largely been studied from the private sector organisations' perspective. That said, the model emphasises relationship reciprocity between media, firms and society. For example, scholars such as Einwiller *et al.* (2010) point out that firms depend upon the news media in particular for the dissemination of their information that cannot be directly experienced through consumption or interaction and that lacks credibility when communicated by the firms themselves. The news media, on the other hand, depend on firms for content that is of interest to their audiences, and oftentimes they rely on firms to make revenues from advertising. A similar argument could be advanced about the reciprocal relationship between the public and the private sector. While the public sector relies on the media for the marketing of its services and public information; equally media rely on the public sector for their content and advertising.

The next section reviews literature on available models to study public sector corporate reputation.

2.2.6. Models

Models that apply to this study are discussed in this section.

i. Arena Model

The arena model is compatible with the study, as it highlights the complexity of the different arenas through which an organisation interfaces with its stakeholders. The Provincial Government interacts with its stakeholders on various platforms, which constitute arenas of communication, and which determine the veracity of its corporate reputation. The arena model gives a conceptual basis to grasp complexities inherent in the theoretical understanding of corporate reputation and corporate communication, "where organisations are engaged in struggles and collaborations with the public in a symbolic environment" (Aula & Mantere, 2012). The authors further highlight the metaphor of the reputational arena to illustrate an organisation's process of interacting with its stakeholders in different types of discursive contexts.

The arena represents the domain where the organisation meets its constituents to engage in communication (Aula & Mantere, 2012). Organisations communicate with their stakeholders in different settings or communication arenas. The above authors accentuate that arenas are embedded in the practice of communication and are intertwined with processes central to the lives of the participants; the pursuit of their interests or the crafting of their life narratives.

In essence, all communication exchanges occur within a particular context, for example "the media is an arena, as are interactions with stakeholders or between employees" (Rensburg & De Beer, 2011). The authors further emphasise that arenas are places where the organisation and its stakeholders encounter each other and create new knowledge, representations and interpretations about the organisation. Arenas are an important source of reputation – whether good or bad.

Aula and Mantere (2012) have discerned two basic acts of meaning making at the reputational arena level: sense-giving and sense-breaking. Sense-giving reinforces prominent reputational beliefs by proposing new meaning to continue existing narratives, while sense-breaking breaches the narrative through contradictory meanings. The authors further propose four arenas of reputation change, which are peace, defense, offence and riot as illustrated in Figure 2.3 below.

Figure 2. 2. The Arena model of reputation
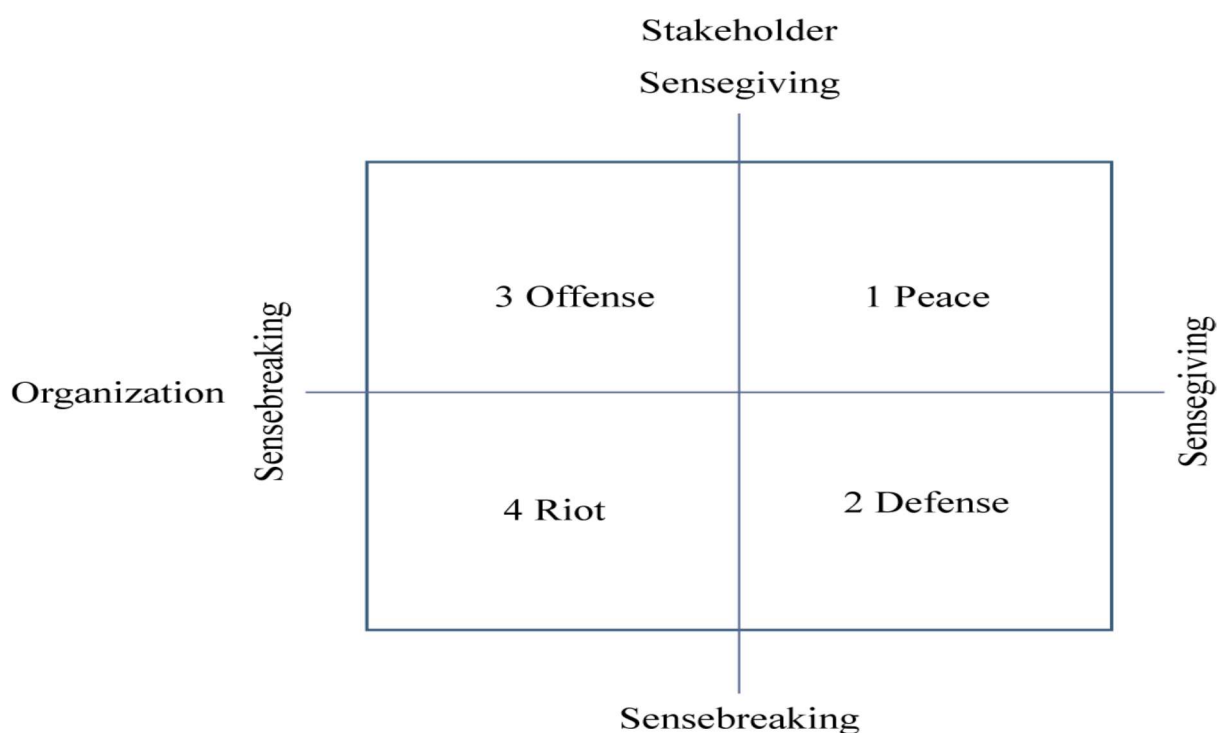
Source: Aula and Mantere (2012)

In reference to the peace arena, Aula and Mantere (2012) posit that it is a position in which the reputational messages of an organisation are accepted as genuine and true by its public, as they cohere with the established reputational narratives. There is high level of believability in what the organisation communicates to its stakeholders. The organisation enjoys credibility and integrity and as noted by Aula and Mantere (2012), there is no direct contradiction between the organisation and its public - the relationship is in harmony.

The peace arena represents an environment of mutual trust and effective communication between the organisation and its stakeholders. In the context of the public sector, the government meets the information needs of its citizens and they perceive the government's reputation as good. Aula and Mantere (2012) refer to this state of affairs as "sense giving is reciprocated with sense giving". In contrary, in the defense arena the organisation strives to defend its reputation when it is challenged by parts of its public (Aula & Mantere, 2012). Communication is predominantly used to defend the reputation which is in crisis. Organisations may enter the defensive arena when they fight to maintain a positive evaluation of themselves against significant resistance from the public (Aula & Mantere, 2012). Contradictions between the organisation and its stakeholders underpin the reputational virtues of the organisation.

In an endeavour to restore its reputation, an organisation might go into an offensive when "it wants to change its reputation in a situation in which the "old reputation" is firmly embedded in the minds of its public but no longer accurate or desirable" (Aula & Mantere, 2012). The offense arena takes precedence when an organisation faces crises and its reputation diminishes. In his study of post-scandal response by a company, Geber (2013) reports that faced with overwhelming reputational and commercial damage, the company was forced to take a different approach and to finally commit genuine reform to try to stave off any further damage and to repair the damage already done. Gupta (2011) argues that if corporate communication is to make an impact on corporate reputation, it must be offensive in its approach, rather than just being defensive.

The riot arena emerges from the inconsistencies between the organisation's and the public's perceptions. As noted by Aula and Mantere (2012), the riot arena occurs in cases where an organisation is unable to communicate logically through official channels, while in other cases an organisation's official message is essentially different from its operations close to stakeholders, for example, in terms of customer service. This area represents dismal failure of the organisation's communication systems. This is a significant theoretical framework which accounts for the mismatch between an organisation's messages and what it practically offers.

ii. SPIRIT Model

The Stakeholder Performance Indicator and Relationship Improvement Tool (SPIRIT) model is relevant for this study because it emphasises the significance of understanding stakeholders' expectations as a basis for strengthening relationships, trust and commitment. The emotional attachment of the people of the Eastern Cape to the Provincial Government is contingent on its ability to fulfil its promises, which also has implications of heightening relationships.

The SPIRIT Model measures corporate reputation in terms of three areas, namely: the experience, feelings and intentions of stakeholders towards a business (Hillenbrand & Money, 2007). The authors add that experiences of stakeholders include the way a business informs and listens to stakeholders; the material and non-material benefits a business provides to stakeholders; and outside influences such as experience of what the media has to say about a business or how a business treats other stakeholder groups. Furthermore, the SPIRIT model includes a measure of how an organisation communicates with stakeholders, the benefits stakeholders receive from organisations, the integrity with which stakeholders are treated and how stakeholders feel towards the business.

The SPIRIT Model by MacMillan *et al.* (2005), explores how corporate reputation is formed and how it consequently influences stakeholder relationships. The SPIRIT Model emanated from a growing concern from the above scholars about the limited theoretical and conceptual development within the area of corporate reputation. The Model measures reputation in three areas: the experience, emotions, and behavioural intentions of stakeholders towards an organisation (Belkema, 2012) and is based on an earlier model by MacMillan *et al.* (2005) of reputation in business relationships. Howevr, contrary to various studies that regard reputation as related to the personality of a firm (Brønn & Brønn, 2005; Carmeli & Tishler, 2005; Fombrun, 2012; Shamma & Hassan, 2009), the SPIRIT model focuses on the antecedents and consequences of corporate reputation. In this regard, MacMillan *et al.* (2005) add that the SPIRIT Model helps to identify the causes of reputation in stakeholder experiences of organisations and the consequences of reputation as stakeholders' intended future behaviours towards the organisation as illustrated in Figure 2.3 below.

Figure 2.3. - Reputation in relationships based on the model of business relationships

Reputation in relationships		The consequences of reputation
Stakeholder perceptions of experiences of business behavior	Stakeholder commitment and trust	Stakeholder intended behavior towards a business
material and non-material benefits, coercive power, termination costs, shared values, equity of exchange, communication, past trust-related behaviors of a business	trust, commitment	creative cooperation, stakeholder loyalty, stakeholder compliance, other trust-related behaviors of stakeholders

Source: MacMillan *et al*. (2005)

As shown in the above conceptualisation, the main variables of this model are stakeholder perceptions of the organisation, stakeholder commitment and trust, and stakeholder behaviour. The SPIRIT method is strategically practical and can be applied to a variety of stakeholders (Belkema, 2012). For example, MacMillan *et al.* (2005) call for researchers and managers to put more effort into understanding key relationships with stakeholders. The authors argue that this would give a business practical information about what it should do to improve relationships with it stakeholders.

The authors' argument is validated by Brown and Fombrun's view in Berens and Van Riel (2004) that the way in which the public perceives a company is crucial in determining its success. The SPIRIT model provides an indication of stakeholder intentions to be supportive of an organisation in the future (Hillenbrand & Money, 2007).

2.3. CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined various theoretical lenses that are used to study public sector corporate reputation. The meta-theoretical framework shows that society grants organisations license to operate. It also amply demonstrates that public sector corporate reputation is anchored on the legitimacy it acquired through embracing the aspirations of the society. While literature shows that public sector organisations have not entirely embraced corporate reputation management in the same way as the private sector, legitimacy theory clearly illustrates the invaluable role of a social contract between an organisation and society. Invariably, this envisaged relationship between the public sector organisations and citizens is entrenched in the extent to which citizens' expectations are fulfilled through the provision of services. The study is located within the communication management discipline, which is critical in establishing and maintaining relations with stakeholders.

Theoretical framework for the study shows that corporate reputation is the bedrock of organisations and an extant literature on the public sector corporate reputation is outlined in chapter three. A strong theoretical link between corporate reputation and various academic disciplines is illustrated. This Chapter has demonstrated that corporate communication must be afforded its strategic role in order to enhance corporate reputation. Furthermore, media play an invaluable role in strengthening corporate reputation, and it is critically essential to build strong media relations. The academic fields are underpinned by various theoretical frameworks that provide strategic lens to study public sector reputation.

CHAPTER THREE

PUBLIC SECTOR CORPORATE REPUTATION

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the recent proliferation of corporate scandals and socially unacceptable norms of behaviour exhibited even by well-regarded corporations, there is a growing engagement of the public at large, on issues relating to corporate conduct and behaviour (Vancheswar, Batra & Gera, 2015). These developments often resonate with the public sector, which also seeks to safeguard its reputation by being responsive to the expectations of citizens and to remain relevant. Furthermore, these developments occur at a time when organisations are facing an unprecedented explosion of social media platforms that inherently pose a new risk. To this end, Mwanyika and Mberia (2017) assert that the contemporary distribution of information on the Web entails reputation risks and risk dynamics that are outside the control and management of companies. In order to mitigate this potential risk, Men (2014) argues that reputation building and protection must be an important task for public relations professionals, especially in the social media era when publics place unprecedented high expectations on companies' openness, visibility, transparency and authenticity.

Sandersa and Cane (2015) posit that politicians and officials seek to position and manage public organisations in ways that win legitimacy and trust for themselves and prosperity for their citizens and other stakeholders. At the centre of the public sector's ability to attain stakeholder trust is the pivotal role of communication. In seeking to highlight the critical role of public sector communication, Husain (2013) adds that addressing the critical social challenges confronting post-modern economies, depends significantly on the ability of public sector organisations to design and deliver effective, and appropriately targeted, messages and service offerings. However, it is worth mentioning that public sector corporate reputation has received limited attention in literature, especially in the South African context. Therefore, this Chapter seeks to reflect on the available literature on public sector corporate reputation.

The Chapter is organised as follows: The first section discusses the determinants of corporate reputation with specific reference to the public sector. The next section outlines conceptual determinants of the public sector, which are crucial in influencing stakeholders' perceptions about an organisation. The public sector operates in an environment of myriad stakeholders, and the next section discusses stakeholder management from this sector's perspective. Various perspectives of public sector corporate reputation, including how organisations manage their reputations, the need to build reputation, how it is formed, and its value to the survival of an organisation are addressed.

3.2. DETERMINANTS OF PUBLIC SECTOR REPUTATION

Corporate reputation is increasingly receiving attention both in the private and the public sector. This section pays specific attention to determinants of public sector corporate reputation, which have been derived from Fombrun *et al*.'s (2015) RepTrak® system. These RepTrak® dimensions have a practical relevance for tracking and analysing the reputations of public sector organisations. The Figure below depicts concepts that invariably influence corporate reputation management.

Figure 3.1: Determinants of corporate reputation
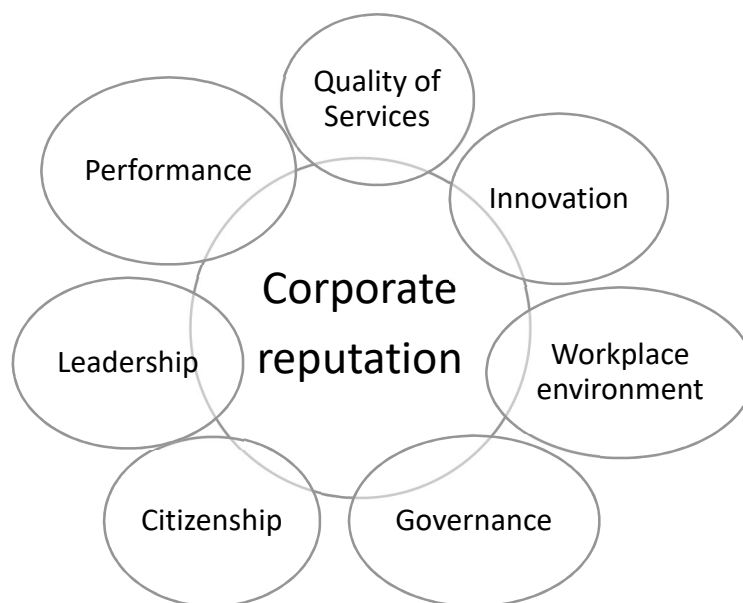
Source: Researcher's conceptualisation based on literature

3.2.1. Quality of services

The Ibrahim Forum Report (2018) posits that African citizens' satisfaction with how their governments guarantee basic public services, such as safety, rule of law, education or health, appears to have diminished. At the same time, the Report asserts that new expectations have appeared, amplified by the 21st century's multiplying challenges and Africa's specific young and urbanising demography, with the following attributes: demands for solidarity, culture, protection against various criminal threats, jobs, business-enabling environments, climate change mitigation and food security. Nixon and Mallett (2017) are of the view that the provision of public services is an important source of state legitimacy, and better access to basic services, social protection, or livelihood assistance leads to more positive perceptions of the government.

That said, Fombrun *et al.* (2015) are of the view that most stakeholders know of a company from its product and service offerings in the marketplace, and its reputation is likely to be influenced by perceptions of its product brands. The extant literature shows that both researchers and practitioners recognise the provision of quality services as underpinning long-term survival for both the public and business sectors. A successful organisation stands behind its products (Zhang & Schaefer, 2009), develops innovative products and services (Romenti, 2010) and offers innovative, value for money, and high quality products and services (Fombrun, Newbury & Ponzi, 2015).

To this end, Iwu-Egwuonwu (2011) posits that organisations add notches to their reputation by offering high quality products and services. The above author further notes that high quality goods and services offered by organisations may well be the beginning of the journey to earning sustained reputation. People assess and form perceptions of a company's offerings based on whether they are thought to be high in quality, in value and service, and in their ability to meet customers' needs (Fombrun *et al.* 2015). Furthermore, Engizek and Yasin, (2017) point out that one way in which a firm's reputation is established is through increasing the quality of its services.

In the context of the public sector organisations, citizens expect services that will change their lives for the better. According to the Green Paper (2011) on public service the government must be more effective in its actions, and must improve the quality of its services. Unlike the private sector, Fourie and Poggenpoel (2017) contend that public sector organisations have a wide range of stakeholders, and each of these stakeholders has its own interests, resulting in a variety of expectations which are imposed on the public sector. The above author adds that more importantly, government should explain what it does and how it serves the interests of the public; incorporating customers input into decision-making processes; and enhancing public satisfaction through the improvement of organisational performance and the development of effective communication of that performance.

Al-Khouri (2012) is also of the view that citizens are demanding the same convenient service in the public sector that they are, for the most part, enjoying in the private sector; and providing satisfactory services determines the way any given government is viewed by the citizens and the rest of the world. In this regard, Nixon and Mallet (2017) assert that service delivery is one of many factors shaping people's perceptions of government, and that service delivery has a potential to damage people's perceptions of government. The above authors further note that this is particularly the case when people have had bad experiences at facilities or in spaces of accountability and interaction. The Ibrahim Forum Report (2018) adds that public service is a pillar of governance - without strong public services and committed public servants, there will be no efficient delivery of expected public goods and services, nor implementation of any political commitment, however strongly voiced.

Da Silva and Batista (2007) are of the view that government organisations should be able to target and deliver products and services tailored according to the community's needs and preferences. The authors further postulate that the relationship with citizens comprehends initiatives such as providing public information to citizens, creating input channels for listening to citizens, and improving the quality of public services according to the received inputs. It is, therefore, through communication that the public sector can improve the provision of quality services by enhancing its capacity to involve the public in decision-making regarding service delivery matters.

The availability of information is essential in service delivery, because the society emphasise the importance of accurate and detailed information and information has been proven to increase public satisfaction (Lanin & Hermanto, 2019).

South Africa has experienced unprecedented levels of service delivery protests in its history. As a result, service delivery has increasingly gained interest in academic literature in this country (Jain, 2010; Luke & Heyns, 2013; Krugell, Otto & van der Merwe, 2009; Nleya, 2011); in part due to the increasing concern about the inability of Government to provide services as expected by the citizens and the perceptions that government is out of touch with citizens. Alexander's (2010) study finds a close relationship between the current spate of service delivery protests and poor provision of services in South Africa. In the same way, Managa (2012) argues that in the second decade of South Africa's post-apartheid constitutional democracy, growing concern has been expressed about the government's ability to deliver the public services that its people yearn for and are entitled to – and that they have, since 2004, taken to the streets to demand. The notorious, ubiquitous service delivery protests have largely been characterised by violence and destruction of infrastructure, which further reverses progress made in the country thus far. In this regard, Fourie and Poggenpoel (2017) posit that various aspects impeding service delivery include incompetent public servants, a lack of accountability, poor human resources practices, inadequate procurement practices and a lack of leadership.

Awang and Jusoff (2009) emphasise that the quality of services is the most important factor underlying the long-term success and survival of an organisation. It is also worth alluding to Fombrun *et al.*'s (2017) viewpoint in which they stress that all stakeholders and customers, more so than others, can be expected to develop perceptions of a company based on its products and services. Throughout Africa, governments have been entrusted to finance and provide basic services such as health, education, telecommunications, safe water and modern sanitation (Akinboade, Kinfack & Mokwena, 2012). However, the authors argue that a major part of populations in Africa (especially in the rural areas) live without access to basic services such as clean water and sanitation, basic healthcare services, proper primary education, and agricultural extension services.

They add that the reasons for dysfunctional service delivery are many and complex, but most often, they relate to a lack of accountability, transparency, and commitment in making services work for poor and marginalized citizens.

Adequate access to these services enhances development. Public services are a key determinant of quality of life that is not measured in per capita income. They are also an important element of any poverty reduction strategy. Thus, improving public service delivery is one of the biggest challenges on the continent. The quality of services should also be underpinned by innovation, which is discussed next.

3.2.2. Innovation

Innovation represents a process, namely an activity of creating a new product or service, new technological process, new organisation, or enhancement of existing product or service (Gerguri & Ramadani, 2010). In their definition of innovation, Gerguri and Ramadani (2010) explain it from the following perspectives:

Table 3.1: Definition aspects of innovation

Customers	Innovation means products with better quality and better services, which together means a better way of life
Businesses	Innovation means sustainable growth and development, realisation of great profit
Employees	Innovation means new and more interesting jobs, which requires more mental faculty, which results in higher salaries
Whole economy	Innovation represents a bigger productivity and prosperity

Source: Researcher's conceptualisation based on literature

In view of the above definition, innovation means different things to different aspects of each organisation. That said, governments are aware of the social expectations for automated services and they have been trying to respond to such a pressure by investing in information and communication technologies (Da Silva & Batista, 2007). The twenty-first century has ushered in an era in which the notion of innovation has included itself into every process of production and provision of services to consumers (Agolla & Van Lill, 2017).

In concurrence with the above viewpoint, Božic and Ozretic-Došen (2015) and Kivipõld (2015) argue that, with changes in lifestyle and patterns of consumption, consumers are now demanding more superior goods and services than before and hence the quest for innovative ways and means to meet such demands. Furthermore Lee, Hwang and Choi (2012) believe that innovation in the public sector is used to improve service performance and to add value in terms of public benefit. In fact, e-government services are empowering customers to conduct transactions themselves, without the need to visit a government office or speak with a government employee (da Silva & Batista, 2007).

In reference to innovation in third-world countries, Agolla and Van Lill (2017) postulate that where the pace of technological and other developments still lags behind, more than in more developed countries, public sector organisations are expected to spearhead the developmental agenda of the government of the day to realise the aspirations of citizens. The authors further argue that in comparison with the private sector, the public sector is confronted by a myriad of challenges that impede its ability to innovate.

The quest to improve the quality of services has driven governments, both in the developing and developed world, to adopt innovative approaches, such as e-government, for example, to meet the citizens' demands (Agolla & Van Lill, 2016). Innovation relates to the public's perceptions of a company as innovative and adaptive (Fombrun *et al.*, 2015). Invariably, the increasing competition in the market place – that is propelled by rapid globalisation and technology – compels firms to embrace innovation. Being innovative is one of the key attributes to a firm's success (Datta, Jessup & Reed, 2011), and according to Padget and Moura-Leite (2012), most successful companies like to position themselves and be identified as highly innovative. Innovation inherently relates to doing something new or differently, and so readily generates an emotional reaction of respect and admiration for the innovator, and therefore its reputation (Fombrun, *et al*. 2015).

From this perspective, Ou and Hsu's (2013) study shows that a good corporate reputation benefits a high-tech firm by directly enhancing its internal resources to create value, as well as indirectly by enhancing its innovative capability, which then influences its innovative performance.

Brown and Turner (2009) concur in their study that the value of innovation is to determine a company's overall reputation. The extant research equate innovation with product innovation, however, Datta *et al*. (2011) argue that this is a mistake as there are other means that firms use for innovation, such as improving efficiency by continually looking for ways to run themselves better, which they further define as continuous innovation.

While the extant literature on the link between innovation and reputation focuses on the private sector, innovation is equally an important dimension of public sector reputation management. For example, Daglio, Gerson and Kitchen (2014) posit that technological progress is advancing at a speed never seen before, opening great opportunities for governments to incorporate new tools and approaches, while placing great pressure on governments to keep pace. Governments need capacity to adapt quickly to change, and to adopt new technological trends in order to improve their effectiveness in providing quality services to its citizens.

Further, Lee *et al*. (2012), for example, are of the view that innovation in the public sector is used to improve service performance and to add value in terms of public benefit. Consistent with the above view is Agolla and Van Lill's (2016) viewpoint in which they state that through innovations, public sector organisations need to grow the economy to provide for the needs of their citizens; and the quest to improve the quality of services has driven governments, both in the developing and developed world, to adopt innovative approaches, such as e-government, to meet the citizens' demands.

Kim, Kim and Lee (2009) point out that while it was initially promoted as a means of improving internal management efficiency in public administration, e-government is increasingly considered an important measure for enhancing citizen access to government services and expediting the delivery of services to citizens. Further, the above authors argue that e-government has potential to increase transparency and combat corruption in government. Gerguri and Ramadani (2010) add that innovation is essential for sustainable growth and economic development, and in the modern economy, innovation is crucial for value creation, growth and employment.

Nowadays, governments the world over are under pressure to deliver quality services to its citizens who are characterised by an enormous amount of heterogeneity. IPSOS (2010) refers to diverse expectations of citizens as personalisation, which is defined as being driven by rising public expectations of services in both the private and public sector. The IPSOS Report further observes that people's daily lives are hectic and pressured, and they increasingly expect services to fit in around their lives rather than vice versa.

Existing technological trends must be embraced in order to improve efficiencies and optimise the impact of services as perceived by stakeholders. As noted by Padget and Moura-Leite (2012) stakeholders will perceive this effect and thus have a greater positive effect on the firm's corporate reputation. To this end, Fombrun *et al.* (2015) stress that companies that adapt quickly to change, launch new products and develop new ideas are more likely to earn respect and admiration from their stakeholders. Albury (2011) points out that such technology has been proved to serve the citizens effectively and efficiently as most of the services can be accessed online, without necessarily having to travel distances in search for them.

While literature shows that the public sector has lagged behind in embracing technology compared to the private sector, Mawela, Twinomurinzi and Ochara (2017) argue that in South Africa there are nevertheless several pockets of success in working towards e-government, such as the South African Revenue Services' (SARS) e-Filing initiative, the National Automated Archival Information Retrieval System (NAAIRS) to facilitate access to public archived records and the National Government Portal (www.gov.za) that provides access to government information and services.

The next section focuses on the workplace environment, which is identified as an important benchmark of corporate reputation measurement.

3.2.3. Workplace environment

The workplace environment relates to perceptions of a company's practices in maintaining an environment that shows concern for employees, and for treating and rewarding them fairly and equitably (Fombrun *et al.* 2015). The workplace environment has received a substantial amount of attention in academic literature. For example, Chandrasekar's (2011) research findings show that the workplace environment impacts employee morale, productivity and engagement - both positively and negatively. It is the quality of the employee's workplace environment that most impacts on their level of motivation and subsequent performance. Consistent with the above viewpoint, Massoudi and Hamdi (2017) claim that the quality of the environment in the workplace may simply determine the level of employee's motivation, subsequent performance and productivity.

Fombrum (1998) observes that better-regarded companies are generally expected to offer greater job security, better relative pay, good labour relations, better health benefits, retirement benefits, employee stock ownership, and profit sharing. The above mentioned author further accentuates that increasingly, the favourable treatment of employees is also expected to manifest itself in heightened employee diversity. In reference to the workplace environment as a crucial dimension of corporate reputation measurement, Iwu-Egwuonwu (2011) posits that the very foundation of high reputation resides in the quality of staff organisations hire, the depth of their motivation and their talents. Iwu-Egwuonwu (2011) further observes that how these employees are treated and the quality of their workplace behaviours seep out into the public domain and thus affect the reputation or otherwise, which an organisation will be associated with.

Zhang and Schwaiger (2009) add that the workplace environment is associated with how the organisation is managed, whether it is a good company to work for and the general quality of employees. Invariably, employees are the face of an organisation, and Da Silva and Batista (2007) accentuate that what employees feel about their organisations may affect the way they deal with customers and, therefore, the way the customers feel about the organisation.

Communication within the organisation is an important catalyst for an ideal workplace environment, which in turn enhances a good reputation.

To this end, Fombrun *et al.* (2015) state that signals that convey information about how fairly a company treats employees are likely to generate trust and respect among most stakeholders – and so contribute to building favourable reputations for those companies. It is also important to note Shamma's (2012) caution that the workplace environment and product and services dimensions are the core elements that need to be managed first, as they are the ones that greatly affect corporate reputation.

Against this background, Pietersen and Oni (2014) assert that job dissatisfaction in government departments is often attributed to poor compensation and better job offers elsewhere, inferior working conditions, and a lack of promotional opportunities. Further, study findings indicate that low job satisfaction is attributed to problematic interpersonal relationships and the autocratic management style of supervisors. The findings of the study provide evidence of the most pressing turnover problems that government departments in a less affluent geographic, such as the Eastern Cape region, experience.

Furthermore, the challenge to retain a workforce exists if there is a disregard for employee wellbeing within the organisation, and often a poor work environment translates into reduced motivational levels, employee disengagement and a resultant decline in employee performance (Uitzinger, Chrysler-Fox & Thomas, 2018). In this regard, Mafini and Pooe (2013) are of the view that employee satisfaction is influenced by the interaction of a family of factors such as recognition, communication, co-workers, fringe benefits, working conditions, the nature of the work itself, the nature of the organisation itself, organisational systems, policies and procedures, compensation, personal development, promotion, appreciation, security, and supervision. When employee satisfaction is optimised and expedited, it acts as an incentive to enhance organisational performance. On the contrary, when employees are dissatisfied, organisational performance will diminish (Mafini & Pooe, 2013).

In this regard, Fombrun *et al.*'s (2015) study asserts that most stakeholders like and respect companies that maintain good workplaces. Furthermore, their research shows that satisfied employees are more likely to commit to long-term involvement, less likely to turn over and more likely to act as ambassadors of the company and to give a good employer a favourable rating. In turn, Alniacik, Elniacik and Erdogmus (2012) argue that a firm's reputation as a good workplace is critical in recruiting a high-quality workforce.

While literature commonly views the workplace environment from the private sector point of view, the public sector is confronted with the same outcomes of either a negative or a positive workplace environment. Cahil *et al.* (2004) and Luoma-aho (2008) have consistently argued that public sector organisations are associated with employees who are inefficient, lazy and incompetent. It cannot be overemphasised that public perceptions about public sector employees and the workplace environment may adversely impact its reputation if not effectively managed. The succeeding section focuses on governance as a RepTrak dimension to measure corporate reputation.

3.2.4. Governance

The King IV Report (2016) defines corporate reputation as the exercise of ethical and effective leadership by the governing body towards the achievement of an ethical culture, good performance, effective control and legitimacy. Governance assesses stakeholder perceptions of a company as ethical, fair and transparent (Fombrun *et al.*, 2015). Corporate governance has received considerable attention in academic literature both in South Africa and the world over. The advent of democratic dispensations in South Africa significantly gave rise to attention on the ability of both the private and public sector to act in transparent ways as they deliver services to their customers. Clarke (2011) draws a correlation between governance and corporate reputation, and states that one of the fastest ways to lose a corporate reputation is enduring a disaster in corporate governance. King IV Report (2016) distinguishes between ethical and effective leadership as part of governance as illustrated in the table below.

Table 3.2: Ethical and effective leadership

Ethical leadership	Effective leadership
- Exemplifies integrity, competence, responsibility, accountability, fairness and transparency - Involves participation and prevention, or otherwise amelioration of the negative consequences of the organisation's activities and outputs on the economy and society	- Is results-driven - About achieving strategic objectives and positive outcomes - Includes, but goes beyond, an internal focus on effective and efficient execution

Source: Researcher's concept based on literature

In reference to the prominent role of corporate governance, Roberts-Lombard, Mpinganjira, Wood and Svensson (2019) state that sound governance and effective ethical leadership are required ingredients for a company to be perceived as successful by all stakeholders in the twenty-first century. The authors further note that a reason for this could be that the most valuable asset of a company is its reputation; therefore, building and managing relationships based on ethical principles is increasing in importance, as reputational damage to a company can cause it significant harm and even lead to its demise.

Akinboade *et al.* (2012) are of the view that the quality and availability of essential services, such as health care and primary education, are a key measure of governance in the public sector. Public services underpin the social contract between states and citizens and, as such, are an indicator of the health of a society. Inherent to the notion of governance is accountability and oversight. From a theoretical standpoint, governance is the system by which managers are constrained from tendencies to engage in opportunistic exploitation of their position (Doh & Stumpt, 2005). In reiterating the role of governance, Robberg (2009) states that governance is the delivery of political goods to citizens, and the better the quality of that delivery and the greater the quantity of the political goods being delivered, the higher the level of governance everywhere and at every jurisdictional level, not just in Africa.

The author is also of the view that it is according to their performance in the governance realm that states succeed or fail. It is worth mentioning that the correlation drawn between governance and corporate reputation in literature focuses on both the private sector and public sector. For example, there is a legitimate expectation that government must not fail in providing public goods to citizens, and in the event where it reneges, its reputation is compromised. In this regard, Doig (1995) argues that failure in governance is exacerbated by the prevalence of corruption, fraud, and other benefits extracted from their office and through their powers by politicians and public officials, and the perpetuation of such conduct in relation to the performance of the roles of the state.

Corruption is seen as being pervasive, even systemic, in South Africa and this makes it more difficult to single out particular sectors - there is also no empirical evidence to support the selection of certain sectors as high-risk (Transparency International, 2017). In this regard, Manyaka and Nkuna (2014) argue that while the South African public sector has a sound legislative framework and strategies for combating corruption, challenges such as the weaker application of the legislation and oversight mechanisms; insufficient political will; political deployments, and an absence of meritocratic systems provide opportunities for unethical, fraudulent and/or corrupt activities to thrive.

In reference to governance in the African context, Yimer (2015) states that there is still much work to be done to address bad practice including corruption and political interference in decision-making, and the main problem which troubles Africans most is the failure of political leadership. The above author further contends that there are of course failures in other domains, but these are traceable in the consciousness of political leadership deficiencies. Furthermore, Yimer (2015) accentuates that in the public sector, the leadership has also been associated with certain undesirable traits such as double-standards, pursuance of selfish goals, lack of seriousness and indiscipline.

In the same way, Masegare and Ngoepe (2018) are of the view that challenges that municipalities face in implementing corporate governance are a lack of skills by councillors and ineffective municipal governance structures.

The authors identified a number of deficiencies within the governance structures and institutional systems of municipalities, and the following aspects were identified as root causes:

- deployment issues and interference by political parties;
- no clear distinctions between councils and administrations;
- unclear boundaries between political representatives and the administration;
- Municipal System Act code of conduct not being enforced;
- poor political management and leadership;
- insufficient application of oversight function at all levels;
- insufficient controls within the system;
- no clear framework or lack of understanding of party – municipal relations;
- poor councillors' skills base in many areas;
- nepotism, cronyism, poor ethics and weak accountability frameworks;
- political factionalism results in territorial economic elites; and
- political factionalism undermines democratic principles.

It is worth noting Matovu's (1996) caveat that, to ensure good governance, governments should ensure the participation of local citizens in development projects. The author further adds that effective community participation in government programmes has not been realised in most countries. Oyugi (2000) contends that what has happened in most African countries can be referred to as symbolic participation and not genuine participation.

Ljubojevic and Ljubovjevic (2008) send a caution that without a good reputation it is very difficult for a company to survive or to make progress. The authors stress that the key role of corporate governance has to be the improvement and protection of corporate reputation. That said, their study found that the majority of organisations do not fully understand that better corporate governance is a condition for corporate reputation development. A positive corporate reputation is only possible with ethical behaviour and the trust that builds with a firm's stakeholders (Wang & Smith, 2010) and is also revealed to be a logical outcome of the quality of corporate governance operated in an organisation (Iwu-Egwuonwu, 2011).

Bratton and Gyimah-Boadi (2016) add that good governance does not rely solely on the mechanical enforcement of administrative standards or the legal enforcement of constitutional rules; it also requires that citizens share a widespread culture of social confidence that public officials – and the institutions they represent – will instinctively "do the right thing." Faber's (2005) research results corroborate the above viewpoints and indicate that firms that take actions to improve governance have superior stock price performance.

In summing up the concept of correlation between the corporate reputation and governance, it is essential to state Fombrun's (2005) study findings in respect of governance as an antecedent of reputation:

> *Well-regarded companies rely on a model of leadership that recognizes the interests of multiple constituencies, values how well these constituencies are served, monitors their perceptions and expresses itself to them abundantly, consistently and with authenticity and transparency*.

In this regard, Jie, Yin, Nadarajan and Ramayam (2016) state that an organisation needs to transparently communicate their products and services, and at the same time commit to governance in an ethical manner. Governance, therefore, represents an organisation's ability to effectively and efficiently execute its mandate by fulfilling expectations of its constituencies. The more a company is perceived as ethical and transparent, the more likely it is to generate admiration and trust in the minds of most stakeholders – and hence to build reputation (Fombrun *et al*., 2015)

The next section discusses citizenship as how an organisation influences the society and strives to meet expectations of its stakeholders.

3.2.5. Citizenship

Citizenship' dimension assesses stakeholder perceptions of a company as environmentally friendly, a supporter of good causes and a positive contributor to society (Fombrun *et al.* 2015).

Zappala (2003) defines corporate citizenship as understanding and managing a company's influence on society and all its stakeholders. Organisations operate within communities and are expected to contribute to the socio-economic development of the people through development initiatives that seek to transform their lives. In the same vein, Brammer and Pavelin (2004) state that companies are now forced to make decisions concerning the type and degree of responsibilities they have towards stakeholders, such as local communities, the natural environment, and employees. Similarly, Sahu and Penigrahy (2016) are of the view that business is an integral part of society, and influences and is influenced by the society, therefore, we cannot ignore the importance of society.

From this perspective, Fombrun *et al.* (2015) indicate that stakeholders tend to respect and admire a company for its good deeds. Companies have to increasingly demonstrate that their actions meet various predetermined social and ethical criteria. Stakeholders begin to forge a long lasting relationship with you as a business owner or manager, and more importantly, they see your business as a venture that needs their support, both morally and financially (Fasset, 2012). The above-mentioned author further claims that in itself it brings an organisation unpaid publicity; and the media notices its social contributions and effort as a company. Businesses also get publicised for all to hear - the good publicity is good for business, and it can be an excellent reputation booster for your business. Furthermore, Fombrun *et al.* (2015) add that by acting responsibly and communicating about it, companies signal that they are good citizens, deserving of praise, and they thereby build trust and reputation. To this end, it is crucial that all companies must embrace citizenship, and according to Fombrun (2002), doing so can help build reputation; failing to do so can be a source of reputational risk.

While the majority of studies associate corporate citizenship with the private sector that makes profit in the community, the concept is equally applicable to the government context. Peters and Rob (2010) note that governments have become increasingly proactive in promoting corporate social investment by adopting a variety of policies to promote responsible business activities. In the same way, Zappal (2003) contends that while the focus of the corporate citizenship debate has been on the business case—on why being good is good for business, today the focus is on the relationship between public policy and corporate

citizenship, and the increasing pressure on governments to regulate corporate social behaviour.

Meaningful government initiatives that potentially influence society require strong, credible leadership, which is discussed in the next section.

3.2.6. Leadership

The leadership dimension is intended to assess perceptions of leaders as excellent and visionary managers, and strong endorsers of their companies (Fombrun *et al.,* 2015). Leadership relates more to whether the organisation has excellent leadership, with vision for future prospects, and recognises and takes advantage of market opportunities (Zhang & Schwaiger, 2009; Trotta & Covallaro, 2012). Romenti (2010) states that vision and leadership can be demonstrated – among other things – by the engagement of internal stakeholders in the re-definition, dissemination and implementation of core values through continuous insistence on behaviour consistent with reputation drivers. Da Silva and Batista (2007) add that it is critical to enhance employees' interactivity and accessibility, improving an organisation's communication processes. The authors note that this will develop a mass of better-informed government managers and staff in general who will be able to generate and easily communicate ideas, feedback, and opinions. The ability by the organisation leadership to prioritise its employees is extensively highlighted in literature.

The ability to deliver on services largely depends on the quality of leadership and as noted by Fombrun and Gardberg (1999), a leader must have a vision, and communicate its values clearly. In other words, stakeholders must be able to relate to values that the organisation espouses. In the context of government, visionary leadership is indispensable as issues of good governance and effective delivery of services are attributed to the quality of leadership. More importantly, as reflected in literature, communication is an important quality that characterises good and visionary leadership (Guru *et al*., 2013; Lurati & Eppler, 2006; Onikoyi & Onikoyi, 2013), which government can leverage to enhance its performance.

In reference to the essential role of communication, Men (2014) suggests that authentic organisational leadership and transparent organisational communication are effective drivers for a favourable reputation in the eyes of corporate insiders. Therefore, Men (2014) continues to stress that favourable employee perception of the organisation is arguably not only related to job satisfaction, organisational performance and achievement of organisational goals, but also helps build and protect organisational reputation in a turbulent environment.

Fombrun *et al.* (2015) note that appealing leaders attract favourable media coverage and investor endorsements, thereby signalling to all stakeholders the credibility of the company's activities, increasing confidence and trust in the company, and thereby building corporate reputation. Jie *et al.* (2016) concur with the authors above and state that in today's corporations, the stakeholders wish for the ethical management of the corporation, such as an appealing leader, transparency, and responsibility in the process of making products and providing good services. In juxtaposing leadership and reputation, Schnee (2017) argues that we may come to see reputation as a concept that serves as a lens through which we view leaders' responses to challenges.

Against the above background, literature increasingly shows that leadership in Africa has been fraught with massive challenges. For example, Dartey-Baah, (2014) contends that leadership in Africa is seriously plagued with issues of corruption and unaccountable governance. The author further points out that corruption and embezzlement of state resources belong to the worst examples of immoral practices of political societies and places the continent at the fore front of the world corruption league table. Lanin and Hermanto (2019) add that bad governance in African countries can also be considered to result from the lack of statesmen in the position of governors - corruption and state robbery is endemic in almost all African countries and is a serious flaw in African leadership.

In contrary, Dartey-Baah (2014) observes that in societies where people live in freedom and prosperity, leaders of such societies broadly give priority to issues upon which the common good of their people depends, often resulting in a further developed and even freer people.

The author further points out that leaders in such societies often serve their people by working hard to place national interests above their personal interests being mindful of the huge price they pay for projecting their interests above that of their people, even to the extent of losing the opportunity to serve their people.

The role of performance as a measurement variable of corporate reputation is investigated in the next section.

3.2.7. Performance

Generally, there is poor performance of government in providing services to the public and this lack of service to the community often shows that community members are not satisfied (Fernandes & Fresly, 2017). Performance has received extensive academic attention, and the role of performance in determining favourable reputations cannot be overemphasised.

Various scholars (Inglish *et al.*, 2006; Iwu-Egwuonwu, 2011; Kanto, 2014) have consistently linked organisational performance to its financial capabilities. Similarly, extant academic literature (Blajer-Golebiewska, 2014; Dunbar & Schwalbach, 2000; Tischer & Hildebrand, 2007) highlights financial performance as a significant dimension of corporate reputation measurement. Iwu-Egwuonwu (2011) takes the above points further. He contends that when an organisation has built itself to become financially strong, has a record of long-term profitability and clear growth prospects, its reputation will increase.

According to Shamma (2012) financial performance is a characteristic of an organisation that has a strong record of profitability; looks like a low risk investment; and looks like a company with strong prospects for future growth. While extant literature discusses financial performance from the private sector perspective, equally, government manages huge budgets and there is an expectation that budgets must be utilised in a more efficient fashion. Therefore, performance of the public sector is gauged from its ability to efficiently manage budgets through sustainable provision of quality services.

Figure 3.2: Public sector performance model
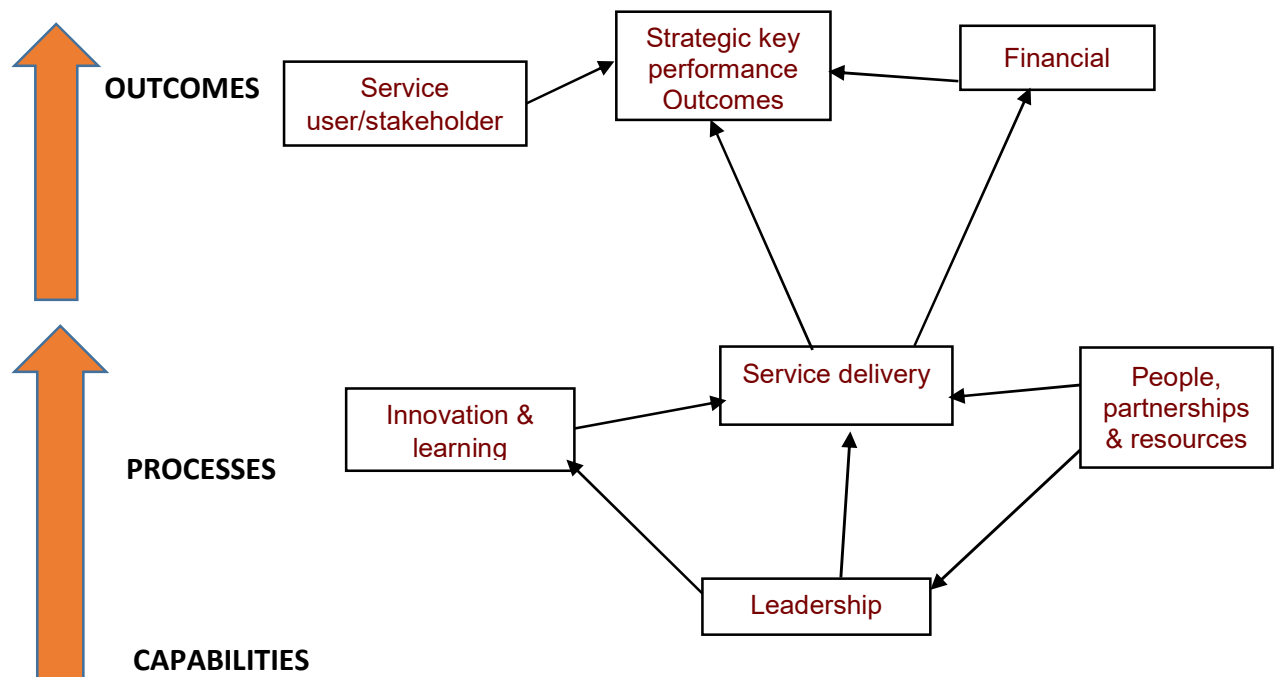
Source: Researcher's conceptualisation based on literature

That said, Waldt (2006) argues that performance in its broadest sense has probably been an issue in government for as long as government has been around. By and large, government steps in to provide public goods and services (Besley & Ghatak, 2007), and its performance is viewed from the extent to which quality of public services are made available to the electorate (Van de Walle, 2008). In the pragmatic political milieus, delivery of quality services to citizens is contingent on the government's proclivity to spend budgets prudently, and refrain from corrupt tendencies. In this regard, the World Bank Policy Report (2016) argues that widespread corruption and poor quality of public services can diminish the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of citizens, who respond with disrespect for state institutions, with disregard for the law, and even with violent conflict.

Glaser and Denhardt (2000) corroborate the above view and note that citizens today are quite negative about government, and while some of this negativity may be explained by a country's history and culture, there is growing evidence that the distance between citizens and government is reaching unhealthy levels, with the potential for undesirable consequences.

The above mentioned authors further point out that citizen perceptions of their overall quality of life are also expected to influence evaluations of government performance, and often they show anger that is being played out in their criticisms of political and governmental leaders and through calls for campaign reform and term limits. As a result, citizens are increasingly reluctant to pay taxes, based on perceptions that they are getting a poor return on taxes.

Mafini and Pooe (2013) hold the view that public sector organisations in South Africa find it difficult to overcome the challenge of underperformance in most disciplines of their operations. The author argues that as a result, they continue to receive constant criticism for poor service delivery, internal wrangles, bureaucracy, financial mismanagement, corruption and poor corporate governance. That said, Managa (2007) adds that the lack of quality services may culminate in citizens taking to the streets to raise their dissatisfaction over the problem of poor service delivery.

The World Bank Policy Report (2016) corroborates the above viewpoint and states that the citizens can take other actions that, although not as tragic as violent conflict, can nevertheless contribute to problems in the public sector, such as throwing garbage in the streets or stealing electricity from public utilities. Further, citizens can regard theft from the public sector as legitimate when they believe that others, including powerful leaders, are stealing from the state.

According to Alexander (2010), Booysen (2007), and Habib (2010), the protest wave in poor urban areas is generally recognised to have started in 2004 and has been attributed to failures in service delivery. In this regard, Nleya (2011) concludes in his research study that service delivery affects protests directly and indirectly through its impact on perceptions of service delivery and perception of condition of life. Therefore, as noted by Fombrun *et al.* (2015) performance is based on a set of attributes that assess stakeholder perceptions of a company's overall financial performance, profitability and growth prospects. However, in the context of the public sector, the performance dimension is based on stakeholders' assessment of services public sector organisations provide.

According to Akinboade *et al*. (2012), citizens' feedback becomes an effective means for improving the performance of public services as it can be used to demand accountability from providers, especially when there are no alternatives due to regulation in the delivery of services. The authors add that what is more important in African countries' poor performance in service delivery is that it seems unresponsive to changes in institutional arrangements, as failure continues to thrive under both centralized and decentralized delivery mechanisms. For many, this picture invites pessimism; as such, sustained deprivation has caused ill-health and illiteracy to persist throughout time in parts of Africa.

3.3.   CONCEPTUAL DRIVERS OF PUBLIC SECTOR CORPORATE REPUTATION

This section focuses on the theoretical concepts of transparency, credibility, reliability and trustworthiness, which according to Fombrun (1996), help companies build strong and favourable reputations. The figure below illustrates theoretical concepts that make a good reputation.

Figure 3.3: What makes a good corporate reputation
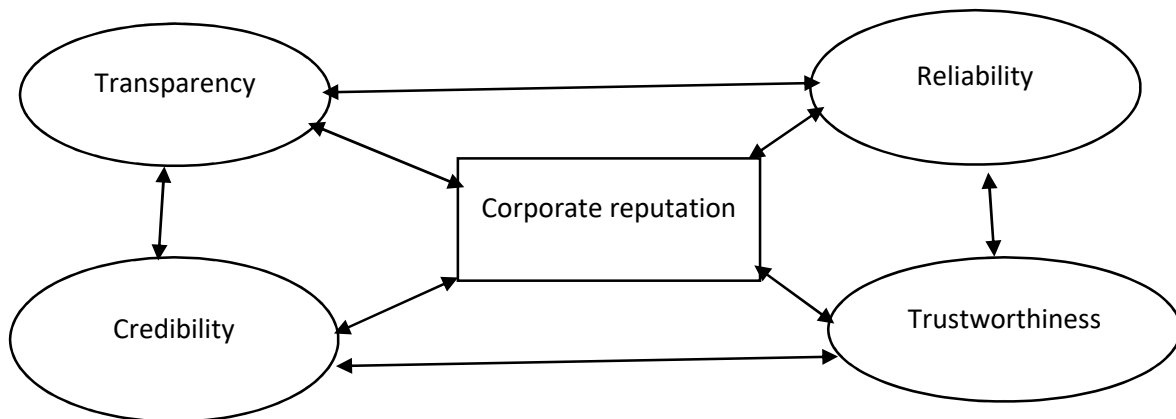
Source: Fombrun (1996)

The concepts provide a theoretical barometer for the stakeholder perceptions of corporate reputation and are hereunder discussed.

3.3.1. Transparency

Transparency has received substantial attention in literature. Cotterre (2007) defines transparency as the availability of information on matters of public concern; the ability of citizens to participate in political decisions; and the accountability of government to public opinion or legal processes. However, the shortcoming of Cotterre's definition is that it represents transparency as an exclusive terrain of government. That said, Nielsen and Madsen (2009) view transparency as an outcome of internal and external stakeholders', i.e. company managements and company stakeholders' agreements on Fairbanks' interpretation of the company.

Similarly, other scholars (Garnett, 2006; Piotrowski, 2007; Piotrowski & Ryzin, 2007) have defined transparency from the point of view of various organisations. In this context, Elisa and Ladislao's (2012) definition reflects a balanced view of transparency, and they define transparency as the strategy followed by an issuer to disclose complete, accurate and appropriate information, through the best available channel so as to enable recipients' decision-making, activating a feedback loop that allows consolidating the process.

A good corporate reputation develops when corporate leaders are transparent in the way they conduct the company's affairs (Doh & Stumpf, 2005). The above authors further accentuate that transparency requires abundant communications delivered in the spirit of 'full disclosure'. The authors further assert that when companies make more and better information available about themselves, the public perceives them as more credible and accountable, thus strengthening reputation. Elisa and Ladisalao's (2012) study corroborates the above authors' view and notes that consistency between the elements of communication, as well as the integrity, accuracy and appropriateness of the message increases the creation of reputation - transparency could become a good indicator of corporate reputation.

Fairbanks *et al*.'s (2007) study shows that basic to a successful democracy is the existence of a public informed about government actions. This requires government information to be open and accessible to the public. However, Putnam in Fairbanks *et al.* (2007) argues that there has been an outgrowth of poor communication between government and its publics, where publics feel that they are not well informed about government actions.

The communication asymmetry potentially diminishes citizens' basic right to information about issues that directly affect their lives. The constant occurrence of service delivery protests in South Africa have largely been equated to the limited information on issues that affect citizens. In this regard, Elisa and Ladisalao (2012) caution that the decision to disclose information must be made proactively by the issuer and must respond to the demands of the recipient, getting to know them and customizing as far as possible the information disclosed. The authors further observe that a lack of transparency justifies the failure in the contribution to the creation of a corporate reputation. Government, with perceived lack of transparency, may lose its legitimacy, thus impacting on its reputation.

Remenyi and Batista (2003) concur with the above views that government reputation can be improved if government explains what it does and how it serves the interest of the public. Failure of government to avail information that affect citizens could jeopardise trust and thus adversely impact on reputation. In their study of government transparency, Fairbanks *et al*. (2007) have conceptualised a transparency model for government communication as illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 3.4: Transparency model of government communication
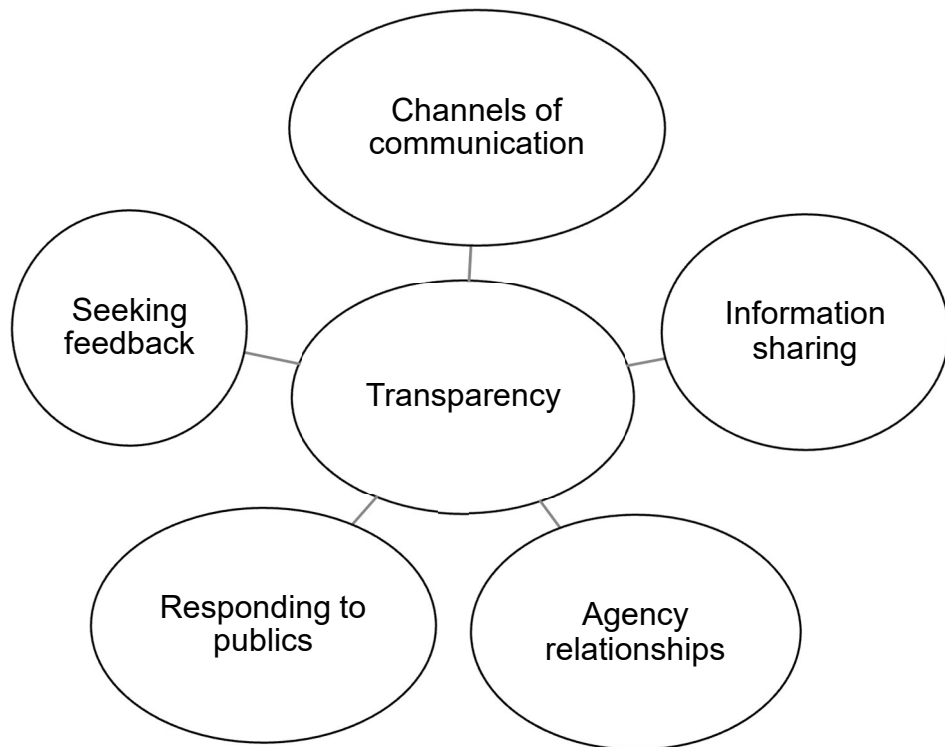
Source: Adapted from Fairbanks *et al*. (2007)

The model stipulates that in order to achieve transparency, communicators must adopt practices that promote open information sharing. These include working to enhance agency relationships with the publics they serve through responding to public needs, seeking and incorporating feedback and getting information out to the public through a variety of channels. Without transparency, government will be vulnerable to public cynicism and disillusionment, which will invariably affect reputation. Poorly perceived transparency will inadvertently influence the relationships with stakeholders, which, according to Da Silva and Batista (2007), will impact on the creation of the organisation's reputation.

Transparency can be viewed as a crucial determinant of public sector reputation management, and invariably, a transparent organisation is trustworthy and credible. That said, there is a close theoretical relationship between transparency and the concept of credibility, which is discussed next.

3.3.2. Credibility

The relationship between credibility and corporate reputation concepts in the public sector has received relatively little attention in academic literature. This is notwithstanding the indispensability of the conceptual link between the two concepts as the public sector endeavours to fulfil its mandate of meeting the expectations of the public. In this respect, Fombrun (1996) argues that good reputation increases credibility, making people more confident that they will really get what they are promised. Fisher (2007) adds that credibility can be established by either a credible source or a credible commitment. Similarly, Campiranon (2010) posits that credibility relies on the supplier's attitude toward companies - to be recognized as credible, companies must maintain a close and cooperative relationship with their stakeholders.

By and large, credibility is embedded in communication, and as noted by Fairbanks *et al.* (2007), when citizens feel that the information they have received is credible, they will be more willing to change their actions and the agency will be more able to operate and remain effective. In reference to the government's credibility, Da Silva and Batista (2007) reiterate the above point: "The relationship with citizens comprehends such initiatives such as providing public information to citizens, creating input channels for listening to citizens, and improving the quality of services according to the received inputs".

It is worth mentioning Fairbanks *et al.'s* (2007) research findings, which state that it is important that the government communicate in an open, honest and timely way with their publics, without manipulating the information. In the same way, Campiranon (2012) posits that suppliers demand companies to be credible and show good faith when dealing or placing orders with suppliers. Fombrun (1996) adds that suppliers also request companies to convey the risks of their strategies, provide warnings of impeding problems, and disclose material facts that might influence the supplier's assessment of their performance.

A credible organisation will enjoy public trust and is closely related to reliability, which is discussed in the succeeding section.

3.3.3. Reliability

Customers expect companies to be reliable and also demand that the products of companies they respect, be of better quality and more reliable than those of lesser known competitors, although sold at the same price (Campiranon, 2010). Organisations provide services and products, and customers expect quality services. The same can be said about the public sector, which provides public goods to citizens, and invariably citizens expect quality services that gratify their socio-economic requirements. Nakra (2000) observes that successful global leaders acquire reputation for reliability among customers and suppliers by ensuring quality of services and innovation.

There is paucity of a conceptual and theoretical framework on the constructs of reliability and reputation in the public sector, even though reliability is a significant tenet of good corporate reputation in the public sector. Citizens expect the public sector to deliver quality public services that meet their socio-economic needs. That said, Campiranon (2010) postulates that reliability is based on how customers perceive a company. The author further proposes three traits of reliability as illustrated in the table below.

Table 3.3: Three traits of reliability

Traits	Benefits
Show professionalism	- Saves time and cost - Helps reduce stress and complications - Makes organisational partnerships more effective
Deliver return on investment (ROI)	- Achieve faster, better and cheaper results - Add value to the core strategy
Employ crisis management	- Well-prepared and implemented crisis management plan

Source: Researcher's own conceptualisation based on literature review

As illustrated in the Table above, to build an image of reliability, it is recommended that companies show professionalism, deliver return on investment, and employ effective crisis management approaches.

Da Silva and Batista (2007) postulate that since responding to social demands may significantly increase government popularity, improvement of government responsiveness leads to improved acceptance of government decisions and actions. Iwu-Egwuonwu (2011) adds that the organisation that stands behind its products/services and provides consistent service, is perceived and taken to be reliable. In the same way, Fombrun (1996) notes that customers demand companies to be reliable, while suppliers require companies to be credible - moreover, employees need to be able to trust companies, whereas communities ask companies to be responsible.

Fairbanks *et al*.'s (2007) study found that transparency is critical to the ability of people to exercise free will and to have an open government that is responsive to the needs, requirements, and desire of the public. It is also through communication that government can sustain its reliability by consistently informing the public about key elements of public policies.

The recent spate of unprecedented community service delivery protests in South Africa can be seen as a manifestation of deteriorating government reliability. Luke and Heyns (2013) concur: "The spate of service delivery protests in South Africa in recent years would appear to indicate that the government is out of touch with the opinions of the South African citizens". Similarly, Kaggwa (2009) found that the gap between the expected services level and the actual services offered by government has been a key contributor to service delivery protests in South Africa. Literature seems to identify a widening gap between what the communities expect and what the government can offer. To this end, Jain (2010) advances a caveat:

> "*Improving the effectiveness of communication with communities with respect to development issues and progress on the delivery of services can help combat the alienation protestors often feel toward local government, the belief that there is little other outlet for public participation than violent uprisings. Moreover, it can help change the perception that government officials are corrupt or somehow complicit in*

the withholding of services from their communities. In the end, however, solving a problem of this magnitude will take time and much effort."

Reliability is crucially a significant tenet of corporate reputation, and the literature abundantly shows that the public sector is increasingly under considerable public scrutiny and must be perceived as reliable in order to enhance its legitimacy. The next section focuses on trustworthiness as a driver of corporate reputation.

3.3.4. Trustworthiness

Van der Merwe and Puth (2014) conceptualise trustworthiness as an objective characteristic of an organisation that makes it worthy of having its stakeholders' trust placed in it. The relationship between trustworthiness and reputation has received fair amount of attention in literature both in the private (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995; Schanz, 2009) and public sector (Blind, 2007; Chingwete, 2016; Edwards, 2015). In reference to the critical role of trustworthiness, Konieczna (2010) states that the highest evaluation an organisation can receive from its satisfied stakeholders is their trust. Stakeholders must believe that the organisation is able to deliver on what it has promised. Being open and accountable is the best way to earn the trust of public sector organisations' stakeholders. According to Fombrun (1996), trust is an indicator of increasing professionalism in the managerial ranks. Generally, employees expect the companies they work for to be trustworthy.

In reference to the role of trust, Campiranon (2012) notes that the relationship between companies and their employees play a vital part in developing a company's image of trustworthiness. Da Silva and Batista (2007) concur with Campiranon that the government should promote change in its employees' attitudes towards customers, and must become more customer-focused, more accountable and responsive to the taxpayers they serve. The key argument is that what employees feel about their organisations may affect the way they deal with customers and therefore the way customers feel about the organisation.

Luomah-alo (2008) observes that a factor influencing a company's image of trustworthiness also involves the customer's perception toward companies. For example, consistent public policies and neutral, trustworthy behaviour create a reserve of consistent behaviour that adds to a reputation of trustworthiness. Fisher (2007) adds that a good reputation is beneficial because, in building trust, it reduces uncertainty about an organisation.

While trust and trustworthiness are presented as synonymous in literature, Van der Merwe and Puth (2014) caution that the concepts of trust and trustworthiness are not the same, although they are intricately related, with the former depending upon an expectation of the latter. The above authors argue that whereas trust is defined as an expectation, a subjective belief that a trustor has about the trustee, trustworthiness is defined as an objective characteristic of the trustee that makes him worthy of having the trustor's trust placed in him. They further identify seven key areas in which an organisation should display its trustworthiness - these are areas in which an organisation can display its trustworthy behaviour impact on its corporate reputation. The table illustrates seven key areas with their related strategic inputs to the organisation's corporate reputation.

Table 3.4: The seven key areas of trustworthiness

Key area	Characteristics
Ability	- Collective set of skills - Competencies and characteristic such as expertise, reliability and attention.
Benevolence	- Collective and consistent behaviour - Genuine care and concern for the wellbeing of all its stakeholders.
Integrity	- Level of congruence between an organisation's words and actions - Ability to consistently honour its word and deliver on its promises or to communicate to its stakeholders - Keep its word as soon as it knows that it will not be able to do so, for whatever reason, and then to take steps of retribution.
Ethical behaviour	- Consistent conduct and adherence to a set of moral principles and ethical behavioural standards - Acting fairly, honestly and responsibly towards all its stakeholders in everything it does.
Identifiability	- Value congruence between the stakeholders and the organisation - Focusing on communicating and behaving in line with values, norms and beliefs that its stakeholders can identify with.
Transparency	- Actively open and transparent about its operations

	and what it stands for
	- Sharing relevant information with stakeholders
	- Inclusive stakeholder governance approach.
Likability	- Manage the emotional bond between the organisation and its stakeholders
	- How strongly it resonates with its stakeholders' emotions or beliefs
	- Admire, support and recommend the organisation.

Source: Van der Merwe and Puth (2014)

As illustrated above, Van der Merwe and Puth (2014) further stress that trustworthiness can be used to drive and shape how stakeholders perceive and assess the organisation's character, since it can choose which characteristics it wants to emphasise, demonstrate and display. Essentially, the integration of the seven areas of trustworthiness would enable the public sector to strengthen its corporate reputation. The succeeding section pays attention to corporate social responsibility as a driver of corporate reputation.

3.4.   BUILDING CORPORATE REPUTATION THROUGH STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

The term 'stakeholder' has become so widely used in both academic and practitioner circles that many scholars no longer see the need to define the term (Vidaver-Cohen, 2007). King III (2009) views stakeholder relationship management as a key tenet of corporate governance, and further emphasises that transparent and effective communication with stakeholders is essential for building and maintaining their trust and confidence.

Organisations the world over – both in the private and public sector – are realising the invaluable role of stakeholder management in their endeavour to enhance their performance. A substantial amount of literature shows that stakeholders is a crucial component of reputation management. Freeman (1984) is the leading scholar in the conceptualisation of what is today stakeholder theory. From this perspective, an organisation is viewed as being dependent on various stakeholders for the critical resources that enable it to operate (Neville & Bell, 2005). This section discusses stakeholder management as a catalyst to the performance of public sector organisations.

3.4.1. Understanding stakeholder management in the public sector

The concept of stakeholder management in the public sector is premised on Mahon and Wartink's (2003) view that as reputation is formed among the public and not 'on' the organisation itself, the views of organisational stakeholders are of central importance. Bromley (1993) adds that stakeholders are believed to continually form assessments of the organisation and these assessments in turn combine to form an invisible entity of attitudes, the intangible operating environment for the organisation and its reputation. In the same vein, Luoma-aho (2007) comments that almost anyone who has anything to do with the public sector, from voting and paying taxes to buying products, using services and reporting to others any favourable or unfavourable experiences had, can be considered to be a stakeholder.

In her study of public sector stakeholders, Luoma-aho (2005) postulates that the concept of 'stakeholder' originates in management literature as an analogue to the profit-oriented shareholder thinking, and it is a rather new one for public sector organisations. To some degree, the author contends, the introduction of stakeholder thinking in public sector organisations can be seen to result from neoliberal principles; to some degree, it merely represents the development toward openness of public sector organisations. Furthermore, Luoma-aho (2008) argues that despite its origin, the idea is useful, as it acknowledges that in society today no organisation can function without the approval of those around it.

The public sector invariably operates in the midst of stakeholders that harbour diverse interests that must be addressed with a reasonable level of equity. In consequence, Feldman *et al.* (2014) claim that different stakeholders may then have different perceptions regarding the organisation, based on their differing contexts and interpretation of the information received: an organisation may have, at the same time, a good reputation among its stockholders and one not so good among its employees. That said, the public sector relies on a myriad of stakeholders who form varied opinions and who must be integrated into the management systems of the organisation. The next section describes the public sector stakeholders.

3.4.2. Public sector stakeholders

In his seminal work 'Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach' Freeman (2001) characterises stakeholders as people and organisations who can affect, or who are affected by, the achievement of the company's objectives. Neville and Bell's (2005) description takes cue from Freeman's, and they describe stakeholders as a group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives. While the above descriptions apply across organisations, Alford (2009) argues that what constitutes a 'stakeholder' in the public sector is a problematic issue, complicated by the fact that there are many terms dealing with the same phenomena, mostly derived from the private sector, such as customers, users, buyers or consumers, each with many contending definitions.

Public sector organisations provide public goods to citizens through the implementation of public policies, and its stakeholders are constituted by a broad spectrum of citizens. Dominique in Melewar (2008:185) has noted that companies have four broad groups of stakeholders, which can be replicated within the public sector setting, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 3.5. – Public sector stakeholder conceptualisation

Stakeholder group	Characteristics	Examples of stakeholders – public sector
Normative group	- Provides authority for an organisation to function - Set the rules and regulations by which activities are carried out - Exist within and outside the organisation	- Political leadership - Legislators /law makers - Board of Directors
Functional groups	- Directly affects operations - Carry out the organisation's core capabilities - Deal directly with stakeholders	- Employees - Service providers - Other government departments
Customers /clients	- Provide long-term survival or reason to exist - Segmented into a set of sub-groups	- All the citizens of the country - Voters - Business sector - Investors
Diffused groups	- Have interest in the company - Given themselves a mandate of protecting rights of other stakeholders	- Journalists/media - Non-Governmental Organisations - Non-Profit Organisations

Source: Melewar (2008)

Table 3.5 above illustrates the fact that in order to perform meaningfully, public sector organisations must be capacitated to embrace all their stakeholders and further embrace their nuances. It is, however, worth noting Melewar's (2008:187) comment that because different stakeholders have different relationships with a company, they will hold a variety of images and reputations of the same company.

Riege and Lindsay's (2006) research findings further validate Melewar's view that differences between underlying value systems, such as different religious beliefs about social issues, are difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile for governments. Hence, deciding how to engage with stakeholders is central to the activities of every government. In view of the differences in how various stakeholders view an organisation, Davies *et al.* (2004) advance an argument that how employees and customers perceive the reputation of an organisation will influence their behaviour towards it. The authors report in their study that if a customer-facing employee and the customer share a positive view of the organisation, a positive interaction between them is more likely to occur.

3.4.3. Channels through which stakeholders build perceptions

Scholars (Cornelissen, 2014:05; Mazzei, 2011; Van Riel & Fombrun 2007:185) have identified communication as key conduit through which an organisation interacts and establishes relationships with its stakeholders. Stakeholders have different touch points where they interact with organisations. In addition, Fombrun (2011) has made reference to a new "economy of reputation", where society will be highly connected through networks and organisations will operate in an ecosystem of permanent influence from their groups of interest. In this regard, Bahr and Gellecum (2010) propose that organisations do not have one reputation, but instead have a number of reputations, with different groups viewing issues and events in different ways. In the same way, Feldman *et al.* (2014) caution organisations that greater knowledge of stakeholder perceptions about the organisation will help define a sort of reputational platform where coherence and equilibrium between what the organisation wants, can, or must do, must be taken into account.

In addition to acquiring the knowledge of stakeholder perception, is the ability to comprehend the channel through which such perceptions are built.

MacMillan *et al.* (2002) are of the view that members of the public will have views about the reputation of the organisation that can significantly affect the fortunes of the organisation concerned. The above mentioned authors further note that some will have personal contacts with the company, either as customers, employees or investors. In addition, they will derive relevant information from what they read, see or hear from the media, from the company itself, from friends or from other contacts. Feldman *et al*. (2014) concur with MacMillan *et al.* (2002) and add that organisations are not wholly in control of the information about them that exists outside their boundaries, and many stakeholders offer their opinions without ever having any direct interaction with the company, through third-party sources (e.g. the media and opinion leaders).

Therefore, organisations face an important challenge when it comes to managing their own reputation: reputation may be influenced by a variety of outside sources, besides communication and signalling from inside the company. Males' (2013) research findings show that when asked why they believed a particular hospital had a good reputation, the majority of participants cited positive personal experience, the experience of close friends or family members or word of mouth. While it would be erroneous to replicate the findings of this study across the board, it would appear that personal experience with an organisation constitutes one of the prominent channels through which perceptions are formed. This particularly manifests in the public sector in South Africa, where citizens would base their perception of government services on their experiences during interaction with public servants who are associated with a high level of incompetence and poor customer service.

However, scholars such as Lu and Wang (2016) and Fan, Geddes and Flory (2011) identify media as the main channel for stakeholders to build perceptions. Similarly, Andrews and Caren (2010) report in their study that the news media can shape the public agenda by influencing public opinion, authorities, and elites. With the proliferation of news media and online media, members of the public are presented with a variety of sources on what occurs in each organisation, which could shape their perceptions.

Shamma and Hassan's (2009) research findings corroborate the above view and report that the mass media is the main source by which the general public forms perceptions about corporate reputation.

The same can be expressed in the context of the public sector wherein the media plays a significant watchdog role to disclose malfeasance within government. By and large, South African citizens rely on the media to receive information on issues that take place within government. It is against this backdrop that Feldman *et al*. (2014) caution that organisations should have the capacity to diagnose how their constituents perceive them, in order to configure an optimistic strategy for managing corporate reputation. Fombrun *et al*. (2015) further point out that stakeholders respond to signals, making it critical for practitioners to understand and communicate across the multiple facets of companies to which stakeholders are exposed. For this, an organisation needs to acknowledge the different dynamics of its environment and learn who its key constituents are and what they want and expect from it. In this regard, it is crucial for organisations – both private and public – to manage their relations with stakeholders, a concept that is discussed in the succeeding section.

3.4.4. Stakeholder relationship management

Organisations nowadays need more than ever to maintain harmonious relationships with their different stakeholders so as to sustain competitive economic performance (Feldman *et al*. 2014). Stakeholder management as a determinant of good reputation has received considerable attention in literature. For example, some scholars (Chinyio & Alomolonje, 2010) state that the survival of any organisation depends on its ability to develop and maintain effective and continuing relationships with its stakeholders. In the same breath, Cornelissen (2014:41) posits that contemporary organisations increasingly realise that they need to communicate with their stakeholders to develop and protect their reputations. Furthermore, Burke and Cooper (2008) observe that a good reputation generally leads to overall advantages in conducting negotiations with stakeholders.

However, it is worth noting Mahon's (2002) comment that Freeman's work in 1984 is the starting place for any discussion of stakeholder management because he was one of the first to codify a disparate literature and to draw links between stakeholders, their impact on strategy, and the need for management of them. Many scholars identify the book by Freeman (1984) as a pacesetter; thus Chinyio and Olomolonje (2010) attribute the introduction of modern stakeholder theory to Freeman. Mahon (2002) further sends a caveat that several scholars have advanced that without the active and continual support of these stakeholders over time, the organisation will cease to exist as an independent entity.

The study of stakeholder management and reputation focuses more on the private sector. That said, Scholl's (2009) argument is worth noting:

> *"Even though most public-sector managers perform their tasks for different ends (e.g., public interest) as opposed to their private-sector counterparts (e.g., survival of the firm, or profit), their decisions have the same capacity of affecting individuals or groups when pursuing their organisation's objective. Just as in the private sector the public managers and their governmental organisations can be affected themselves by others as a consequence of their own decision-making. In other words, Freeman's stakeholder definition applies to managerial decision-making also in a governmental context"*

Fox, Ward and Howard (2002) confirm the above viewpoint and add that the public sector has a key role to play in facilitating meaningful stakeholder dialogue with the business community (for example, by building the capacity of civil society actors or by directly facilitating dialogue and multi-stakeholder processes). The fashion in which the private sector manages and strengthens its stakeholder management strategies cannot be different to how the public sector executes its own strategies. To this end, Chinyio and Olomolonje (2010) contend that regardless of the sector, stakeholders need to be managed in order to minimise their negative impacts and ensure that they do not hinder the achievement of goals by individuals and organisations.

The stakeholder relationship is assumed to consist of 'interactive, mutually engaged and responsive relationships that establish the very context of doing modern business, and create the groundwork for transparency and accountability' (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

Therefore, the company must inform stakeholders about its good intentions, decisions and actions to ensure positive stakeholder support. Verbeke and Tung (2013) describe such meaningful stakeholder relations as effective stakeholder management wherein suppliers and customers provide firms with intangible assets such as a good reputation and high-quality relationships.

Possessing a high reputation is also valuable for firms regarding specific stakeholder groups (Burke & Cooper, 2008). This requires a concerted management effort to strengthen organisation mechanisms (such as communication) to engage stakeholders and to establish sustainable relationships. However, a caveat by Fontaine, Haarman and Schmid (2006) is worth acknowledging: "A firm should not ignore claims of stakeholders simply because honouring them does not serve its strategic interests". The firm should build principles or "rules of the game" on how the company should operate building contracts with stakeholders (Fonteine *at al.* 2006). This arrangement should be pursued against the backdrop of Abdullah and Abulazizi's (2011) observation that different stakeholders require different demands and needs. Cornelissen (2014:44) concurs and states that the content of stakes that are held by different persons and groups is different.

In order to manage the reputation of the organisation as a whole, proactive communication and cooperation between stakeholders is necessary (Ermen, 2004). In his extensive literature review on building resilient reputations, Fombrun (2005) posits that by being expressive, companies effectively chunk information about themselves and present them in attractive packages to stakeholders. The key argument being that only through open multilateral communications can actors get close to their various stakeholder groups, both internal and external, and involve them in the strategic decision-making process (Ermen, 2004).

To this end, according to Cornelissen (2014:41), managers must think strategically about their business overall and about how they can effectively communicate with stakeholders, including customers, investors, employees and members of the communities in which the organisation resides. Thus, companies should manage their reputations in ways that contribute to their ability to attract potential customers, employees, investors and the support to local communities (Puncheva-Michelotti, 2010).

That said, a thread that runs through the stakeholder management process is rigorous communication with stakeholders, which is discussed in the next section.

3.4.5. Stakeholder communication

For stakeholder engagement to lead to meaningful accountability and for social responsibilities to be taken seriously, mechanisms need to be employed which allow stakeholders' views to feed into the organisations' decision-making process and which will ensure that organisations are held accountable to stakeholders' expectations (Blackburn, Hooper, Abratt, & Brown, 2018). Stakeholders are not homogeneous and they have different touch points with organisations (Sontaite & Bakanauskas, 2011). The organisation's strategic benefits of consistently communicating with stakeholders cannot be overemphasised. Invariably, building long-term relationships with stakeholders depends – in part – on the quality of communication that an organisation sends to its stakeholders. To this end, Brønn (2002) adds that organisations that communicate effectively with their publics develop better relationships because management and publics understand one another and because both are less likely to behave in ways that have negative consequences on the interests of the other.

According to Al-Khafaji *et al*. (2010) the survival of any organisation depends on its ability to develop and maintain effective and continuing relationships with its stakeholders. Koch (2007) adds that in order to strengthen relationships with stakeholders, communication in its various forms is the primary tool used for building long-lasting relationships and partnerships. Communication is the art and science to structure and transmit information in a manner that can be easily understood. Al-Khafaji *et al.* (2010) accentuate that stakeholder communication is critical to the success of every project in every organisation. The authors further accentuate that a well-planned communication process helps maintain good relationships between the organisation and all its stakeholders. Communication is certainly not the only solution to meeting stakeholders' requirements but it certainly plays a major role.

IPSOS (2009) reports note that good communication is vitally important to stakeholder management. It needs to be a two-way process; stakeholders want to feel that their views are listened to and acted upon – or to know why their advice has not been used. While many public sector organisations listen to their stakeholders, most need to do better at feeding back to stakeholders how they are acting on their views. Communication becomes a glue that holds the organisation and its stakeholders together, thus enhancing its reputation and competitiveness.

Organisational stakeholders include both internal and external stakeholders. Einweller and Boenigle's (2011) research study indicates that an organisation with an affinity for communication is more likely to foster favourable internal communication. The study further shows that a communicative culture impacts the way employees identify with the company; this in turn has a strong positive effect on employee satisfaction. Employee satisfaction is found to correlate with customer satisfaction.

Khanyapuss *et al.* (2010) add that every employee across the organisation needs to understand the values of the organisation so that they can behave and act naturally during the service encounter, while still effectively communicating the brand promise. Employees want to acquire company related information directly, and to contribute to the future decisions of their organisation (Dortok, 2002). In essence, employees are the primary stakeholders of an organisation, and it is critical that there is frequent and honest communication within the organisation. Stakeholder communication is a ubiquitous phenomenon in both the private and the public sector. In South Africa, the failure in the implementation of various public policies is attributed to poor stakeholder communication. This is partly due to limited public participation in the policy process.

In this country, public participation is entrenched in the Constitution, however, according to Luke and Hyns (2013), despite this, the spate of service delivery protests in South Africa in recent years would appear to indicate that the government is out of touch with the opinions of its citizens. Lack of public participation is underpinned by inadequate communication with stakeholders.

To this, Lehman and Matwa (2008) add that lack of communication and information can be the most crucial elements impacting on how the policies are translated into practice. The authors add that in all likelihood, government's aspirations to seamlessly delivering services to its citizens, largely depends on its ability to prioritise stakeholder communication.

3.5. PUBLIC SECTOR CORPORATE REPUTATION IN PERSPECTIVE

While there has been relatively limited research on public sector corporate reputation, contemporary public sector organisations increasingly experience unprecedented levels of scandals that considerably impact their reputations. This section seeks to review literature that highlights the key perspectives of public sector corporate reputation.

3.5.1. Corporate reputation of public sector organisations

There is increasing scholarly interest in the role of corporate reputation as a source of competitive advantage among both business and non-business organisations. However, Munyoro and Magada (2016) note that much of the research on the significance of corporate reputation has been largely inclined towards the private sector, with limited research on its impact in the public sector, particularly in the developing world. This salient bias towards the private sector is notwithstanding the fact that "most public sector organisations the world over are characterised by a persistently negative reputation" (Munyoro & Magada, 2016). In the same vein, Fourie and Poggenpoel (2017) argue that public sector organisations all over the world face challenges and, thus far, public sector reforms have not been successful.

Scholars such as Waeraas and Byrkjeflot (2012), contend that there is limited scholarly attention focused on public sector reputation, despite the fact that on a global scale most public sector organisations have been subjected to persistent negative reputations related to poor service delivery, mismanagement, and ethical misconduct among other allegations. The authors' further accentuate that public sector organisations have in recent years been subjected to negative media publicity involving corporate scandals and unprecedented levels of corruption.

They are also of the view that such allegations and the negative media publicity surrounding it, whether based on real or perceived issues, ultimately damage an organisation's reputation and consequently affect its performance. Henceforth, corporate reputation serves a significant purpose for the public sector and should be accorded the same level of scholarly attention.

That said, Luoma-aho (2008) postulates that reputation as a concept can be beneficial for public sector organisations, as it combines stakeholder assessments with a record of past deeds, and provides a way to assess intangible assets that are valuable for organisational legitimacy, yet often left without measurement. However, in accentuating the theoretical significance of public sector reputation, Luoma-aho (2008) sends a caveat that public sector organisations should not aim at improving merely reputation, but also those grass-root level daily practices that eventually shape reputation. Luoma-aho further provides a critical viewpoint considering that reputation is largely underpinned by the experiences stakeholders have had over time in relation to how the organisation has met their expectations. Similarly, Carpenter (2002) notes that public sector organisations' reputation is viewed as valuable political assets used to generate public support, achieve delegated autonomy and discretion from politicians, protect the agency from political attack and recruit and retain valued employees.

In the same vein, a study conducted by Luoma-aho and Canel (2016) shows that better-reputed public organisations would be beneficial to society through public trust, attractive business, increased legitimacy, guaranteed more fluent fulfilment of public policies, enhanced public participation, empowered citizens, and increased engagement. Males' (2013) study of hospitals concurs with the above study and posits that reputation is a huge issue, since it impacts a hospital's ability to recruit, raise funds, compete for patients, and be seen as a reasonable partner. Consistent with the above studies, Jakab's (2016) reputation study on the cities of Hungary found that countries and cities, as in the case of companies, also have their own reputation, which has an impact on their economies. The author's study further reports that places with a good reputation welcome more tourists, increase exports, improve public diplomacy, attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), foreign knowledge and talent.

The above review of literature essentially demonstrates that there is an urgent need to build public sector reputation in order to heighten its transformative capacity in the society it serves. The next section reviews literature on the need to build public sector corporate reputation.

3.5.2. Need to build public sector corporate reputation

The preceding section has clearly typified the role corporate reputation plays within the public sector context. Governments the world over, currently operate under tremendous pressure to deliver services faster and more efficiently. Paradoxically, given the impact of the public sector on the economy and the amount of budget that is allocated, there is limited academic work that has looked into the criticality of public sector corporate reputation and the management thereof. Consistent with the above viewpoint, Konieczna (2010) argues that corporate reputation for the public sector is an important area to research because public sector organisations' reputation depends on stakeholders' perception of their services. Therefore, it is pivotal to empirically assess public perceptions to ascertain government legitimacy. Konieczna (2010) further emphasises that recently, the status of citizens has changed; citizens became more than just taxpayers - they became clients of public sector organisations and users of their services.

That said, Wearaas and Moar (2015:02) assert that research from multiple countries and institutional contexts presents mounting evidence that public sector organisations have become more cognizant of the value of a favourable reputation and, as a result, are gradually treating the corporate reputation as a concern of strategic importance. Similarly, Ly-Le (2015) highlights a significant dimension to the effect that government is always under the public eye; it has a duty to report decisions and actions to citizens. It, therefore, requires a high level of responsibility and delicate communication and as noted by Konieczna (2010), communication will bring the trust of stakeholders, which is the result of a positive reputation.

Conversely, governments the world over suffer from an extreme image deficit, which, as observed by Wearaas and Moar (2015:02) is associated with negatively charged words such as inefficiency, bureaucracy, waste, incompetence, and rigidity.

Davenport, Leitch and Merlot (2013) agree with the authors above and posit that reputation of public sector organisations has developed over time, however, impressions of public sector organisations are plagued by negative connotations. Increasingly, negative publicity further emanates from the growth of scandals within the public sector, which include corruption, misuse of resources and inefficiencies.

In concurrence, Kroukamp (2015) states that negative connotations of the public sector may be affected by low confidence (whether caused by unethical behaviour or by ethical but incompetent behaviour); and causes friction and creates hidden agendas, interpersonal conflict and defensive and protective communication. That said, Da Silva and Batista (2007) contend that, notwithstanding popular criticism that public sector organisations are slow, and incapable of taking immediate action; governments are striving to revert this negative image by adopting new business approaches and applying new technologies to become more responsive to the public. The above authors' viewpoint is a mimic of the New Public Management (NPM) concept, which, as noted by Drechsler (2005), encourages the transfer of business and market principles and management techniques from the private into the public sector.

 The NPM is a shift towards greater competition both between public sector organisations and the private sector (Hood, 1995) and the marketization of public service delivery (Rubakula, 2014). While the NPM is a plausible reform, it is unimaginable how the theory would transcend the current intrusive political environment that public managers have to deal with in their administrative functions. Tambulasi (2007) notes that politicians resort to unproductive behaviours which include interference, sabotage and corruption to regain political control of government, and in many ways this impacts on its reputation. To this end, Luoma-aho and Makikanga (2013) argue that, in fact, there are challenges in constructing reputation in the context of public sector organisations, which include the inherently political nature of public organisations; an inability to connect with stakeholders on an emotional level; and the difficulties complex public organisations face in trying to communicate a coherent message.

Political challenges notwithstanding, as noted by Da Silva and Batista (2007), the building of corporate reputation has become a strategic issue for the public sector and it requires a series of organisational change. Berman (1997) adds that by reshaping its corporate reputation, government must embrace the development of trust, which must involve a sense of belonging that serves the emotional needs of individuals.

In reference to the significance of trust, Heintzman and Marson (2003) argue that if citizen trust and confidence is low or declining, it will be difficult to think of governments as fully successful, even if they could point to specific successes of public policy or programmes. Lack of trust reflects a deteriorating reputation, and Plotnick (2009) argues that without trust, organisations are bogged down by suspicion, anger, cynicism and disappointment. Therefore, it is imperative that government organisations maintain trust with its publics through effective hearing from the public so as to enhance its reputation.

Figure 3.5: Effectively hearing from the public
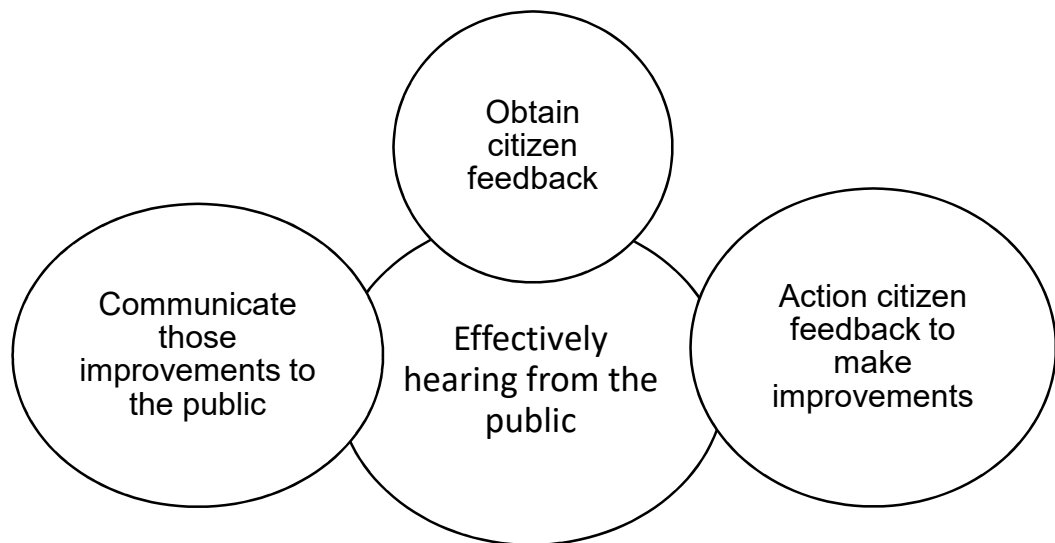
Source: Adapted from da Silva and Batista (2007)

As illustrated in Figure 3.5, Da Silva and Batista (2007) outline effective strategies that the public sector should embrace in order to build formidable reputations.

The author accentuates that, in order to reduce public cynicism, government should use its power to help citizens by explaining what government does and how it serves the interests of the public; incorporating citizens' inputs into decision-making processes and development of effective communication systems.

To this end, it is important to note that a government that has built its reputation might maintain existing businesses (Bannister*, Remenyi & Batista 2003); increase loyalty (Cahil, *et al.*, 2004); use more economical means to acquire investors and employees (Ponzi, Fombrun & Gardburg, 2011); and have a higher satisfaction of employees and stakeholders, which is the reason for their trust, confidence and loyalty (Konieczna, 2010).

The extant literature amply demonstrates – as illustrated above – that the public sector is equally obliged to embrace and manage corporate reputation so as to realise its mandate of fulfilling the policy mandate. That said, in view of the dichotomy between the private and public sector corporate reputation the existing literature has canvassed, the next section outlines a theoretical process that underpins the formation of the public sector reputation.

3.5.3. How public sector reputations form

While the extant literature has viewed corporate reputation from the point of view of the private sector, the crucial role of corporate reputation in the public sector context cannot be overemphasised. As it has consistently been indicated earlier in this study, public sector reputation has received relatively limited attention in academic literature. Conversely, governments experience excessive levels of scandals that create an untenable milieu of public distrust and apathy. For example, various scholars agree that trust in government organisations is globally low, with citizens reporting problems of transparency and bureaucracy (Motion *et al.* 2013), inefficiency, wastefulness, and unreliability (Waeraas & Brykjeflot, 2012), inept public policies and corrupt public officials who take advantage of citizens (Da Silva & Batista, 2007).

That said, Remenyi and Batista (2003) argue in favour of strengthening government reputation and state that over time improvements in both reputation and satisfaction will generate stronger loyalty bonds between the government and its publics. To realise this objective, government must endeavour to identify strategic elements that potentially boost reputation, including stimulating public trust. In emphasising the critical role of trust as a key element of reputation formation, Fombrun and Van Riel (2007:46) posit that reputation forms from networks of cognitive associations that develop over time from a group's cumulative exposure to stimuli.

To this end, Bromely (2000) outlines levels of information processing that affect people's impressions of an organisation which will potentially enhance trust and loyalty:

- Information processing at primary level – which is based on personal experience with the organisation;
- information processing at secondary level – which is based on what other people have to say about the organisation or the product; and
- Information processing at tertiary level – which is based on mass media information including advertising and unpaid publicity.

It would appear that the tertiary level of information processing – which is more about mass media influence – constitutes a bigger element of how government reputations are formed. Hannington (2004:25) is also of the view that the attention of the media has a profound impact on reputation. Based on the above scholarly views, it has to be stressed that generally the public relies on mass media to receive information that relates to the work of government, and citizens may use such information to form perceptions about government, thus impacting on reputation. In addition to mass media influence, service quality, competencies and capabilities of an organisation are factors that strengthen its reputation (Melewar, 2008). Governments are under extreme pressure to provide quality services (Konieczna, 2010); failure to do so alienates citizens and adversely impacts the corporate reputation.

Increasingly, literature accentuates the significance of building good reputation, however, various scholars such as Mulgan (2006), and Briggs (2006) and Mergel (2013), argue that public sector organisations' ability to build and sustain a quality reputation is inevitably challenging. Henceforth, public sector reputation mostly remains under a negative light from the public. However, contrary to the above popular views, Waeraas and Moare (2015:01) argue that public entities are in fact concerned with their reputations and have begun to implement measures to nurture, maintain, and protect them.

Public sector interest in building favourable reputations is reflected in the amount of effort and resources they put into their communication mechanisms. The role of communication in enhancing the attainment of organisational objectives has received considerable academic attention in the private sector, however, there is limited research that has been undertaken to investigate the role of communication in enhancing public sector performance, especially in the South African public sector context. However, Gupta (2011) argues that corporate communication is evolving and is contributing much more to the organisation than before. That said, the next section focusses on the value of corporate reputation within the public sector.

3.5.4. The value of the corporate reputation

Reputation has received an enormous amount of attention in literature. It is of immense importance to all organisations, whether they are commercial, governmental, or not-for-profit (Watson, 2007). In seeking to highlight the critical role of reputation, Fombrun and Low (2011) argue that it takes just a single incident to shatter a company's reputation, and to avoid such situations, communicators need to take a strategic role in shaping public perception. Scholars have consistently argued that organisations have either a 'good' or 'bad' reputation. For example, Boulstridge and Carrigan (2000) argue that one can have a good reputation or a bad reputation with the public, or perhaps even worse still, no reputation. That said, scholars (Boyd, Bergh & Ketchen, 2009; Fombrun, 2005; Huffy, Demit & Oughton, 2001; Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007:47) have variously stressed that every organisation strives for a favourable or good reputation.

Reputations are, therefore, a vital component of strategic management — and, not surprisingly, top rated companies have begun to manage them as such (Fombrun & Low, 2011).

In reference to favourable reputations, Boulstridge and Carringan (2000) argue that there is no doubt that corporate reputation in a holistic sense is a tool that can provide competitive advantage, and in many cases has been very successful. Most companies would desire a positive reputation if given the choice, primarily because current wisdom suggests that it will assist an organisation to sustain competitive advantage among its peers. A favourable reputation also has strategic, economic and other benefits such as preference in doing business with an organisation (Fombrun, 2012) when products/services are similar (Greyser, 2003); differentiating on the basis of a good reputation and developing legitimacy (Burke, 2011); gaining support in times of controversy (Balmer, 1998); creating competitive barriers (Deephouse, 2000); obtaining value in the financial marketplace (Roberts & Dowling, 2002); attracting and retaining employees (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007:47); and returning fair value to its shareholders (Beheshtifar & Karouki, 2013).

Once established, a good reputation acts like a magnet (Fombrun & Low, 2011); it strengthens the attractiveness of an organisation, simplifying the realisation of a broad range of activities (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007:47). It is also worth mentioning Melewar's (2008:189) comment that good strong value propositions that sit easily with the expectations of stakeholders, when backed by consistent and good corporate communications and behaviour, ultimately create good corporate reputations. Furthermore, Cahill *et al*.'s (2004) study shows that stakeholders assign firms reputations based upon the perceived quality of goods and services that they experience when interacting with them. In the same way, good reputations can act to buffer a corporation from economic loss in specific types of crises (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007: 48). Mazzola (2006) concurs with the authors above and observes that shares of companies that enjoy a good reputation suffer less and recover faster from stock market crashes due to corporate crises, product recalls, financial scandals etc. than shares of poorly regarded companies do. Firms with excellent reputations have made considerable investments in employee training (Hess, 2008), control mechanisms (Middleton, 2009) and service delivery systems to minimize the occurrence of failures (Hammond, 1994).

In addition, Hess (2008) states that when the occasional failure does occur, customers are expected to consider these efforts and be more lenient and forgiving of firms with good reputations.

Therefore, organisations that invest in reputation building and sustainability indirectly protect their reputations from unforeseen scandals. According to Feldman *et al*. (2014) in concrete terms, the main benefits of a strong corporate reputation could be listed as follows:

- Improving the consumer's perception of the quality of products or services (which allows to charge premium prices): sale increases and positive word-of-mouth
- Improving the capacity of hiring and retaining qualified personnel in corporations. Raising the morale of employees and therefore productivity
- Protecting the value of the enterprise by diminishing the impact of scrutinizing, crisis and/or competitive attacks
- Preceding and helping international expansion, not only in terms of market penetration but also in preparing the scenery in key communities and facilitating alliances
- Attracting a greater number of investors (good credibility): rise of market value and diminishing risks for the organisation
- Differencing the company from its competitors and establishing better market positioning
- Allowing access to cheaper capital.

While organisations would quintessentially strive for a positive reputation, however, Fombrun and Low (2011) argue that when damaged, a weak reputation drives away customers, repulses investors and mars performance. Boulstridge and Carrigan (2000) add that a bad reputation may even contribute to product rejection or avoidance by consumers and stakeholders. That said, Melewar (2008:189) cautions that there are no shortcuts to being well respected or building a good reputation. Adding to the voices of several scholars, Booth (2000) argues that the reputation of an organisation, which may have taken years to build up, could be destroyed almost instantly through uncontrollable communications.

It could take a single scandal to demolish the reputation of an organisation, henceforth it is imperative that organisations make an extraordinary effort to preserve their reputations. Whilst public sector reputation has received relatively limited attention in literature, good reputation remains a crucial component of its existence.

In seeking to accentuate the instrumentality of corporate reputation within the public sector setting, Waeraas and Maor (2015:1) note that research from multiple countries and institutional contexts presents mounting evidence that public sector organisations have become more cognizant of the value of a favourable reputation. That said, Cahill *et al.* (2004) observe that building relationships with citizens is an inherent aspect of governmental activity. Briggs (2006) adds that the community now expects, and deserves, smooth seamless service delivery – in other words, they want easy and simple access to government services. Briggs further notes that government reputation is only as good as the service it delivers to the community. While good reputation is imperative for reinforcing the legitimacy of government, bad reputation can result in public apathy and loss of social contract. For example, Heintzman and Marron (2003) argue that if citizen trust and confidence is low or declining, it will be difficult to think of governments as fully successful, even if they could point to specific successes of public policy or programmes.

Where there is lack of public trust the credibility of government is adversely impacted, resulting in the loss of support which could delegitimise its authority. That said, it is worthwhile to note that good corporate reputations have more benefits for both private and public sector organisations. The existing body of scholarship on corporate reputation has largely focused on the private sector, and considerably less on the public sector.

3.6.   CONCLUSION

In this Chapter, scholars have underscored the fundamental role of corporate reputation in both the for-profit and non-profit organisations. The review of literature shows that its ubiquity and extensively reported effect on performance calls for added attention, especially within the public sector context. While extant literature shows that corporate reputation has by and large been associated with the private sector, this Chapter sought to demonstrate that public sector organisations are beginning to realise the invaluable role of reputation in their endeavour to fulfil expectations of the citizenry.

Contemporary organisations are increasingly becoming vulnerable to public scrutiny, and it is extremely crucial that they heighten the strategic management of their corporate reputation in order to survive this daunting environment. While there are various drivers of public sector corporate reputation, media coverage can play a significant role in building the reputation of the public sector. The role of the media in influencing public sector reputation is described in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MEDIA

4.1.   INTRODUCTION

Recently the study of the relationship between the media and corporate reputation has received growing attention from both scholars and practitioners. As it will be shown in this Chapter, extant literature has substantially revealed the extent to which the media influences public opinion, thus influencing reputation. Literature amply shows that government – both in South Africa and the world over – increasingly receives negative media coverage, which impacts their reputation in a profound way. For a very long time, government and the media have experienced an adversarial relationship. In this regard, Lanin and Hermanto (2019) point out that the public sector challenge, somewhat ironically, is the problem of public distrust.

This Chapter is organised as follows.   The first section deals with media coverage of government and how it impacts its reputation. This is followed by a discussion of the role of the media in government with specific focus on media coverage and government reputation, the media watchdog role, government exposure to media, and government favourability and familiarity. The next section highlights the value of media reporting on government, and this is succeeded by the discussion of new media and its impact on public sector reputation, focusing on social media, its reputational risks and potential spill overs. The Chapter concludes with the discussion of media related concepts that impact public sector reputation, which comprise issue management, crisis management and change management.

4.2.   MEDIA COVERAGE AND GOVERNMENT REPUTATION

Governments the world over are grappling with challenges of fulfilling the ever-increasing socio-economic expectations of citizens. Visibility in the media is considered important for organisations, as it is alleged to affect their reputation, public legitimacy, and stakeholder relations (Wonneberger & Jacobs, 2017). The media has grabbed the importance of these trends as the basis for newsworthy items, framing their stories about governments accordingly (Hanson & Stuart, 2001).

That said, a study by Di Tella and Franceschelli (2011) shows that the media play an important role in modern democracies. For example, it provides a large proportion of the information with which policymakers and voters make decisions, as well as the analysis and editorial content that may influence the conclusions reached by potential voters. As a result, media coverage sets the agenda for public discourse (Rindova *et al.,* 2007) and the media exposure is likely to contribute to reputation building by focusing attention on the organisation, in this case a provincial government (Kotha, Rajgopal & Rindova, 2001). Significantly, many stakeholders depend on news reports about corporations, because the media are considered credible and trustworthy sources of corporations' performance (Meadows & Meadows, 2016).

Furthermore, the above authors state that many stakeholders will not have direct experience with the firm or industry, so that when an issue arises, they will rely on others to supply information about the reputation of the firm and the industry. That "other" can be the media, the government, or public interest groups and their presentation or interpretation of reputation that may have a crucial influence on outcomes (Freeman, 2002). According to Guru *et al.* (2013) the media are used to deliver the messages in order to invite the attention of consumers and to persuade them to accept goods and services manufactured by public and private companies.

The research undertaken by Deephouse (2000) also suggests that the media influence public knowledge and opinions, particularly from the perspective of the agenda-setting theory that initially proposed that media coverage of certain issues raises the salience of these issues on the public's agenda. The study further reports that the media provide information to stakeholders, reducing information asymmetry. More importantly, Deephouse's (2000) study expands our knowledge of reputation as a resource and it develops a variant of the reputation concept called media reputation, defined as the overall evaluation of a firm presented in the media.

Dyck and Zingales' (2002) empirical study on media effect on governance is worth noting in this context. The authors report in their study that media attention can drive politicians to introduce corporate law reforms or enforce corporate laws in the belief that inaction would hurt their future political careers or shame them in the eyes of public opinion, both at home and abroad. This implies that the media inadvertently enhances good governance, thus building good corporate reputation. The authors further accentuate that the media does play a role in shaping the public image of corporate managers and directors, and in so doing they pressure them to behave according to societal norms. The study also came to the conclusion that the media are important in shaping corporate policy and should not be ignored in any analysis of a country's corporate governance system.

Dyck, Vilchkova and Zingales (2006) corroborate Dyck and Zingales's study and state that exposure of corporate governance violations in the international press seems to promote some readdress. The authors argue that the media is potentially important in exercising control over abusive government, particularly in countries with high levels of corruption and weak legal systems.

Morsing and Ravasi's (2011) study advances a new perspective in the theoretical analysis of the media as determinant of corporate reputation. Their study refutes other scholars' views that media coverage perpetuates bad reputations. In contrary, the authors report that the news media may also report stories that cast an organisation in an overly positive – rather than negative – light and that may enhance its social regard rather than threaten its image. They contend that the media plays a central role in the construction of 'celebrity firms,' defined as business organisations that subsequently attract a high level of public attention, and generate positive emotional responses from stakeholder audiences. However, Sutter (2004) argues that many people blame the media for political developments they do not favour. The author further states that such arguments, however, are rarely subjected to economic analysis, much to the detriment of our understanding of the media.

Moreover, Van Schalkwyk, Du Toit, and Schlebusch (2016) report that the media has also been identified as a place where corporate reputation is developed. In other words, the media plays a critical role in terms of influencing the reputation of an organisation (depending on the nature of the coverage) as well as influencing public perception. Increasingly, people receive more information about government in the mass media and as a result they form opinions about governance, which may impact the reputation of government. While the media may make or break reputations, it is also a significant instrument to promote democracy – which is briefly discussed in the next section.

4.3.   THE WATCHDOG ROLE OF THE MEDIA

In this section, the review of literature focuses on key concepts that reflect the role of the media within a provincial government context. Literature considers the media as the backbone of democracy, demonstrating the role media plays as the watchdog that society relies on for uncovering errors and wrongdoings by those who hold power.

4.3.1. Media and democracy

Media freedom is enshrined in the South African Constitution, and grants media organisations the right to report without fear or favour. In democratic theory, the public gains information necessary to evaluate and control governance largely through the media (White, 2008). Literature shows that democracy is an old concept and according to Dall (2000:2) it has been discussed off and on for twenty-five hundred years - enough time to provide a tidy set of ideas about democracy on which everyone, or nearly everyone, could agree. While the concept of democracy has been considerably studied the world over, however, the role of the media in a democratically instituted government is still in an embryonic stage. The role of the media in a democracy has attracted a considerable amount of attention from scholars after the new South African political dispensation in 1994. Some scholars (Forbes, 2005; Occitti, 1999; Tomiselli & Nothling, 2008) have argued that in the post-apartheid era, the role of the media was seen as that of supporting government.

The new government expected the media to play more of a sympathetic role to the government of the African National Congress as a liberation movement. The expectations of the ruling party and the legitimate role of the media in a democracy have clashed over the past few years, resulting in extremely adversarial relations. That said, Gumede (2014) disputes the ruling party's narrow view of the media's role, and argues that the media has a crucial role in strengthening and consolidating the country's infant democracy by giving voice to the vulnerable; and on disadvantaged and neglected issues. The above author further accentuates that the very obvious role of the media is to provide information to citizens, not only through specialised reporting, but also by just informing people on what's happening, so that they can make informed decisions. The media also provides the platform for criticism, questioning and for pressure to be put on leaders to be responsive and accountable to the wishes of citizens.

The general public depends on the media to access information on what is happening within government, which enables them to monitor the actions of the government. Furthermore, Gumede (2014) points out that it is also in the media where "democracy" most concretely manifests, because that arena both represents and constitutes the independent political institution wherein citizens can engage in the discussion of matters of common interest. However, the author sends a caveat that the media could also play a constructive role in reconciliation, multiculturalism and nation-building. In new democracies the media is often required to go beyond the traditional role of just informing, to also contributing to public education and enlightenment.

Based on the reviewed literature, the media typically exercises an oversight role on government by keeping checks and balances of what is going on within the state. For example, in South Africa, the media has brought to the fore corruption related issues that otherwise would not have reached the public's attention. The media has unravelled corruption and malfeasance in government, and oftentimes have played a watchdog role, which is discussed in the next section.

4.3.2. The media's watchdog role

The work of government the world over has attracted enormous attention from both scholars and practitioners over the years. Government manages huge state budgets or taxes which warrants an increasing public and media scrutiny. The 21st century media is saddled with the responsibility of providing the citizenry with substantial information to help them make informed decisions (Amodu, Yartey, Ekanem, Oresanya & Afolabi, 2016). Agbo and Chukwuma (2017) are of the view that the watchdog function of the press is essentially to hold government accountable, and is a crucial role that empowers the press to checkmate governments' activities with the core aim of engendering good governance. Furthermore, the authors refer to the press as the fourth estate of the realm, while the executive, legislature and the judiciary are the first, second and third estates respectively. The authors argue that the legislature and the judiciary seem to have neglected their oversight functions, thereby leaving the fourth estate (press) with no choice than to solely perform the watchdog role of exposing government misdeeds.

To this end, Gumede (2014) postulates that the idea of the media as watchdog, as guardian of the public interest, and as a conduit between the government and the governed is rather compelling. The media has assigned itself the role of not only disseminating information but also of becoming the watchdog of companies' reputations (Hudson & Stuart, 2001). Coombs (2000) concurs, and states that most of the information stakeholders collect about organisations is derived from the news media, which is why media coverage is an important feature of reputation management. In this regard, Malakwen (2014) emphasises that the media as an information provider is highly significant as a watchdog; and within the context of information provision and interpretation, the media influences society in many dimensions. Malakwen (2014) further argues that as gatekeepers, the media decides what information gets to the public; and as watchdog they represent the interests of the people against powerful interests.

Amodu *et al*. (2016) are of the view that to ensure a successful democratic governance and sustainable development, the media has the responsibility to communicate the actions of the government to its citizens and then relaying the feedback to the government through opinion pages and public affairs programmes, among others. The above-mmentioned authors further state that media's responsibility is to monitor governmental activities and report progress or lack of it after candidates have been voted into power for constant evaluation. The authors contend that politicians over the years have made promises using the media's capacity to reach a wider spectrum of audience in a bid to canvas for votes during the electioneering periods; it therefore, becomes imperative that the media be responsible enough to highlight, remind and vocalise to the general public how well the promises made (over their own air waves) are being fulfilled. The media can reveal hidden stories through investigative reports, and the key characteristic of the media as watchdog is that they speak for the people, represent their interests, and act as a check on government (Malakwen, 2014).

In this regard, Booysen (2013) points out that the media is credited for playing a valuable role in keeping citizens informed, by helping create awareness of government and leadership processes beyond local horizons. The author further makes an observation that citizens often see the mass media as an extension of their own voice, of their eyes and ears, especially if they are from segments of society still advocating for more delivery and more transformation. In this way, the media helps them to make their voices heard, and helps them to keep their government accountable.

In the same vein, Gumede (2014) adds that the media also provides the platform for criticism, questioning and for pressure to be put on leaders to be responsive and accountable to the wishes of citizens. Daniels (2010) joins the voices of other scholars in highlighting the critical watchdog role of the media, and posits that by playing the role of watchdog and holding power to account, and by exposing corruption, the media plays a critical role in the social environment, as part of civil society. In the case of South Africa, Gumede (2014) comments that the media has by and large played an extraordinarily crucial oversight role to consolidate the country's democracy, not least by holding elected officials accountable.

With the advent of investigative journalism, South Africans have seen unprecedented cases of corruption and malfeasance being exposed on various media platforms. To this end, Malakwen (2014) is of the view that the media is the voice of the people in a democratic society, and it represents the people by asking officials of government the kinds of questions that hold them to account for the exercise of their public trust; and thus are representative in fighting the daily battle to protect democracy. Forbes (2005) defines investigative journalism as an in-depth fact finding about various matters that occur in our society day after day; it is a type of journalism whereby a journalist dwells inside the society [and tries] to reveal the hidden truth for the purpose of informing and exposing all necessary matters as required by the communities.

It is the media that has surreptitiously untangled information around scandalous government activities and consequently brought it to the attention of the South African public. Di Tella and Franceschelli (2011) concur that the media is potentially important in exercising control over abusive governments, particularly in countries with high levels of corruption and weak legal systems. Nkomo and Wafula's (2016) study shows that Africans are much clearer about the specific mandate of the media vis-à-vis government, and generally support for the media's "watchdog" role is strong and widespread and the majority of Africans agree that the news media should "constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption." Over and above the watchdog role, the nature and mandate of government exposes it to media scrutiny, and its exposure to the media is briefly discussed in the next section.

4.3.3. Government exposure and media relations

Media exposure is likely to contribute to reputation building by focusing attention on the firm (Kotha *et al*. 2001). Meijer and Kleinnijenhuis (2006) add that organisations' reputations are dependent on how they are evaluated in the news media. However, Tlou and Govender (2015) argue that although stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, or employees may use other sources of information such as share price or rumour to determine an organisation's reputation, the media is the only one aspect where reputation is built or lost.

However, it is worth mentioning that high visibility of a corporation in the news does not necessarily lead to a positive reputation, as oftentimes media have the freedom to choose the tone and perspective that are not in favour of the organisation (Meadow & Meadow, 2016). Consistent with the above viewpoint, Wonneberger and Jacobs (2016) assert that visibility in the media is considered important for organisations, as it is alleged to affect their reputation, public legitimacy, and stakeholder relations.

According to Glaser and Denhardt (2000), media are the primary conduits of information between citizens and government and consequently must be important actors in bridging the gap between citizens and government. The relationship between the media and government has always been low, both in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. As such, the media is inclined to focus on negative, rather than positive news, and is more likely to cover dramatic events (Liu *et al.,* 2012). In reference to the South African Government, Lloyd (2013) notes that the relationship between the ANC Government and the media has been tense for many years, underpinned by distrust from the ruling party.

That said, generally, the extant literature has reported that, by and large, media coverage of government has largely been negative in South Africa, in particular. Service delivery protests, failures in government operations and corruption have characterised media reporting in South Africa. Liu *et al.* (2012) argue that in view of the declining citizen trust in government and increasing negative media coverage of government, improved public communication efforts about government performance can improve relationships with both the citizens they serve and the media they rely on to convey their information to the public.

That said, Knudsen (2015) asserts that political news is increasingly focusing on negative, rather than positive, evaluations. The author further contends that negativity and criticism are indeed important news values, and journalists strive to uphold their role as a public watchdog, questioning, challenging and criticizing power structures, elites, governments and organisations. Another reason advanced by Trussler and Sork (2014) for the pursuance of negative government news is that negativity is more gravitating than positivity in regards of catching reader's attention, but it also pertains to meeting consumer demands.

Some research studies report that extensive media exposure results in familiarity and favourability of government, which is elucidated in the succeeding section.

4.3.4. Familiarity and favourability

Familiarity and favourability have attracted extensive attention in corporate reputation literature. According to IPSOS (2010) there is a clear relationship between familiarity and favourability among public sector entities. For example, the more familiar the public is with a given public sector organisation, the more favourable its opinion of it. Furthermore, IPSOS (2010) points out that the above viewpoint demonstrates that, more often than not, the better known a public sector organisation, the better liked it will be.

Regular communication can potentially strengthen reputations because if the public knows about an organisation, they will more likely favour it. The above statement is, however, used with great caution in view of the fact that in recent times many organisations, both private and public, end up in the media space for odd reasons. Therefore, being a familiar organisation in the media may not necessarily translate to a positive reputation. Having said the above, Aleknonis (2010) postulates that the media is one of the most important and influential means of reputation building - the principal driver of visibility. Kotha *et al.* (2001) add that media exposure is likely to contribute to reputation building by focusing attention on the firm. Visibility will subsequently lead to the familiarity of an organisation, which, as indicated above, may not necessarily guarantee strong reputations.

It is, however, worth noting Oržekauskas and Šmaižienė's (2007) viewpoint in which they state that a positive reputation's benefits are evident: a positive reputation leads to more favourability, better potential to attract electorate, better relationships with the media, better support in crisis, etc. Favourability has largely been studied with corporate reputation. Lange *et al.* (2011) have conceptualised favourability as perceptions or judgements of the overall organisation as good, attractive and appropriate. Bernett *et al.* (2006) furthermore add that favourability entails the level of intensity with which favourable or unfavourable judgments of the overall organisation are held. It ranges from very unfavourable judgments at the low end of the dimension, to very favourable judgments at the high end.

Favourability is essentially a function of being perceived in the positive, based on the confidence that the public have placed in an organisation's behaviour that may potentially boost its image.

4.4.   THE VALUE OF MEDIA REPORTING

Media reporting of the public sector has attracted mixed views; some scholars (Howard, 1998; Lui *et al*., 2009; Kalantari, 2008) view media reporting of the public sector as extremely negative, compromising the hard-earned benefits of a good reputation. However, other scholars (Dowler, 2002; Sutter, 2009; Wantt, Golan & Lee, 2004) believe that media reporting is essentially helpful to the public sector in its endeavour to transmit information to its constituents.

Media have a large impact upon what topics we discuss, provide different views on those topics, both reinforce and change beliefs, and generally shape the nature of our social reality (Ranft, Ferris & Zinko, 2006). Similarly, Sutter (2004) points out that much media coverage of government involves scandals, and over time such coverage should diminish people's respect for government. In reference to the value of media reporting, Gumede (2014) states that the role of the media is to provide information to citizens, not only in the form of specialised reporting, but also just by informing people on what's happening, so that they can make informed decisions.

Fogs (2013) corroborates Gumede's view and adds that the media is helpful in providing a platform for debate across a diverse range of views, holding officials to account for the way they exercise power, provide incentives for citizens to learn, choose, and become involved in the political process, and resist efforts of forces outside the media to subvert their independence. In addition, Nogara (2009) states that media reporting on corruption can play an important role in pressuring the government to act in the public interest. Furthermore, the above-mentioned author is of the view that the media can play an important public accountability role by monitoring and investigating the actions of those who are granted public trust and who may be tempted to abuse their office for private gain.

It would appear from the extant literature that while the public sector – by and large – experiences negative media publicity, media remain an important conduit between the public sector and its stakeholders. However, more importantly, as argued by Melewar (2010) in today's world, the emotional viewpoint of the media and public opinion predominate and influence changes in corporate reputation, and as such critical news reports and specific negative incidents have an ability to diminish the reputation of a firm. In addition to the value that the public sector can derive from media reporting, there are emerging, new media channels that impact corporate reputation, which will be discussed in the next section.

4.5.   NEW MEDIA AND CORPORATE REPUTATION: A PUBLIC SECTOR PERSPECTIVE

Rapid globalisation and technology have placed organisations under tremendous pressure to effectively manage and minimise damage to their reputations that might result from crises. This section discusses new social media and its inherent reputational risks as potential outcomes of reputation management.

4.5.1. Social media: an emerging paradigm

Technology (especially social media) is playing a vital role by enabling organisations to come up with innovative ways to better express their brands, particularly the emotions, feelings and values that are associated with them (Arya, Sethi & Verma, 2018). That said, the burgeoning social media platforms in modern society cannot be underestimated. These advances in media and web technology provide new challenges and opportunities for organisations to communicate and engage with their stakeholders, including their own employees, local communities, customers and the news media (Cornelissen, 2014:257). Consistent with Cornelissen's views, Lee and Kwak (2012) posit that social media has opened up unprecedented new possibilities of engaging the public in government work. In this regard, Song and Lee (2016) concur with the above authors and add that the use of the Internet and other digital media to deliver government information and services to citizens can be an influential factor in the restoration of trust in government because it has the potential to improve government performance (e.g., productivity gains, improved decision processes) and transparency.

In addition, Agbo and Chukwuma (2017) note that this trend encourages new and emerging patterns of communication, demolishes artificial borders, while creating participatory and other new forms of creative expression.

While extant literature on social media focuses on the private sector, Mergel (2013) argues that social media applications are extending the information and communication technology landscape in the public sector and are used to increase government transparency, participation and collaboration. Arya *et al*. (2018) add that in recent times, interaction between people is getting easier with the use of technological innovation especially in building communication with consumers which actually caters to the basic need of consumers to receive information, communicate with others and build networks more creatively.

Lee and Kwak's (2012) empirical work shows that social media enables the government to become a platform for public participation and collaboration. Furthermore, Lee and Kwak argue that social media-based public engagement is an uncharted territory and government agencies generally lack experience and knowledge about implementing social media. Furthermore, the authors predict that if harnessed, government will become an important platform on which the public and the private sector can participate, collaborate, and innovate. Consistent with the above authors' empirical work, Song and Lee's (2016) study findings also show that social media in government serve as an effective means of disseminating government information, providing citizens with an opportunity to access the most up-to-date government information in a timely manner, and citizens, in turn, may gain a sense of more connectedness with government agencies and officials.

 It would seem that for government to effectively harness the virtues of social media, it would need to accelerate education "to create social media-based communities to get the public to participate in government work" (Lee & Kwak, 2012). Davidson, Wagner and Ma's (2005) study shows that indeed, there is also evidence that e-government is for the educated minority in developing countries. The authors further contend that this would be truly unfortunate, since it is often the less educated that have most to gain from online initiatives that empower them to make decisions based on what is in their best interests, and would stand in stark contrast to the presumably universal principle of government: serving all

citizens. South Africa is a case in point: The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2013) reports that illiteracy remains prevalent among women, the elderly, in rural communities and among members of poor households, which are the groups of the society that specifically need to engage with the government on socio-economic issues. However, Cloete (2007) argues that the strong penetration of mobile phone technology in both urban and rural areas is an encouraging positive development in this regard that can lay the foundation for faster progress in government.

For example, the Eastern Cape has the lowest youth literacy rate which stands at 86% of illiteracy (General Household Survey, 2017). The report unequivocally observes that these low levels of literacy and education in general, can impede the economic development of a country in the current rapidly changing, technology-driven world. That said, social media is growing in popularity, and the study findings of Song and Lee (2016) show that use of government social media is significantly and positively associated with perceptions of government transparency; that perceptions of government transparency are positively and significantly related to trust in government; and that perceptions of government transparency mediate the relationship between use of government social media and trust in government. Thus, for companies, monitoring, protecting and enhancing their image means value creation for the future, based on public confidence in the company and positive attitudes associated with its products and services.

Consistent with the above, is Baird and Parasnis' (2011) view in which they report that social media holds enormous potential for companies to get closer to customers and, by doing so, facilitate increased revenue, cost reduction and efficiencies. As might be expected, their findings indicate that social media initiatives are quickly springing up across organisations. With social media, though, companies are no longer in control of the relationship. Song and Lee (2016) argue that social media is an effective means for government to improve citizens' trust in government by enhancing their perceptions of government transparency. Therefore, the authors above add that governments are adopting social media to provide complementary information dissemination, communication, and participation channels whereby citizens can access government and government officials and make informed decisions.

Now, it is much easier for citizens around the world to challenge authorities on issues, expose corruption, and express their opinions via new media. Images that would have been censored by media houses based on their sensitive nature, get frequently circulated online (Agbo & Chukwuma, 2017).

While there are myriad advantages in the use of social media, a limitation advanced by Aula (2010) is worth noting for both practical and theoretical positioning of the concept. The author argues that social media expands the spectrum of reputation risks and boosts risk dynamics. Moreover, there are many social media websites that question the responsibilities and administration of organisations, that demand transparency, and that reveal corporate irresponsibility. The next section reviews literature on new media reputational risks.

4.5.2. Reputational risks of social media

It is often commented that it may take a company generations to acquire a solid corporate reputation and only seconds to lose it (Clarke, 2011), and once lost - even tarnished – it is incredibly difficult to regain (Nakra 2000). These views clearly demonstrate that reputation is a "strategic asset" (Ozturk, Cop & Sani, 2010) that takes effort to develop, yet it can be lost in a very short time. Adeosun and Ganiyu (2013) state that any incident that reduces trust among any single stakeholder group has the possibility to create reputation damage.

The loss of reputation affects competitiveness, local positioning, the trust and loyalty of stakeholders, media relations, and the legitimacy of operations, even the license to exist (Aula, 2013). Organisations are required to meet the expectations of various stakeholder groups and "a risk to reputation occurs where the organisation fails to meet expectations of a specific group" (Adeosun & Ganiyu, 2013). in this regard, Briggs (2006) notes that most public sector organisations are only too aware of the risks and the difficulties they face in managing their image in a very "information rich" world where any bad news spreads fast — much faster than our achievements. Consistent with the above view is Janek, Immanuel, Roman and Christoph's (2014) caution that organisations should continuously sense their business environment for being able to seize emerging opportunities and react against threats, such as loss of reputation.

Diermeier's (2008) viewpoint is also worth noting that reputational damage can hurt a company in many ways. Meadows and Meadows (2016) concur with Diemeier's views and caution that:

> *"Public relations practitioners should be cautious when implementing social media strategies, because social media are often seen as a two-edged sword; on the one hand, social media allow the company to engage with every customer and stakeholder on an individual basis, the ease and freedom to engage is unparalleled throughout history, however, on the other hand, social media are also seen as a risk".*

In the Eastern Cape Province, the provincial government insistently receives negative media publicity on corruption, poor service delivery, and being the poorest province in the country. All these examples project the Government and the ruling party, in particular, as caring less for its people and public resources – thus invariably impacting its reputation. The nascent social media has received more attention in academic literature over the past few years, and is projected as a threat to the reputation of organisations. Lee and Kwak (2012) state that the advent of social media has opened up unprecedented new possibilities of engaging the public in government work and has changed the public's expectations about how government work should be done.

However, Zufall (2012) argues that while social media has shifted organisational communication from one-way communication to free conversation, organisations have lost power to control what is being said about them in the world, which can lead to threats for an organisation in many cases and in many ways. However, Song and Lee (2016) argue that governments can promote transparency by actively disclosing information about their activities and decisions and then enabling citizens to access, monitor, and evaluate it. From the citizen's point of view, government transparency is perceived when government information is publicly available. Similarly, Sancilio's (2013) research findings show that corporate reputation can be stimulated or damaged through social media. The author further reports that stakeholders often distribute their views and stories about companies online. While social media is ubiquitous, media publicity also plays a critical role in the creation of reputation risks.

Media can exert a great deal of influence on corporate reputation (Carrol, 2013). According to McCombs (1997), in setting the public agenda, the news media influences the salience or prominence of that small number of issues that come to command public attention.

In the same way, Wanta, Golan and Lee (2004) add that the news media do tell people what to think about by providing the public with an agenda of attributes. The government manages resources of the state, and often the public depends on the media to get information on how their resources are utilised and whether the government is adhering to its electoral mandate.

Rayner (2002:07) argues that these days the media have scant respect for rank or authority, whether the prominent figure or business in question is a government body or a major multinational. The author adds that a virulent or even personal attack can almost always be justified as being 'in the public interest' or 'for the sake of transparency and openness'. Invariably, media potentiality to set the agenda and challenge the authority pose a serious threat to the reputation of government. Reputations may potentially spill over to similar organisations as discussed in the next section.

4.5.3. Reputation spillover

One of the remarkable outcomes of reputation management is the reputational spillover. Yu and Lester (2002) define the construct of reputation spillover as the process in which a reputational crisis occurring to one organisation may spill over to other organisations that are either proximate or structurally equivalent to the focal organisation. In other words, the actions of surrounding firms also shape a firm's reputation and ultimately its performance (Barnett, 2008).

An organisation might be devalued or delegitimised by evaluators, simply because it belongs to the same organisational form as the stricken organisation (Yu, Insead & Lester, 2008). Simply stated, an organisation's damaged reputation may have implications that go beyond its boundaries and affect others. The scandals and crises that befall both private and public organisations have stimulated interest in the reputational spillover. However, scholars have predominantly studied reputational spillover from the private sector perspective.

It is also worth noting that public sector organisations are also vulnerable to crisis situations, which may impact the same category departments. In this regard, Barnett (2008) argues that one firm's poor behavior can taint the reputation of all firms in an industry. Juxtaposing Barnett's argument with government experience, it can be concluded that government experiences similar spillover during crises, as citizens conceive a specific department's behaviour as representative of the government's attitude.

Nonetheless, literature has given little attention to how firms manage potential reputational spillovers and the interdependences between organisations. To this end, Yu, Insead, and Lester (2008) argue that although the crisis may not directly strike an organisation, other organisations, especially those most likely to be affected by spillover, may engage in a preferential detachment process — one in which organisations make changes to reduce their linkages to or perceived similarities with the stricken organisation. However, the scholars have made no attempt in theoretical study to demystify preferential detachment as a recourse for organisations vulnerable to reputational spillovers.

It would seem from this literature review that the majority of organisations, either private or public, grapple with reputational spillover as people will project an organisation's perceived bad reputation onto other similar groups. To mitigate the reputational spillovers, some scholars propose a corporate branding process so that organisations can distinguish themselves through unique activities and identity. For example, Gylling and Lindburg-Repo (2005) postulate that a strong and favourable corporate brand is seen as the discriminator differentiation tool in an increasingly commercial environment. In addition, Melewar (2008) identifies corporate identity as a significant underpinning of corporate brand management.

The above author contends that by effectively managing corporate identity, organisations are able to create a clear individuality that distinguishes them from other players in the marketplace. Corporate identity management involves activities that the company deliberately undertakes in order to enhance its image among its stakeholders. It enables an organisation to distinguish itself from its competitors, and according to Van Riel (1997), it expresses the organisation's sameness over time, continuity, distinctiveness and centrality.

That said, more research is needed on the reputational spillover effect, particularly within the public sector context. The next section discusses media related concepts that can impact corporate reputation.

4.6. MEDIA RELATED CONCEPTS THAT IMPACT CORPORATE REPUTATION

This section explores three of the most important media related areas that may impact corporate reputation. The three concepts comprise issues management, crisis communication and change communication. Each of these areas plays a significant role in influencing public sector corporate reputation management, and further are contingent on how public sector organisations manage media relations through consistent communication.

4.6.1. Issues management

In the same vein, Elimimian and Edevbie (2013) posit that the management of issues conveys to members of the organisation a clear message that they should be attentive to strategic issues from external and internal environmental scanning when formulating a long range strategic plan. Parker, Wayne and Kent (2006) conceptualise issues management as a systematic identification and action regarding public policy matters of concern to an organisation and involves the identification of key issues that may affect an organisation's business environment. From this perspective, Brønn and Brønn (2002) argue for the integration of issues management into the strategic planning of organisations and urge organisations to view it as providing the basis for an overall strategic orientation.

Heath and Palenchar (2009) add that the overriding goal of an issues management function is to enhance the current and long-term performance and standing of the corporation by anticipating change, promoting opportunities, and avoiding or mitigating threats. Furthermore, the authors state that issues management is the capacity to understand, mobilise, coordinate, and direct all strategic and policy planning functions, and public relations, towards the achievement of the same objectives.

Elimimian and Edvebie (2013) observe that issues management pertains to an external and internal environment which could impact the organisation's performance; to which the organisation must respond in an orderly fashion; and over which the organisation may reasonably expect to exert some influence. Organisations operate in environments which are underpinned by the unpredictability of events, which could potentially jeopardise their reputations if not managed timely. In the same way, Brønn and Brønn (2002) point out that the ability to 'manage the mess' and to create 'sanity' out of an unpredictable environment is crucial for an organisation and can have a significant impact on organisational performance and long-term viability. The authors argue that an organisation's objective is to reduce the possibility of strategic surprises; and issues management assists organisations to facilitate the realisation of their objectives by helping them anticipate and respond to changes in the external environment.

According to Parker *et al*. (2006) issues management helps to bring to light potential threats that are present but not prevalent and communication is central to issues management. Furthermore, the authors accentuate that issues management communication strengthens core values, distributes information, fosters relations and accurately portrays corporate goals. The authors also add that by engaging the media in the issues management process, organisations increase the likelihood of the media reporting on "their side" of the story, thus either achieving positive publicity or mitigating negative publicity. Both positive publicity and the mitigation of negative publicity will serve to promote the success of an organisation.

That said, Luoma-aho and Vos (2010) refer to "arena issue" as a new dimension of issue management. The authors postulate that with the development of new communication technologies, traditional ways of thinking about stakeholders are becoming outdated as communication with and among stakeholders is moving onto new stages outside the organisation's control. The authors argue that organisational survival is not dependent on only communicating with the right stakeholders, but also on finding the relevant issue arenas in which to participate. Luoma-aho and Vos (2010) contend that conversations and arenas left without organisational participation may threaten organisational reputation and through it also organisational legitimacy. Stakeholders' expectations formed in the various issue arenas guide how the organisation is perceived and may impact reputation.

As noted earlier in this section, there is paucity of empirical work on public sector issues management. That said, the growing attention on the work of the public sector from both the citizens and business sector calls for more attention to issues management. The general public raise myriad issues on various media platforms that pertain to – among other things - how the government of the day spends taxpayers' money. It, therefore, becomes imperative that there is a rigorous issues management process so as to ensure that issues are demystified before they generate into crises.

Some management literature conceptualises issues management as an integral constituent of crisis management (Booth, 2000; Coombs, 2007; Diermeier, 2008; Valackiene, 2010). However, Jaques (2007) argues against the coalescence of the concepts of issues management and crisis management and states that their interdependent activities must be managed at different stages. It is against this backdrop that crisis management is discussed as a separate activity in the next section.

4.6.2. Crisis management

All organisations are vulnerable to crisis and failure to make any attempt to deal with such events could lead to public panic, a loss of legitimacy which can jeopardise reputations in more than one way (Booth, 2000). As a consequence, crisis communication has increasingly received attention in the management literature, and invariably it is attributed to the ability of organisations to manage crises. Yilmaz and Kucuk (2010) define crisis management as the preparation and application of strategies and tactics that can prevent or modify the impact of major events on the company or organisation. Cornelissen (2014:201) views a crisis as an event or issue that requires decisive and immediate action from the organisation. Crises usually take organisations and people by surprise, create threatening circumstances and demand a quick response from those responsible. Crisis management has its origins in public relations and is grounded in strategies to manage and frame public perceptions of an event (Palttala, Boano, Lund & Vos, 2012).

Crisis management is a critical concept in both the private and public sector. It is worth noting Lee's (2009) observation that a government crisis differs from a corporate crisis in both nature and scope. The author argues that government is always under the public eye; it has a duty to report decisions and actions to citizens and it requires a high level of responsibility and delicate communication skills.

Meng and Berger (2008) furthermore provide a caveat in their study that at both practical and theoretical levels, crisis management should be integrated in government decision-making. The strategic integration – the authors argue – may allow government to effectively manage a crisis by practicing a collaborative and open approach, which may contribute to more favourable perceptions among citizens, other governments, media representatives, and other publics. According to Cornelissen (2014:204), a crisis typically emerges as a sudden and unexpected event that disrupts an organisation's operations and poses both financial and reputational threats. Cornelissen adds that corporate communication is a key mechanism to protect the company's reputation following a crisis and to limit the damage to its image. To this end, Yilmaz and Kucuk (2010) emphasise that reputation is one of the most vulnerable values corporations have to stay sustainable in the globally warmed business environment.

From the analysis of many corporate brand crisis experiences, Greyser (2009) finds that forthrightness in communications and substantive credible responses in the form of behaviour, are most likely to restore trust and rescue a brand in crisis. Furthermore, the author notes that effective communication plays the key role in overcoming crises. To this, Mejrit and De Wolf (2013) add that open, timely and trustworthy reporting, as well as regular dialogue and communication with all stakeholders, should be maintained in times of crisis. The authors stress that a company should also be honest about what it knows and does not know, which would give it far more credibility.

As communication is executed during a crisis, it is important to note Visuri's (2003) observation that citizens may have various needs for information and expectations towards response organisations. The author further contends that communication needs to be a regular part of crisis management procedures and decision-making during a crisis situation, which calls for openness.

While proactive communication is highlighted as an essential element during a crisis, Sack (2013) argues that, despite expectations based on dominant crisis communication theory that the company would experience reputational damage as a result of the crisis, a company may instead experience an increase in market share and awareness. The author notes that this gap between theory and practice can be partly explained by the social media driven change in the way individuals and organisations communicate. Against this background, Coombs and Holladay (2006) make reference to the halo effect that has the potential to protect established reputation. The authors posit that a favourable prior reputation functions as a bank account containing reputation capital and an organisation with bountiful reputational capital can afford to spend or lose some capital in a crisis and still maintain a strong, favourable post-crisis reputation. Linked to managing crisis communication is change communication, which is discussed next.

4.6.3. Change communication

Change has long been a topic of debate in communication management literature across the world. However, Elving (2005) argues that despite this growing attention and research, still many of the efforts of organisational change fail. Change still wreaks havoc in many organisations due to a lack of established systems of management, such as meaningful communication. Despite the seemingly uncontested acceptance of change as an integral part of organisational management and leadership, many business institutions and governmental departments still seem to falter and flounder in instituting business and political change and in leading their employees/voters through the resultant transition and transformation (Grobler & Puth, 2002).

That said, Johnson and Heide (2008) assert that in order to cope with competition, technological developments and customer demands, managers seek different solutions and tools to manage unstable, rapidly changing, and never predictable situations. In their research article, Grobler and Puth (2002) take the point of view that two of the major reasons for both private and public sector's inability to effectively manage change is that: (I) the importance of communication is either totally ignored; or (2) communication is only viewed as a tool to bring about change (that is, communication on technical level).

The authors argue that attempts to manage change in the organisation often fail, because organisations do not see communication as a strategic function or resource. Barret (2002) concurs with Grobler and Puth that what some companies still do not realize, is that without effective communication, change is impossible and change management fails. Effective communication is the glue that holds an organisation together, and during major change, that glue becomes even more critical.

Government often undergoes astonishing changes that include the introduction of a plethora of public policies, new technology, and new political structural systems. All these changes indirectly or directly impact ordinary citizens, and it is crucial that they are promptly informed on how these will affect the status quo. Failure to indulge in robust communication of change may result in resistance. Numerous scholars have studied resistance to change.

For example, Elving (2005) maintains that one goal of communication during a change process is to prevent or reduce resistance to change, and to thereby lay the foundation of an effective implementation. Another goal, Elving asserts, is to reduce people's uncertainty of their future situation, and thereby create readiness for change. Change is inevitable in both private and public organisations. However, the survival of an organisation is contingent on the ability to utilise communication to manage change. Lines, Salart, Espedal and Johansen (2005) argue that there is a relationship between organisational change and trust in management. In other words, where management is perceived to be effectively communicating change, there is likely to be trust in management, leading to a strong reputation. Failure to communicate change may adversely impact on the reputation of an organisation.

4.7. CONCLUSION

This Chapter has shown that media coverage of government plays a pivotal role in determining its reputation, which includes fulfilling a watchdog role by uncovering errors and wrongdoings by those who have power and exposing critical government information to the citizens. The media provides a democratic platform through which citizens can access information critical to their development.

It plays a significant role as the chief source of information, and it is through the media that government can enhance its familiarity and favourability among its stakeholders.

The media can potentially build or destroy the image of government, especially where communication is restricted. While general reporting on government may add value to its reputation, negative reporting has the potential of reversing any reputational gains that have been made. The rapid proliferation of new media presents a new challenge to government reputation due to the power of social media platforms that have exposed government to unprecedented levels of reputational risks. This Chapter has demonstrated that government should prioritise media relations in order to engender citizen emotional attachment, which is discussed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT AND REPUTATION MEASUREMENT

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of corporate reputation measurement instruments both at academic and practical level amply demonstrates the increasing prominence of corporate reputation. The available academic literature in the area of public sector reputation, which provides a theoretical lens for this study, can be divided into "two distinct cohorts" (McHugh, 2014). The first group belongs to the European scholars who have *inter alia* studied public sector reputation focusing on building government reputation (Bamister, *et al.* 2003; Batista & de Silva, 2007), neutral reputation and public sector organisations (Luama-aho, 2007) and recovering of government reputations (Cahil, Batista & Kawalek , 2004). The second scholarly group comprises American academics who have also, among others, conducted empirical studies on public health institutions' reputations (Males, 2013) and government reputation management (Heintzeman & Marson, 2003).

This Chapter is organised as follows. The Chapter first discusses the emotional attachment, which is followed by the discussion of the genesis of the RepTrak ™ Pulse view. Dimensions of RepTrak ™ Pulse are discussed as the drivers of emotional attachment. The Chapter concludes with the discussion of literature on the variety of practices applicable to the measuring of corporate reputation and major approaches to measuring this phenomenon.

5.2. STAKEHOLDER EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT

The emotional attachment that consumers develop toward some brands has attracted considerable research attention within marketing research (Vredeveld, 2018). Levy and Hino (2015) define emotional attachment as a construct that reflects a mental state or feeling connected or attached to the brand – a holistic feeling toward the brand. Marketing research has often viewed emotional attachment from the private sector point of view.

For example, Berry, (2000) and Thomson, MacInnis, and Park (2005) state that the possibility that customers can develop emotional connections to brands is suggested and supported in the marketing academic literature. Further, brand attachment is defined as the emotional bond between a consumer and a brand, and it encompasses three dimensions: affection, passion and connection. The outcomes of brand attachments include brand trust, and the fostering of perceptions that brands are safe havens which, in turn, influence conative and behavioural loyalty (Sarkar, Sarkar & Rao, 2016).

Scholars such as Khan, Rasheed, Islam, Ahmed and Rizwan (2016) point out that there is a close relationship between emotional attachment and customer loyalty. The figure below depicts the model the above authors developed to illustrate the relationship between the concepts of emotional attachment and brand loyalty. Although this model is principally applicable within the marketing discipline, however, it can be considered within the public sector corporate reputation domain.

Figure 5.1: Model of corporate emotional attachment and brand loyalty
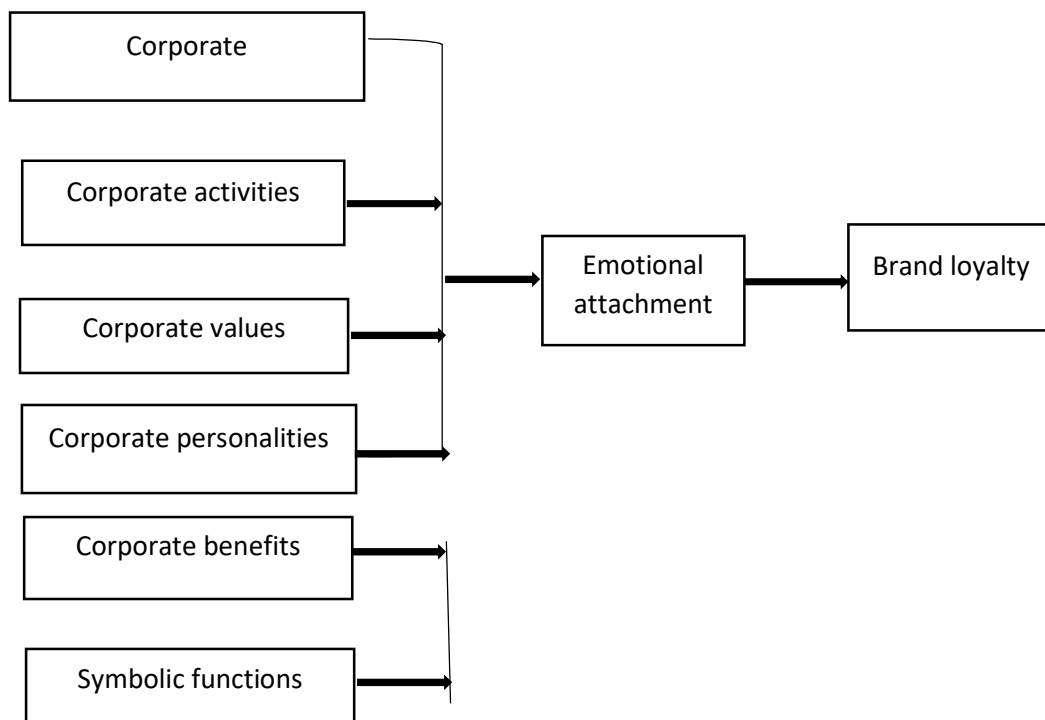
Source: Khan *et al*. (2016)

Khan *et al.*'s (2016) model shows that functional benefits, and symbolical benefits were found to have an impact on customer emotional attachment. Luoma-aho (2015) further contends that in the reputation society we have entered into a time of strong emotions and organisations have become targets of emotion, both love and hate. Emotional attachment is the outcome of long-term relationships between service providers and customers; it occurs during the service experience (Carroll & Aluvia, 2006); and is a result of the company's holistic marketing efforts (Levy & Hino, 2015).

The study conducted by Levy and Hino (2015) shows that one of the things that motivate customers to choose and connect to a certain product or service is emotions, and the emotional connection between a company and its customers is formed gradually. Similarly, findings of Loureiro, Ruediger and Demetrix's (2012) study suggest that brand attachment is positively related to brand love. The above authors further emphasise that brand love reinforces the trust, interest in continuing a relationship and faith in the future of the brand. However, Luoma-aho (2015) points out that emotion may threaten organisational legitimacy, as organisations are faced with the question of how to maintain organisational functions and good relations with the different and sometimes even opposing emotionally involved publics.

Strong reputation signals trustworthiness to customers, which motivate them to attach themselves to the firm (Engizek & Yasin, 2017). The feeling of love toward an organisation can reinforce trust, the interest in continuing the relationship and faith in the future regarding the brand. In relation to the above view regarding love toward the brand, Balmer and Greyer (2006) observe that a corporate brand is underpinned by a powerful (albeit informal) contract, which can be compared to a covenant in that customers and other stakeholder groups often have a religious-like loyalty to the corporate brand. Furthermore, the authors argue that whereas legal ownership of a corporate brand is vested in an entity, its emotional ownership (and therein its substantial value) resides with those who have a close association with the brand.

Based on the above viewpoints, it can be highlighted that emotional attachment to a brand is a reflection of a good reputation that an organisation enjoys. Invariably, the support an organisation receives from its customers or stakeholders depends to a large extent on this emotional attachment. While emotional attachment is largely studied from the business perspective, the public sector would equally benefit from the public's emotional attachment as their programmes would be supported by the general public and also be guaranteed support during elections. In this regard, Levy and Hino (2015) add that positive emotions toward a brand might temporarily retain dissatisfied customers and maintain their loyalty.

Furthermore, the authors' identification with the brand, coupled with good experiences with the brand, work to strengthen the attraction, passion and love for the brand. However, Roos and Friman (2008) add that reactive emotions, in turn, are aroused by a service experience that either exceeds or fails to meet expectations – resulting in positive emotions in the former case and negative emotions in the latter.

In the context of government, access to basic quality public services is a constitutional right in South Africa, which can potentially create strong citizen emotional attachment to government. In order to ensure the provision of quality services, and thereby adhere to the constitutional obligation, the government introduced the Batho Pele concept to build a public service capable of meeting the challenge of improving the delivery of quality services to the citizens of South Africa with its rallying call of "People First". The service delivery model sought to ensure that the public service personnel was poised to provide services to citizens in a more professional and sustained fashion. Batho Pele principles are underpinned by the values of consultation, service standards, access, courtesy, information, openness and transparency, redress and value for money. Adherence to all these principles would ensure that citizens seamlessly received services.

A study conducted by Ngidi and Dorasam (2013) shows that while initiatives are in place to ensure the application of the Batho Pele principles, challenges still exist. The South African government is still grappling with corruption, and inept public servants, among other things.

The above authors further point out that the losses that accrue from a culture of permissiveness with respect to corruption include a loss of revenue, loss of trust, loss of values, loss of credibility and legitimacy, and a loss of the democratic ethos and impulse within institutions and organisations. The authors further stress that corruption erodes the "common good" and the "*People's Contract*".

The South African Government service delivery model of Batho Pele mirrors government's determination to brand itself with the belief that: "We belong, we care, we serve" (Batho Pele 1996) and thereby to improve its reputation. However, the performance of the South African public service has not lived up to the expectations of its citizens, henceforth the plethora of service delivery protests which are a manifestation of disgruntled citizenry, and poor stakeholder emotional attachment. Some scholars – such as Nzimakwe and Mpehle (2012) – have attributed the failure of Batho Pele principles to the lack of training among public servants. That said, the implementation of the principles of Batho Pele would build the government's performance and enhance its reputation.

5.3.   GENESIS OF REPTRAK™PULSE VIEW

Although the concept of corporate reputation has already gone through decades of development, empirical literature's attempts to measure the construct haven't evolved at the same rate (Feldman *et al*., 2014). This is not withstanding the myriad of measurement frameworks that scholars and organisations have conceptualised at different levels. That said, a recent international construct-validation study conducted by the Reputation Institute has made particularly important progress in this area. The study has demonstrated that the reputation construct can be reflectively operationalised by assessing emotional attachment through the degree of admiration/respect, trust and good feeling observers experience for the target, as well as their perception of the target's level of overall public esteem (Vidar-Cohen, 2007).

While there has been a dramatic upsurge in the study of corporate reputation around the world, yet hitherto the nascent construct has been plagued by the lack of rigorous measurement instruments.

This scientific measurement inadequacy occurs against the mounting realisation in literature of the essential role of corporate reputation "as an important measure of corporate success" (Shamma & Hassan, 2009). In this regard, Fombrun *et al*. (2015) advise both researchers and practitioners that they would benefit from having a rigorous instrument to measure reputations and the ability to develop productive models of reputation's impact on stakeholder outcomes.

Fombrun's advice prevailed against the backdrop of the bourgeoning measurement instruments that have been put forth since the early 1990s but have in the main been characterised by varied forms of weaknesses, thus have incessantly failed to meaningfully measure corporate reputation. Cornelissen (2014:137) concurs and adds that while these kinds of rankings have gained popularity among managers, they have often failed to account for the views of the multiple stakeholder groups, and appear to be primarily tapping a firm's visibility in a particular setting, as well as its financial performance and assets. Consequently, after realising both theoretical and methodological weaknesses in corporate reputation measurements, Ponzi *et al.* (2011) pioneered the development and the validation of the RepTrak™ Pulse, a simplified emotion-based measure of corporate reputation.

In 2006, Ponzi *et al*. initiated a multi-national, multi-stakeholder study to understand how reputations had evolved over the preceding decade. The scholars validated the RepTrak™ Pulse, an emotion-based measure of the corporate reputation construct that untangles the drivers of corporate reputation from measurement of the construct itself, which was based on cross-cultural quantitative and qualitative research. The authors drew on signalling theory to conceptualise corporate reputation as a set of beliefs about the company. RepTrak™ Pulse measures the corporate reputation construct, by focusing on the emotional aspect, while as noted by Fombrun *et al.* (2000), previous research instruments tended to limit their focus on the measurement of the antecedents instead of measuring the construct of corporate reputation as well, e.g. Reputation Quotient. The ambiguities in the previous measurement instruments will be discussed later in this Chapter.

Ponzi *et al.* (2011) demonstrated the reliability and validity of the RepTrak™ Pulse scale, which measures the corporate reputation construct. In their analysis of the RepTrak™ Pulse, they concluded that it is a potentially powerful short-form measurement tool that can be used to: (1) assess perceptions of corporate reputation by both the general public and by specialized stakeholders; (2) compare corporate reputations across stakeholder groups; and (3) compare corporate reputations cross-culturally. The analytical description of RepTrak™ Pulse makes it worthwhile for the current study of a public sector reputation, as the study also measures multiple samples of participants and will assess perceptions across a broad spectrum of stakeholder groups.

RepTrak™ Pulse contains an emotion-based measure of the corporate reputation construct, which focuses on whether one has a good feeling about the organisation, whether one trusts the organisation, whether one admires and respects the organisation, and whether one evaluates the organisation as having a good overall reputation (Ponzi *et al.* 2011). While there is salient scarcity of the application of the RepTrak™ Pulse in the public sector, Theron-Wepener (2014) urges organisations to build a strong emotional bond with their customers and other stakeholders by ensuring that the company is admired, trusted and respected and that customers are proud to be associated with it and have a general good feeling about it.

An inference can be drawn from Theron-Wepener's view that the RepTrak™ Pulse measurement is a universal instrument that can also be replicated within the public sector setting. The next section focuses on the RepTrak™ dimensions that are relevant to measure the stakeholder emotional attachment of an organisation.

5.4. THE KEY ATTRIBUTES OF EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT

The four-attribute of the RepTrak™ Pulse measure was pulled out of the Reputation Quotient (RQ) in 2005 and used to create a separate measure of a person's emotional attachment to a company (Fombrun *et al.,* 2015). The core of the model – the RepTrak™ Pulse – represents the beating heart of an organisation, and it shows how strong the emotional bond is between the company and its stakeholders (Reputation Institute, 2016).

The RepTrak™ Pulse is the basic RepTrak™ product, which gives executives high-level insight into how consumers view their organisation – and generally ratings are shorthand descriptions of how stakeholders feel about a company (Reputations Institute, 2016). Wong, Woo and Tong (2016) add that this reputation construct (outcome variable) is reflectively operationalised by assessing the degree of trust, admiration, good feeling and perceived public esteem; the predictor variables include organisational performance, product/service quality, leadership practices, governance procedures, workplace climate, citizenship activities and approach to innovation, which are discussed in Chapter Three as determinants of public sector corporate reputation.

That said, the Reputation Institute (2016) crucially draws a clear theoretical relationship between the RepTrak ™ Pulse and the RepTrak seven dimensions. For example, the Reputation Institute advances that RepTrak ™ Pulse measures the overall reputation based on people's immediate emotional perception of the company; and in contrast, the seven reputation dimensions examine people's rational perception of corporate reputation based on specific and detailed statements. The Figure below illustrates the RepTrak ™ Pulse dimensions.

Figure 5.2.: The RepTrak ™ Pulse View– emotional measure

Source: Reputation Institute SA Report (2017)

Figure 5.2 shows an emotion-based measure of the corporate reputation construct, which focuses on whether one has a *good feeling about the organisation, whether one trusts the organisation, whether one admires and respects the organisation, and whether one evaluates the organisation as having a good overall reputation* (Ponzi *et al*., 2011). That said, the Reputation Institute (2016) states that people's emotional perception may be influenced by an overall positive attitude to the company, which is not necessarily rewarded by a proper evaluation of the respective company's products, innovation, workplace, governance, citizenship, leadership or performance.

While the RepTrak measurement instrument has largely been applied within the private sector context, Ponzi *et al*. (2011) contend that the RepTrak ™ Pulse can be a useful measure of corporate reputation across samples that consist of different types of stakeholders: general public, employees, professionals and customers. Furthermore, Vidaver-Cohen (2007) concurs that as the framework has only been used to measure reputation among private sector firms, applying it to the public sector context can significantly expand its potential. To this end, Whelan and Davies (2007) argue that any corporate brand needs to appeal at an emotional level to stakeholders.

More importantly, companies' reputations are built more on emotional factors like trust, admiration, and good feeling than on rational factors such as performance or the quality of services (Theron-Wepener, 2014). Wiedmann's (2002) study shows that simply being good is not enough — companies also need to be emotionally relevant to the experiential spheres of the members of their target groups. The author contends that the companies are expected to give their best performance and meet stakeholder expectations across these seven rational factors.

Doing well on these dimensions in turn leads to the generation of a RepTrak ™ Pulse, which is composed of four components: good feeling, esteem, admire and trust (Theron-Wepener, 2014). Ponzi *et al* (2011) define the pulse as a measure of the emotional attachment of the stakeholders with your company which translates into the overall corporate reputation.

The authors further note that a company that outperforms across the seven key dimensions and succeeds in generating a strong RepTrak ™ Pulse is termed as a highly reputable and strong brand, which has full support from its stakeholders. The figure below shows the RepTrak ™ Pulse dimensions and its related statements.

Figure 5.3.: RepTrak ™ Pulse View dimensions
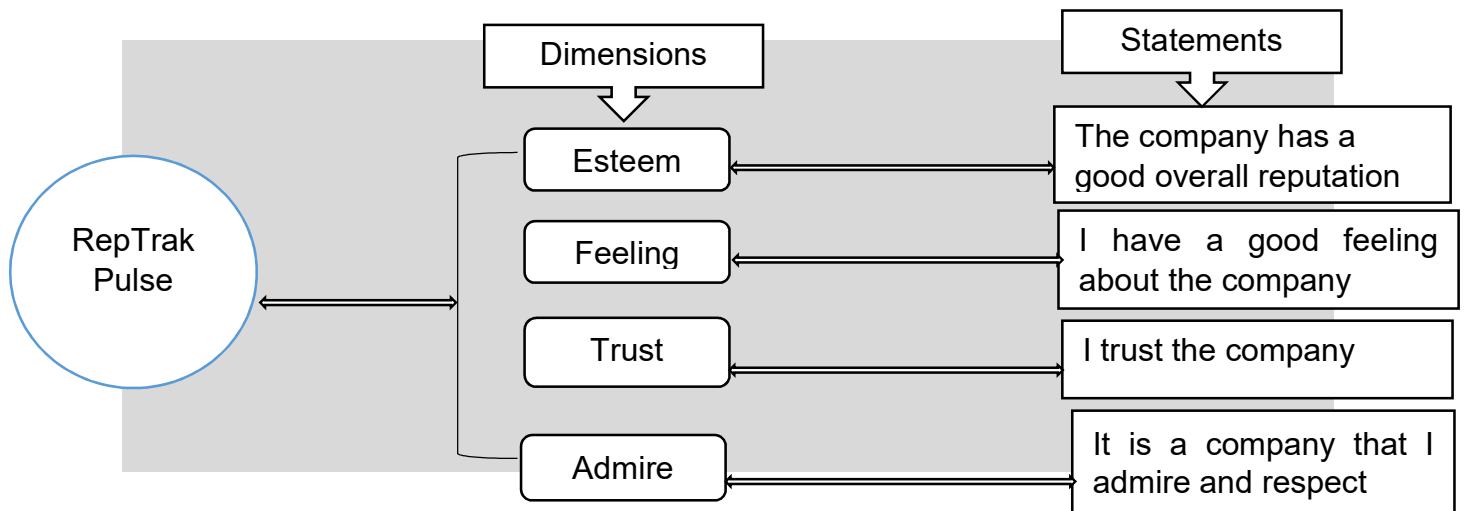
Researcher's conceptualisation of the RepTrak Pulse View based on literature

These dimensions are explicated in the next sections.

5.4.1. Esteem /overall impression

Ponzi *et al*. (2011) essentially define esteem as the overall reputation of the company. The authors further posit that it is basically the way the consuming public views a company, its practices, its contributions to communities, its benefits to stockholders, and its image as a business leader. MacMillan *et al*. (2002) contend that members of the general public will have views about the reputations of companies and can significantly affect fortunes of the businesses concerned (to the extent that they can on the basis of those views).

JAKAB (2016) adds that the overall reputation of an organisation is the emotional perception constructed through direct experience, its own communication, the perspectives of third parties and generally accepted stereotypes. In other words it reflects the overall views the general public holds about the company which largely is a product of direct experiences they have had with the company. Lanin and Hermanto (2019) send a caveat that service providers should treat the public equally and politely because the public wants to feel accepted and appreciated when they come to a public institution.

On the contrary, Cahill *et al.* study (2004) indicates that the wider society continually discusses, analyses and debates the problems of government; the majority perceiving it with distaste i.e. negatively, or without any concern (neutral). Similarly, Managa (2012) points out that many South Africans have little confidence in the efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness of government, as demonstrated by their protests. The author further contends that municipalities' underperformance and mismanagement, coupled with corruption, have led communities to have little confidence in the local government. Moreover, this is aggravated by unfulfilled political promises, abuse of power and lack of accountability to the public by councillors and government officials. Furthermore, Wæraas and Byrkjeflot (2012) argue that this presents an image of ill-spirited bureaucrats, constantly trying to figure out how to increase regulation of citizens while extending their own malign influence or of the lazy, procrastinating, and indifferent bureaucrat with no customer or service orientation, busy reading magazines, planning sailing trips or buying and selling stocks.

Da Silva and Batista's (2007) research findings corroborate the above views and show that the public base its opinions about government primarily on very general impressions of a remote, vast, and inefficient bureaucracy and on a negative image of government members. Fourie and Poggenpoel (2017) are also of the view that citizens' impression about government is that various aspects impeding service delivery include incompetent public servants, a lack of accountability, poor human resources practices, inadequate procurement practices and a lack of leadership. These recurrences also imply that overall the South African public sector struggles to address functional and process issues that affect efficient and effective delivery of services.

5.4.2. Feeling

Linked to the overall perception about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is the way in which the general public feel about government. Newbury's (2010) study shows that individuals who perceive companies as having a better reputation may be more likely to pursue company-supportive behaviours, based upon stronger perceptions of fit with these companies. The general public's feeling about an organisation may be influenced largely by the "direct experience of their interactions with companies, for example, as customers" (MacMillan *et al.,* 2002).

Loureiro *et al.* (2012) point out that customers need to feel that the brand symbolises what they are; this contributes to the customer's image and helps to develop a sense of belonging. That said, Lanin and Hermanto, (2019) are of the view that in order to increase public satisfaction on basic needs, such as education and health services, government should improve delivery, timeliness of service, availability of information, staff professionalism, staff attitude, external and internal roles of managers and at the same time minimise organisational politics within the local government.

Luoma-aho (2015) cautions that we have moved into a time of emotional publics, where feelings toward organisations range from love to hate, and the different stakeholders have several ways of showing their emotion and recruiting others to join in and comment on their feelings, for example through social media and different hate-sites and fan groups. In seeking to accentuate the pivotal role of feeling, Loureiro *et al*. (2012) contend that the feeling of love toward a brand can reinforce trust, the interest in continuing the relationship and faith in the future regarding the brand. A study conducted by Akinboade *et al*. (2012) shows that younger people are more likely to express negative strong feelings against the government.

The general public's feelings about the organisation may impact on trust, which is discussed next.

5.4.3. Trust

Trust is formed when people of the Eastern Cape believe that the Provincial Government will fulfil its promises. Trust refers to public trust that public service providers are able to provide good service and always strive to meet the needs of the community in the long term; and government failure to maintain public trust will have adverse impacts such as the destruction of government image (Lanin & Hermanto, 2019). Trust has received an enormous amount of academic attention, particularly from the private sector point of view. For example, Vidaver-Cohen (2007) postulates that trust has been found in an extensive body of private sector research to be the foundation of organisational commitment – fostering employee motivation, investor confidence, community support, and the loyalty of customers and transaction partners.

That said, similarly within the public sector context, trust plays a crucial role in determining corporate reputation. To this end, Edwards (2015) argues that trust in government has been identified as one of the most important foundations upon which the legitimacy and sustainability of political systems are built. Watson (2007) concurs that in any organisation the serious breach of stakeholder trust can destroy reputation virtually overnight. In this regard, it can be argued that the legitimacy of a public sector organisation hinges on the proportion of trust that has been developed with the citizenry.

Citizens' trust in government is depicted in the table below, which essentially shows that trust is generally characterised by the fulfilment of citizen expectations through the provision of quality services. Citizens also form perceptions about government, which may impact its image.

Figure 5.4: Citizens' trust in government model
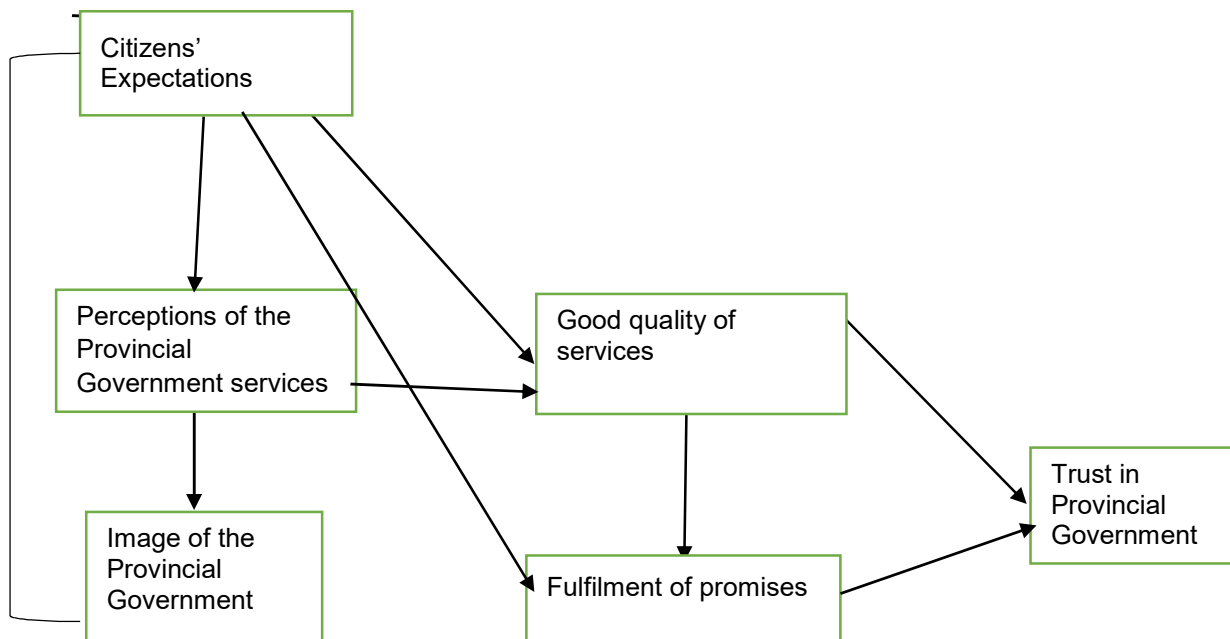
Source: Researcher's conceptualisation based on literature

Edwards (2015) points out that citizen trust is lower than governments would like it to be and that there is, therefore, a need for them to confront their trust deficit and attempt to build up a trust culture with their citizens. In line with Edwards's view, Fakir (2009) argues that in South Africa, trust and confidence in public institutions have ebbed and flowed. Further, the above author asserts that there is a marked decline of trust, and public institutions are perceived not to deliver on the mandate that they have, or at least there is a mismatch between the mandates of institutions and the mismatched and/or (un)realistic expectations of citizens.

Fakir (2009) furthermore suggests that public expectations may not always be legitimate, especially in instances where there is perceived political interference. For example, some service delivery protests in South Africa have been attributed to extreme political interference, where politicians use community members to achieve their malicious ends. Consistent with the above view, Lanin and Hermanto's (2019) study shows that when the public thinks that the government can no longer carry out its responsibility, public trust will decline automatically.

The study further indicates that a pivotal method to develop public trust toward the government is to make the public feel confident in public sector organisations and societal institutions, because public service is not run in a competitive atmosphere and the implementation of commercial aspects is not too relevant in public service.

Edwards (2015) suggest that trust in government by citizens can be increased: through citizen engagement in decision-making processes, improvement in public services, citizen centric approaches, stronger local government, public sector integrity, anti-corruption measures, a professional civil service, open government, accountability mechanisms and information for decision-making. To further demonstrate diminishing citizen trust within African governments, Bratton and Gyimah-Boadi's (2016) study findings indicate that Africans express more trust in informal institutions such as religious and traditional leaders than in the formal executive agencies of the state, and further trust in the state is associated with positive popular assessments of government performance.

Extant literature has associated African governments with inefficiencies and corruption, which has impacted their service delivery efforts. For example, Asongu, (2013) contends that corruption remains the most daunting challenge for the majority of African countries, and it is a major obstacle to economic progress, social welfare, service delivery and good governance on the continent. That said, Motion, Davenport, Leitch and Merlot (2013) are of the view that the low levels of trust result from actual poor performance caused by bad management or lack of communication.

Fakir (2009) argues that data and focus group attitudes suggest eroding levels of trust and confidence in institutions and amongst people, and therefore, potentially decrease levels of legitimacy and credibility for institutions and the policies they promote, imperilling in the long run the project of mutuality and a diverse but united society.

The last dimension of the RepTrak Pulse is 'admire', which is briefly discussed in the succeeding section.

5.4.4. Admire

Ponzi *et al.* (2011) conceptualise the admire dimension as referring to the extent to which the public admire and respect the company. The legitimacy of an organisation is, among other things, underpinned by the extent to which the general public can recommend the organisation due to its ability to meet their expectations. The extent to which government can meet the expectations of the citizens would enable them to admire and express positive feelings about their government. In this way, the incumbent government is in a better position to be recommended when the next elections are held.

Luoma-aho (2015) conceptualises trust and reputation as inextricably linked and representing social capital. The citizens' admiration of the Eastern Cape hinges on the trust in Provincial Government, which is a reflection of a good reputation. Luoma-aho (2015) points out that stakeholders view organisations from divergent viewpoints. For example, the author postulates that stakeholders that feel high trust toward the organisation can be described as faith-holders. Further, Luoma-aho (2015) adds that faith-holders are formed when the trust and positive emotion that stakeholders feel toward the organisation is strong enough to be a beneficial resource for the organisation. The faith-holders are social capital for the organisation, as they share their experiences and recommendations in their social networks raising the amount of general trust felt toward the organisation. Quite evidently, faith-holders will recommend the organisation to other stakeholders because they share good experiences. However, Luoma-aho (2015) cautions organisations that there is an inherent threat among the faith-holders as well: strong emotions raise high expectations.

Stakeholders that feel strong distrust or even hate toward an organisation can be described as hate-holders (Luoma-aho, 2015). Hate-holders are formed when the distrust and negative emotion that stakeholders feel toward an organisation are strong enough to hinder the organisation. The stakeholders within this category would seldom recommend the organisation, instead their hate may be spilled over to other stakeholders.

While connotatively hate-holders may sound disastrous for organisations, Luoma-aho (2015) argues that a valuable opportunity for the organisation to collaborate with hate-holders may turn out to be very fruitful, as those viewing the organisation more critically are able to see things others might miss.

That said, Johansen, Johansen and Weckesser (2016) accentuate that unlike hate-holders, who may damage the reputation of a company, faith-holders may hold the key to maintaining organisational legitimacy. It is through effective strategic communication that government organisations – in particular – will sustain faith-holders and harness hate-holders in order to strengthen reputations.

5.5. CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP– EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT NEXUS

Building and sustaining relationships with customers is a common phenomenon within private sector organisations, however, it is increasingly gaining traction in public sector organisations. Governments yearn for sustainable citizen's support and strong emotional attachment in order to solidify their legitimacy. Therefore, they have an obligation to build formidable relationships with citizens by rendering good customer service, among other things.

Karunanithy and Kajendra (2014) define customer relationship as an approach to understanding and influencing customer behaviour through meaningful communications in order to improve customer acquisition, customer retention, customer loyalty and customer profitability. This section outlines elements of the customer relationship that are key in reinforcing emotional attachment to public sector organisations.

5.5.1. Service delivery and community relations

Governments the world over are by design mandated to provide services to citizens or 'public goods' utilising taxes. Besley and Ghetak (2007) corroborate the above viewpoint and point out that organising public service provision is deemed to be a core function of government.

Often ability to deliver quality services to citizens grants government a license to operate within the environment. Service delivery has over the past years attracted interest of a myriad of scholars (Brynard, 2005; Jain, 2010; Krugell, Otto & Van der Merwe, 2009) on how government strives to meet the basic needs of its diverse electorate.

Evidence on the South African government's failure to provide quality services per the expectations of the citizenry is mounting. Some scholars (Jain, 2010; Kaggwa, 2013; Luke & Heyns, 2013) are of the opinion that the policies being implemented by government are outrightly wrong. Besley and Ghetak (2007) have attributed lack of service delivery on inefficient processes, institutional weaknesses and mismanagement. The scholars also view the media as having a tendency to attribute the slow pace of service delivery not on poor policies but on outright corruption by policy implementers. The issue of corruption has received proportionately extensive attention in South Africa as one of the factors that potentially hinder service delivery, and that deplete resources that otherwise would have benefitted a wide range of poor communities.

It is worth noting Heintzman and Marson's (2003) viewpoint that citizens' assessments of service quality are determined primarily by five factors: timeliness, knowledge and competence of staff, courtesy/comfort, fair treatment, and outcome. Authors further emphasise that when all of these drivers of service quality are present, citizens give maximum ratings to government services. Chen and Popovich (2003) add that ordinarily customers expect organisations to anticipate their needs and provide consistent service at levels above their expectations. In return, customers are loyal to the organisation for longer periods of time, which builds formidable community relations.

 Furthermore, Besley and Ghetak (2007) posit that improving the effectiveness of communication with communities with respect to development issues and progress on the delivery of services can help combat the alienation protestors often feel toward government - the belief that there is little other outlet for public participation than violent uprisings. Communication is a significant link between an organisation and its stakeholders.

Rapporteurs' Report (2009) adds that it is in the interest of government to communicate effectively about the work they do on behalf of their constituents, and it can benefit from developing and maintaining effective communication capacity with citizens, to better take stock of their needs and preferences. In this regard, Vivier, Seabe, Wentzel, and Sanchez (2015) argue that citizens and communities in South Africa often lack knowledge about government policies, budgets and operations, mechanisms for engagement, or even their own rights and responsibilities. The longevity of the incumbent government is contingent on its continuous ability to provide quality services and strengthening relations with its communities who will grant it legitimacy through voting. Customer relations are further bolstered by the level of satisfaction, trust and confidence which the government can maintain.

5.5.2. Public sector value chain: satisfaction, trust and confidence

There is a decline in trust and confidence in public institutions, and a parallel decline in civic engagement and democratic participation, across the developed world (Heintzman & Marson, 2003). The authors further state that if citizen confidence and trust in public institutions is high or rising, it would be reasonable to assume that public institutions are achieving their democratic mission, even though there may be failures or disappointments in specific areas. The erosion of trust and confidence is manifested in various ways (Edwards, 2015), such as service delivery protests, apathy to vote and loss of support to the ruling party, among others (Fakir, 2009). The public sector value chain model below is drawn on the work of Heintzman and Marson (2003), which focuses on the role of service delivery in enhancing citizen trust and confidence. Trust and confidence have been fiercely debated in literature across the world. The figure below depicts the value chain model with its variables.

Figure 5.5: Public sector value chain
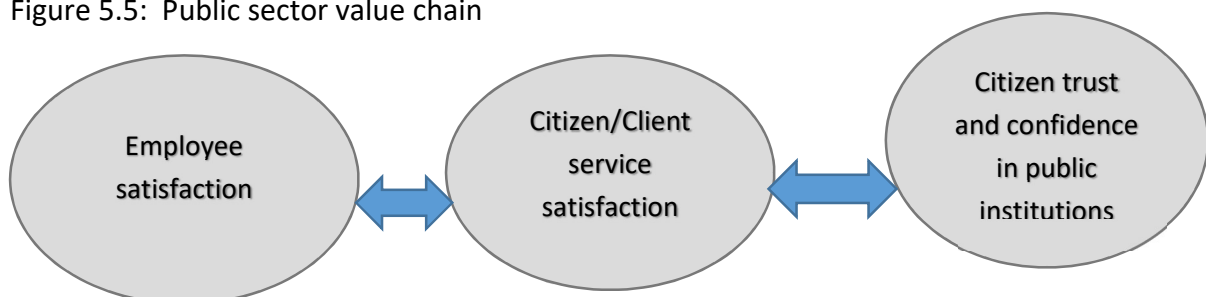
Source: Heintzman & Marson (2003)

While the public sector value chain model is designed for the Canadian public sector, its elements are also applicable in the South African public sector context. As depicted in Figure 5.5, the model has three building blocks, and according to Heintzman and Marson (2003), they are similar to those found in the private sector.

The relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction has also received extensive attention in academic literature. While there have been contradicting findings in this regard, numerous studies (Brown & Lam, 2008; Bulgarella, 2005; Chi & Gursoy, 2009; Naseem, Sheikh & Malik, 2011) show a positive relationship between employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction and perceived service quality. That being the case, Turkyhmaz, Ozkan and Pastuszak (2011) argue that employee satisfaction is relevant to the public sector and have found a positive relationship between working conditions and employee satisfaction in this sector. Crucially, satisfied customers are more inclined to remain in a relationship, whereas dissatisfied customers are likely to look for alternative options (Nguyen & Mutum, 2012).

The importance of trust in the government cannot be overemphasised. As observed by Blind (2007), trust emerges as one of the most important ingredients upon which the legitimacy and sustainability of political systems are built. Government's survival squarely depends on the public trust that it enjoys at that point in time. Blind (2007) refers to this form of trust as 'political trust' and qualifies it as the judgment of the citizenry that the system and the political incumbents are responsive, and will do what is right even in the absence of constant scrutiny. The author further postulates that, while trust in government and its representatives foment good governance, good governance in turn engenders and strengthens trust in all of its variants.

Meeting expectations of citizens is a bedrock of public trust in government. To this end, Plotnick (2009) notes that trust is often referenced as the result of a positive or strong reputation. Furthermore, Argenti (2011) contends that reputation is more than just another public relations strategy or campaign; it is the basis for trust. The author further reports that being a reputation-driven company that drives and maintains customer trust is a painstaking endeavour that requires principles and values-based leadership.

In reference to the significance of trust in building reputation, Gul (2014) found in his study that there is a positive and significant relationship among reputation, customer satisfaction, trust and customer loyalty.

It can, therefore, be argued that public sector organisations that experience good customer relations that are underpinned by employee and customer satisfaction and public trust, enjoy a good reputation. In order to realise this ideal, Chen and Popovich (2003) suggest that organisations today must focus on delivering the highest value to customers through better communication, faster delivery, and personalized products and services. There is currently a raging debate on the role of relationships in building reputations, and the next section specifically looks into relationship outcomes as determinants of reputation.

5.5.3. Relationship outcomes

A growing body of research shows that organisations with good reputation command good relationships with their stakeholders (Alan & Erdebill, 2011; Beaty, 2009; Brønn, 2007; Johnson & Gryason, 2005). Brønn's (2007) research study shows that a relationship is the bottom line outcome of communicating with stakeholders. Furthermore, Hon and Grunig (in Brønn, 2007) argue that organisations that communicate effectively with the public develop better relationships because management and publics understand one another and because both are less likely to behave in ways that have negative consequences for the interests of the other. Therefore, relationship outcomes are the critical underpinnings of corporate reputation - Fombrun and Van Riel (2003) have described reputation as something that attracts people to an organisation like a magnet.

While both marketing and public relations literature have studied relationships largely from the private sector perspective, the same elements are applicable in the public sector particularly in view of the advent of the 'new public management' concept that requires the public sector to operate business-like. In this regard, Chen and Popovich (2003) postulate that optimizing customer relationships requires a complete understanding of all customers; profitable as well as non-profitable, and then to organise business processes to treat customers individually based on their needs and their values.

In seeking to build strong relationships with customers, IPSOS (2008) furthermore argues that employees clearly matter: they do more than deliver customer service – they personalise the relationship between customer and supplier. Further, IPSOS accentuates that happy employees help create happy, loyal customers, which ultimately benefits company profits. The process of building relationships must be anchored in formidable relations with employees who are the point of contact with customers.

Both private and public organisations must strive to build and sustain strong relationships with their customers to strengthen their reputations. Brønn (2007) argues for organisations to work on relationships, as the quality of relationships impact different stakeholders' impressions of the firm. This section has demonstrated a conceptual nexus between the CRM and reputation - the next section discusses challenges that may thwart the public sector's endeavours to strengthen its corporate reputation management capacity.

5.6.   MEASURING CORPORATE REPUTATION

Various scholars have acknowledged (Aula & Mantere, 2008; Chun, 2005; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; Mohamed *et al*., 2001) that organisational reputation has increasingly lacked a consensual conceptualisation and definition. However, Bontis (2007) argues that the primary challenge in conceptualisation and measurement of corporate reputation stems from discrepancies among various researchers and academics in terms of the elements or building blocks of the reputation construct.

The divergence in the conceptualisation of organisational reputation has invariably resulted in the burgeoning of measurement instruments. For example, Clardy (2012) refutes Chun's typology of existing kinds of measures that have been applied to organisational reputation that include, rankings, brand equity scales, image measures and multiple stakeholder measures. The author offers a different framework for classifying the organisational reputation construct, and advances five distinctive sets of approaches to operationally define and measure organisational reputation.

These approaches are discussed in the next sections.

5.6.1. Reputation as general knowledge about an organisation

Clardy (2012) posits that people may have general knowledge and beliefs about an organisation, characterising both what it is like, and how its members are likely to act. In addition, the author argues that this knowledge does not have to be accurate; it can come from any number of sources: advertising or public relations activities from the firm; personal experience either with a firm's products and/or with its employees; comments and observations from trusted associates or friends; or representations about the firm in various mass media.

Feldman *et al.* (2014) echoe Clardy's viewpoint and add that as a dynamic concept, corporate reputation develops as information about the organisation's activities and achievements is spread out, and interactions take place between the organisation and its stakeholders (suppliers, salesmen, competitors, clients, investors, employees and local communities). Stakeholders share the environment with their organisations, experience their actions and form opinions. In the same way, Clardy (2012) notes that the foundation of action begins with beliefs, and people can have beliefs about anything, including organisations. Furthermore, the strength of a belief is the person's subjective, estimated probability that the feature or attribute is true. When a belief is formed, according to the theory, an attitude about the object automatically arises at the same time. On the basis of this theoretical perspective on organisational reputation measurement, Clardy (2012) contends that measures of reputation, thus, should assess both knowledge of and evaluative judgments about the organisation.

The author further advises that the knowledge about an organisation can be collected as unstructured interviews and/or as tests of what is known; evaluations can be reported as ratings on attitude scales. Van Riel and Fombrun's (2007) Harris Interactive "EquiTrend" measurement instrument evaluated the consumers' general knowledge of an organisation through familiarity, quality of service, purchase intent, brand expectations and distinctiveness.

Although the measurement approach is applicable to the private sector, the same attributes can be replicated within the public sector. The next measurement approach is evaluative judgement.

5.6.2. Reputation as an evaluative judgement

As stated earlier, corporate reputation suffers from poor and inconsistent conceptualisations, however, Fombrun's (1996) definition has become the most prominent within the academic fraternity. The author has defined reputation as an overall evaluation or judgement about an organisation. Reputation in this sense is attitude rather than belief (Clardy 2012) and can exist for the organisation as a whole, as well as for specific products (Caruana, 1997). In the same way, Clardy (2012) posits that the most complete measures of reputation would identify the themes used by an audience to characterise an organisation, establishing the structure of beliefs about it along with some indication of the evaluative judgment and assessment of that organisation.

Stakeholders scramble for the organisation's attention to fulfil their expectations, thus evaluating it on the basis of its ability to meet such expectations. However, expectations of stakeholders go beyond simple notions of customer satisfaction with products and services (Caruana & Chircop, 2002) to a broad mix of economic and social criteria (Fombrun & Van Riel 2003). Research results of the study conducted by Bahr and Gellecum (2010) clearly suggest that different stakeholders bring different perspectives to corporate reputation, and that differences between stakeholder groups' views must be taken into account when assessing corporate reputation. In other words, different stakeholders might have divergent views about the organisation's reputation, hence each stakeholder's evaluative cognition must be individually reviewed.

Stakeholders evaluate organisations based on different signals they receive and this evaluation inevitably reflects stakeholders' judgment of the organisation's reputation. The next section discusses extant literature on reputation as brand knowledge.

5.6.3. Reputation as brand knowledge and awareness

The concept of a brand has received extensive attention within marketing literature. Aaker (1991) defines a brand as a distinguishing name and/or symbol intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate these goods or services from those of competitors. Brand is an important element of corporate reputation, and as noted by Abimola and Kocak (2007), they are often difficult to separate in practice. To this end, Bergstrom *et al*. (2002) argue that in certain ways, a brand and a reputation are interchangeable. However, Ettenson and Jonathan (2008) refute the above view and argue that confusing the two would be extremely costly.

In reference to the relationship between the two concepts, Keller (2001) contends that building a strong brand has been shown to provide numerous financial rewards to firms and to become a top priority for many organisations. That said, when examined in terms of how that brand impression exists in the minds of consumers, Keller (1993) found that brands have two dimensions: *Brand awareness* refers to consumer knowledge of the brand and what it represents. Awareness can be assessed through recall or recognition tests: can consumers correctly identify and recognize the brand? *Brand image* refers to what kinds of features are associated with the brand, how favourably those features are rated, and the strength of the ratings.

In seeking to juxtapose brand and reputation, Clarky (2012) notes that a brand becomes an intended image for the purpose of positioning the product as unique in the customer's mind; and when a brand is active in the minds of consumers, it is a cognition that functions as a reputation, triggering impressions (beliefs and expectations) about an organisation and its products and services. Furthermore, Clarky (2012) has proposed the use the 17-items 'brand equity scale' to measure brand knowledge and awareness. However, this measure has been refuted by Pappu, Quester and Cooksey (2005) as suffering from limitations such as a lack of distinction between the dimensions of brand awareness and brand association.

The authors have further hypothesised a four-dimension model of a consumer-based brand equity scale, which has found brand awareness and brand association to be two distinct dimensions of brand equity. Having reviewed literature on brand awareness and knowledge as a measurement instrument, the next section focuses on reputation as personality.

5.6.4. Reputation as personality

The issue of brands as having personality has received enormous attention in literature. For example, Davies, Chun, Da Silva, and Roper (2001) argue that the use of human personality dimensions is a 'personification metaphor' that is useful because it enables comparisons between organisations, while at the same time simplifying understanding. Regardless, terms used to describe human personality have been transferred to and used to assess organisational reputation. The above authors further postulate that given some measure or identification of a brand's personality traits, there is still the issue of evaluating whether those traits are good or bad; that is, how does one interpret or make sense of the information.

Keller (2001) concurs with the above authors and states that brands may take on personality traits and values similar to those of people. Furthermore, Keller (2001) identifies five dimensions of brand personality: 1) sincerity (honest, down-to-earth); 2) excitement (up-to-date, spirited); 3) competence (reliable, intelligent); 4) ruggedness (tough); and 5) sophistication (upper-class, charming).

An increasing academic interest in reputation as personality has seen a rapid growth of brand personality measurement scales. For example, Aaker (1997) developed a 42-item brand personality scale; Davies *et al*. (2004) developed a 49 personality-type adjectives scale; and Slaughter Zickar, Mohr and Highhouse (2004) used various personality instruments to develop their list of adjectives reducing Davies *et al*.'s 49-items. Clardy (2012) has, however, criticised the existing brand personality measurements arguing that there is still the issue of evaluating whether those traits are good or bad; that is, how does one interpret or make sense of the information. This assessment simply questions the completeness of the measurement items, whether they derive adequate information in respect of the stakeholders' views on the personality traits of the organisation.

The next section reviews literature on financial asset as a measure of corporate reputation.

5.6.5. Reputation as a financial asset

The relationship between reputation and financial performance has received extensive attention in literature (Chung, Eneroth & Schneeweis, 2011). Corporate reputation is often regarded by academics and practitioners as indicative of a firm's current and future financial performance (Clardy, 2012). Corporate reputation has largely been studied from the point of view of the private sector. Henceforth, its definition has been biased towards the private sector perspective.

For example, Aula and Mantere (2008) concur that corporate reputation has been defined as an intangible asset, that is, the difference between a company's market value and its book value, carried as goodwill (Aula & Mantere, 2008). By and large performances of organisations have largely been viewed from their market value. Clardy (2012) posits that financial indices are residual reflections of reputation, but such indices may be affected by other factors (like stock market vagaries), making their reliability suspect. Further, such measures contain no specific information about the actual content of the reputation.

While they could be indicators of reputational capital as an asset, financial indicators should not be considered valid representations of reputation. The exclusive reliance on financial performance as the main determinant of corporate reputation has been challenged by some scholars. For example, Caliskan *et al.*'s (2011) and Blajer-Golebiewska's (2014) studies indicate that there is no causal relationship between corporate reputation and corporate financial performance. In this regard Clardy (2012) has warned against heavy reliance on financial performance as an exclusive measure of reputation, arguing that to measure reputation as a financial asset may reflect a firm's reputation, but should not be considered as the reputation.

Therefore, it would be imprudent to single out financial performance as a key measurement instrument of corporate reputation as many studies have sought to suggest.

As it will be shown later in this study, other valuable measurement instruments that have been applied across the globe have emerged. Moreover, the extant literature shows that the available existing instruments of measuring corporate reputations, such as the RepTrak System and RepTrak Pulse View can be applied across a wide range of stakeholder groups. Having reviewed literature on various measures of corporate reputation, the study turns attention to the importance of measuring public sector corporate reputation.

5.7. THE IMPORTANCE OF MEASURING PUBLIC SECTOR CORPORATE REPUTATION

As an academic pioneer of corporate reputation, Fombrun (2001) notes that measuring corporate reputations is crucial if they are to be managed. Although corporate reputation has largely been viewed from the point of view of the private sector, public sector organisations the world over are also beginning to embrace the concept. However, there is still a dearth of academic work on public sector corporate reputation, particularly in the African and South African contexts. Cahill *et al*. (2004) observe that given the relative newness of government reputation theory, government leaders have lacked suitable strategies and techniques to apply in their organisations. In this regard, Wæraas and Maor (2015:01) caution that, given that we currently find ourselves in a reputation society – where decision-making is characterized by increasing emphasis on track records — scholarly attention to the reputation of public sector organisations is warranted.

That said, Luoma-aho and Canel (2016:599) have observed that the reputation of public sector organisations has developed over time, and impressions of public sector organisations are plagued by negative connotations despite their vital role. Cahill *et al*. (2004) accentuate that the challenge to shift the deep-seated negativity that public sector authorities are remote, wasteful, under-performing and inefficient bureaucracies, suggests a wider agenda of change that moves beyond the recovery of government reputation.

In view of the challenges that the public sector confront, Luoma-aho (2008) claims that economic pressures and rising stakeholder expectations have led public sector organisations to measure their reputation.

Andreassen (1994) is of the view that reputation is not entirely new for the public sector, however, tools designed to measure reputation in the public sector are few in number. Indeed, there are measurement tools that have been designed to measure the reputation of cities and municipalities. Furthermore, Engizek and Yasin (2017) emphasise the invaluable role of the reputation measurement of both public and private sector organisations as they often equally face pressure from investors and citizens.

The dimensions of the existing measurement tools for cities and municipalities cannot be applied in its entirety to other public sector settings, such as the government sector that provides public goods. The public is not that much interested in investment and tourism opportunities; they are more concerned with the provision of basic services and the quality of service they experience when accessing such services. For the public sector organisations with little direct competition, Luoma-aho (2007) has developed a reputation barometer to measure reputation through both qualitative and quantitative questions yielding scores of 1-5 on five different reputational factors: authority, esteem, trust, efficiency and service.

In their review of the existing measurement tools, Luoma-aho and Canel (2016:599) note that public services are often assessed by measuring their perceived quality, and the focus has been on whether public services meet the needs of society. The authors argue against this approach, and propose that research has to explore the complex dynamic of indirect causal relationships between public organisations' achievements, communication performance, citizens' satisfaction, and trust. They further argue that identifying causes is important to determine the practical implications for public sector reputation management.

Recent scandals that have increasingly pervaded the public sector the world over have placed governments under extraordinary public scrutiny. The South African public sector is also entangled in an unprecedented phenomenon of state capture, which has created a high level of public scepticism and mistrust in government structures. However, even within the South African context, emphasis on corporate reputation is focused more on private companies, and very little if any, on the public sector. In this regard, Luoma-aho (2008) provides a caveat that a good reputation creates a favourable operating environment, but it demands continuous maintenance and demonstration through good practices.

Similarly, Fombrun *et al.* (2015) concur that both researchers and practitioners would, therefore, benefit from having a rigorous instrument to measure reputations. Wæraas and Maor (2015:01) contend that public entities are in fact concerned with their reputations and have begun to implement measures to nurture, maintain, and protect them. The authors further add that research from multiple countries and institutional contexts present mounting evidence that public sector organisations have become more cognisant of the value of a favourable reputation and, as a result, are gradually treating the management of reputation as a concern of strategic importance.

5.8. CONCLUSION

This Chapter amply illustrated the pivotal role of emotional attachment in building and sustaining public sector corporate reputation. Thus, it is important for public sector organisations to understand the factors that strengthen public emotional attachment. For example, it has been shown in this Chapter that individuals who are strongly attached to an organisation are more likely to be committed to and support its actions. Furthermore, it has demonstrated that publics' emotional attachment to an organisation predicts potential strong relationships. In order to build strong emotional attachment, organisations must enhance the public's positive feelings about the organisation, and further pursue actions that build public trust. Lack of trust and negative feelings about an organisation characterise poor public emotional attachment to an organisation. For public sector organisations to build legitimacy and acceptance within their jurisdictions, it is important that they embark on processes that will build trust and enhance emotional attachment.

It is, therefore, imperative that organisations constantly measure their corporate reputation in order to heighten efforts to sustain their reputations. An old saying by myriad scholars the world over 'what you cannot measure, you cannot manage' provides a serious caveat to reputation management scholars. While there is currently no dedicated public sector corporate reputation measurement instrument, the available private sector oriented measurement instruments can also be adapted to public sector reputation measurement. Public sector organisations must invest in measuring their reputations in order to ensure that social contract with citizens is maintained.

CHAPTER SIX
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1.   INTRODUCTION

This Chapter builds on the research topic as stated out in Chapter One, which sought to investigate how the Eastern Cape Provincial Government strategically manages reputation. This Chapter highlights the operationalisation phase of the study. It seeks to generally outline how the study was planned and subsequently executed in order to answer the research question. The research question was distilled from the problem statement, which gives the rationale for the research study.

The Chapter starts by discussing the methodological orientation and the research design. This is succeeded by a description of the sampling strategy, which essentially identifies purposive sampling as the main sampling approach for the study. Purposive sampling was relevant as the study was not intended for the generalisation to the population of the Eastern Cape. The participants are described, highlighting how they participated in the field study. The study is qualitative in nature, and the data collection procedures included in-depth interviews and observations. Both in-depth interviews and observations were relevant for the purpose of the study, which was to study participants in their natural setting and gain in-depth insight of their views. An interview scheduled was developed which was used to guide the in-depth interviews. Research procedure entails detailing of the strategic approaches to enhance the study's scientific soundness in order to mitigate researcher's subjectivity.

The study used the thematic analysis of data, which according to Attride (2001) is relevant for the qualitative study as it seeks to unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels, and aims to facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes. Furthermore, as part of the data analysis, the study used Leximancer Software analysis.

Leximancer software provides both a quantifying and conceptual structure of the qualitative data built from the occurrence of related iterations and concepts that identifies a centrality of similar contexts to build the resulting themes (Gapp & Merrilees, 2006).

6.2.   METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

This section presents key research philosophies that guided the study, including their implications for the entire study. In this regard, Creswell (2007:15) posits that researchers bring their own worldviews, paradigms, or sets of beliefs to the research project, and these inform the conduct of the study. This study was interpretive and in line with Tuli's (2010) observation, the interpretive worldview is inductive, that is, oriented toward discovery and process; has high validity; is less concerned with generalizability; and is more concerned with deeper understanding of the research problem in its unique context. The interpretive approach positioned the researcher at the centre of the research process, which enabled the researcher to decipher participants' construction of meaning in their own setting.

The extant research literature identifies three research worldviews: positivism, interpretivism, and critical social science. According to Norman (2010:81), most ongoing social research is based on the first two. Positivism is used with quantitative research design, and relies more on the statistical analysis of data. It undertakes a deductive approach (Scotland, 2012) of which the primary role is theory-testing (De Beer, 2014:117) and subsequently generalise research findings to the population. This approach presupposes that there is an existing theoretical framework on the phenomenon being investigated, which will be tested through statistical analysis of data.

The mounting counter pressures against positivism gave rise to interpretivism. To this end, Fick (2003) argues that interest in interpretivism has grown in recent decades. Ponelis (2015) postulates that interpretivism is based on a life-world ontology that argues that all observation is both theory- and value-laden and investigation of the social world is not, and cannot be, the pursuit of a detached objective truth. The author further notes that the interpretive research paradigm is characterised by a need to understand the world as it is from a subjective point of view and seeks an explanation within the frame of reference of the

participant rather than the objective observer of the action. The intention to attain deep insight about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government's reputation management resonated with the interpretivism worldview.

That said, the worldview of the researcher (positivism, interpretivism and critical social science) influence their approach in accessing scientific knowledge and how they provide answers to questions that relate to scientific reality (ontology), process of accumulating/forming knowledge (epistemology) and value attached to scientific knowledge (axiology). The manner in which scholars pursue the scientific investigation of a phenomenon is contingent on their respective epistemological assumptions (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard, & Snape, 2013). According to De Beer (2014:117), how the researchers see the world, truth and human nature influences how they believe they should learn about the phenomenon. To this view, Ponelis (2015) posits that positioning a research project within a paradigmatic framework is a worthwhile task that will lead researchers to reflect upon the broader epistemological and philosophical consequences of their perspective. For example, the positivist paradigm postulates that the world of empirical facts exist apart from personal ideas or thoughts; they are governed by laws of cause and effect; patterns of social reality are stable and knowledge of them is additive (Tuli, 2010).

To positivists, the study of knowledge is objective, and it is dominated by quantitative research methods. The quantitative paradigm sees the world of science as independent of human interference. In the natural science model, phenomena are seen as independent (Ritchet & Lewis, 2013: 18) and the researcher must be separated from the research process so that he /she views the world through a one-way mirror (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:110). According to Plack (2005), the quantitative paradigm contends that research should be context-free, value-free, bias-free, and replicable. They rely on experimental and quasi-experimental research designs, most often requiring rigorously applied interventions or variable manipulations. Ontologically, in learning about scientific knowledge, the quantitative paradigm holds a view that social science reality is objective. For example, scholars such as Antieno (2009), Plack (2005), and Densin and Lincoln (2000) postulate that positivists believe reality exists independent of the social context and can be discovered through objectively designed and applied research.

Ontologically, positivists believe that logical deductive reasoning, scientific inquiry, and replicable findings will converge upon apprehendable objective truths (Pluck, 2010).

That said, the interpretive worldview argues against basic tenets of the positivists. This worldview is predominantly qualitative. Qualitative researchers consider reality as subjective and argue against absolute truth (De Beer, 2014:170). They argue against the concept of value-free, bias-free research. To this end, Creswell (2007:18) posits that in a qualitative study, the inquirers admit the value-laden nature of the study and actively report their values and biases, as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field. Baxter and Jack (2008) assert that the qualitative paradigm recognizes the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning, but does not reject outright some notion of objectivity. Crabtree and Miller (1999) argue that one of the advantages of this approach is the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories. This was in line with this study's purpose of unravelling participants views – through in-depth interviews and observation - on their views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government's reputation.

It is against the above backdrop that the positivist worldview would arguably not have been appropriate to give the researcher a deeper insight into the reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The phenomenon of public sector corporate reputation is under-researched; therefore, this study needed a rich description of the phenomenon in order to attain deep insight. Furthermore, the research questions encouraged an in-depth analysis of the research phenomenon, and qualitative research remained the most appropriate paradigm to answer them.

6.3.   RESEARCH DESIGN

Creswell (2008) defines research design as plans and procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. Similarly, Kumar (2011: 95) conceptualises the research design as a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems. The primary benefits of qualitative methods are that they allow the researcher to discover new variables and relationships; to reveal and understand complex processes; and to illustrate the influence of the social (Shah & Corley, 2006). Bowen (2005) asserts that in qualitative research, findings do not result from statistical procedures, correlations, and similar mathematical calculations; instead, they come from an interpretation of non-numerical or largely text-based data.

This study used the qualitative research design, because it was designed to provide an in-depth description of the public sector reputation from the point of view of the Eastern Cape citizens. This is in line with Creswell's (2008) assertion that qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.

Moriarty (2011) highlights a set of qualitative research core characteristics, which include:
- aims which are directed at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of research participants by learning about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives, and histories;
- samples that are small in scale and purposively selected on the basis of salient criteria;
- data collection methods which usually involve close contact between the researcher and the research participants, which are interactive and developmental and allow for emergent issues to be explored;
- data which are very detailed, information rich and extensive;

- analysis which is open to emergent concepts and ideas and which may produce detailed description and classification, identify patterns of association or develop typologies and explanations; and

- Outputs which tend to focus on the interpretations of social meaning through mapping and re-presenting the social world of participants.

This is an interpretivist study, which, according to Wahyuni (2012), recognises that individuals with their own varied backgrounds, assumptions and experiences contribute to the on-going construction of reality existing in their broader social context through social interaction. The study also fits quite well into the philosophy of "naturalistic" ontology. According to Bowen (2005) naturalistic research includes the following characteristics: natural setting (to keep realities in their contexts), qualitative methods, purposive sampling, inductive analysis, grounded theory, case study reporting mode, tentative application of findings, and special criteria of trustworthiness. For this study, a qualitative method was considered appropriate for an analysis of concepts and themes derived from an exploration of the public sector corporate reputation, and for which there is paucity of scientific research. In order to investigate the phenomenon of public sector corporate reputation, an in-depth understanding was desired.

The qualitative research paradigm uses a variety of research strategies, which include: basic qualitative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, narrative analysis, and qualitative case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:23). However, this study used *the basic qualitative research strategy.* The above authors accentuate that in this strategy, researchers simply describe their study as a basic qualitative study without declaring it a particular type of qualitative research. The overall purpose of the qualitative research strategy is to understand how people make sense of their lives and experiences. Similarly, in this study the researcher sought to delve deeper into the phenomenon so as to gain an in-depth insight into the Eastern Cape Provincial Government corporate reputation management strategy.

The following are the key design elements of this study:

Empirical study: Researchers seek an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:15). The researcher gains understanding and knowledge of the study phenomenon by "studying the events as they occur rather than having to reconstruct them in retrospect" (Babbie & Mouton, 2014: 271). This is a scientific study that entailed collection of data through in-depth interviews and participant observation. The large amount of data that were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observations were then analysed through thematic and Leximancer Software analysis through which research findings were generated.

Exploratory study: This study was used to make preliminary investigations into a relatively under-researched public sector reputation management, particularly the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. Exploratory studies employ an open, flexible, and inductive approach to research as they attempt to for new insights into the phenomenon (Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2014:44). Although a given study can have more than one purpose (Babbie & Mouton, 2014:79) this study will use the exploratory approach. The goal of this study is to explore the research phenomenon and it, therefore, requires the researcher to undertake an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the above authors are of the view that exploratory studies are essential whenever a researcher is breaking a new ground and they can almost always yield new insights into a topic for research. This is invariably in line with the study's goal of gaining an in-depth understanding and description of Eastern Cape Government Provincial corporate reputation from the perspective of the research participants.

Basic and applied research: The result of basic research is discovery of new phenomena and new ideas of general interest, and by shaping our understanding of the world the discoveries of basic science become preconditions for any precise formulation of political and other practical problems (Roll-Hansen, 2009). This research seeks to gain in-depth insight into the public sector corporate reputation management.

In basic research, the researcher mainly stresses on investigating the structure of the knowledge and is undertaken with a primary purpose of the advancement of knowledge for its own sake (Bentley, Gulbrandsen & Kyvik, 2015). Concepts and themes from this study contribute to scientific knowledge and existing theoretical framework on the public sector corporate reputation, which is an under-investigated area. Ritchie and Lewis (2003: 24) state that applied research is concerned with using the knowledge acquired through research to contribute directly to the understanding or resolution of a contemporary issue. This study culminates in the development of a conceptual framework that will inform public sector organisations on how they can practically improve corporate reputation management.

Cross-sectional: This study is a cross-sectional research study, and according to Levin (2006) cross-sectional studies are carried out at one time point or over a short period. Corporate reputation is experienced within organisations over a long period of time, however, for the purpose of this study the Eastern Cape Provincial Government corporate reputation was studied within a specific timeframe culminating in the declaration of the research findings.

Primary research: This was a primary research study that gathered data through in-depth interviews the researcher conducted with 15 participants (which comprised of eight female and seven male participants) that represented five organised Eastern Cape structures, and observations of two community engagement sessions which the Office of the Premier had facilitated. The community engagement sessions were attended by members of the community that comprised both young and old people, and each session was attended by more than 300 members of the community. The researcher further used audio recording and field notes to collect data.

Qualitative research: The study employed a qualitative research approach in order to gain in deeper insight into participants' construction of reality. All qualitative research is interested in how meaning is constructed, how people make sense of their lives and their world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:25). Qualitative research studies human action in its natural setting and through the eyes of the actors themselves together with an emphasis on detailed description and understanding of the phenomena within the appropriate context (Babbie & Mouton, 2014: 278).

Further, Tuli (2010) adds that qualitative research is oriented toward discovery and process, has high validity, is less concerned with generalizability, and is more concerned with deeper understanding of the research problem in its unique context. The data were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observations. The researcher developed a semi-structured interview schedule, which was administered to source qualitative data in order to answer the research question.

6.3.1. Sampling

Neuman (2011:219) describes sampling as the researcher's attempt to get a representative sample from a larger collection of units or population. In discussing sampling, it is worth noting Marshall's (1996) comment that choosing a study sample is an important step in any research project since it is rarely practical, efficient or ethical to study whole populations. The researcher used the purposive sampling type, which stresses the in-depth investigation of the phenomenon in relatively small numbers. According to Patton (1990:169), the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases were those from which the researcher could learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling.

The purposive sampling approach was the most appropriate approach for this study, as it afforded the researcher an opportunity to identify cases about which the researcher had prior knowledge that they might provide deep insight into the study phenomenon, thus providing rich data. Devers and Frankel (2000) add that researchers select "information rich" cases - that is, individuals, groups, organisations, or behaviours that provide the greatest insight into the research questions. The researcher purposefully selected five organised structures that represent community members from diverse backgrounds. They comprised business, media, youth, NGOs and government officials from contrasting geographical areas of the Eastern Cape, who work closely with the Provincial Government and would have perspectives on the Provincial Government's corporate reputation. Three representatives from each structure participated in the interviews and a total 15 of participants were interviewed.

For participant observation, the researcher selected two community engagement sessions that the Office of the Premier had facilitated, which enabled the researcher to observe the views of the general public towards the Provincial Government. As noted by Kumar (2011:125), participant observation enabled the researcher to spend sufficient time with the study group, gaining much deeper, richer and more accurate information.

6.3.2. Population

For scientific study, sampling is drawn from a population. This represents the study population from whom the required information to find answers to the study research questions, is obtained (Kumar 2011:65). Determining the population for the study was crucial, considering that the population can be small or large. Similarly, to study the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, it was necessary for the population to be clearly delineated, as the nature of this study would not allow for the study of the entire population.

As part of the participant observation phase of the study, community engagement sessions were identified as part of the target population for the study. Two community engagement sessions constituted the respective populations for the study, during which the researcher observed community interactions with officials from the Provincial Government. The target population for in-depth interviews comprised NGOs, youth structures, business organisations, media and government employees. These organisations constituted organised structures that represented diverse constituencies in the Eastern Cape and had direct relationships with the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The research problem investigated the reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, and three representatives from these structures were interviewed.

I.   Business sector

Government policies and processes directly or indirectly affect the business sector, therefore, they were a crucial source of data for the study.

Businesses have certain expectations from government including policy posture, and the extent to which such expectations are fulfilled impacts on its reputation. A total of three organised business structures – Business Chamber, Business Women Association, and Liquor Traders' Association - were included in the study for the in-depth interviews and one representative (chairperson) was recruited from each structure. Similarly, business participants were recruited from the urban, semi-urban and rural areas in order to obtain views from varied settings. All three participants were males aged 44, 55 and 60, respectively.

II.   Government officials

The identification of government employees was based on Yin's (1994:88) caveat that when selecting participants, one should deliberately interview some people whom one suspects might hold different views related to the topic of study. The choice of government employees was intended to limit bias of the study by ensuring that views from participants that worked for the Eastern Cape Provincial Government were obtained. Furthermore, due to their proximity to the processes and operations of the Provincial Government, government employees were an important source of data on the general work environment. In this case, three participants were recruited from provincial government departments. They comprised two females aged 30 and 42 respectively, and one male aged 33.

III.   Media

Inevitably, the media plays an invaluable role in shaping perceptions of society. In its watchdog role, the media obstinately reports on activities of government and communities, from perceptions about the Provincial Government based on what they gather from various media platforms. The inclusion of the media as a study case, provided relevant information on the Provincial Government corporate reputation. The focus was on both print and electronic media. Three media houses were included in the study for in-depth interviews: editorial team members were interviewed. One male participant aged 35 represented print media, and two female participants aged 28 and 35 respectively, represented electronic media (radio).

IV.   Non-governmental organisations

The NGOs primarily represent the aspirations of the community – particularly the disadvantaged communities – therefore, they were better placed to provide rich information on how the community views the Provincial Government's corporate reputation. NGOs ordinarily deal with socio-economic issues of the society and often become a mouthpiece for ordinary people. From this case, three non-governmental organisations were included in the study for in-depth interviews. One research participant (chairperson) from each non-governmental structure was recruited into the study. Non-governmental structures were recruited from the urban, semi-urban and rural settings to receive perspectives from diverse demographics. These population groups were selected on the basis of their proximity to the community and potentially provided rich information on how government is viewed at the community level, thus reflecting its reputation. Two female participants aged 24 and 49 years, respectively, and one male participant aged 36 years were interviewed.

V.   Youth structures

Invariably, young people look up to government for their development. Their selection into the study was largely based on the prior understanding that as representatives of young people in the Eastern Cape, they are fully aware of the general views of young people about the Provincial Government. Three youth structures were selected from both urban and rural settings, and chairpersons from each structure were interviewed. Two female participants aged 28 and 31 years, and one male aged 24 participated in the study.

6.3.3. Sample size

The research sample includes 17 field studies. Field studies 1 to 15 represents three participants from business organisations, youth structures, media institutions, NGOs, and the government. Business organisations, youth structures and NGOs were each represented by the chairpersons, while an editorial team member represented each media institution.

Government officials comprised of an official from the Provincial Government, district municipality and local municipality spheres, in order to obtain diverse views from government perspectives.

Field studies 16 and 17 represent two participant observations during which the Office of the Premier facilitated community engagement sessions as platforms to interact with members of the community. Each of the community engagement sessions was attended by members of the community, including men, women and young people. However, the majority of attendees were young people, predominantly females which could be an illustration of the high level of unemployment among the youth considering that these sessions were conducted during working hours.

6.3.4. Participants

Creswell (2007) suggests the importance of acquiring participants who will be willing to openly and honestly share information or "their story". The table below illustrates the participating organisations that comprised business organisations, government employees, media institutions, NGOs and youth structures.

Table 6.1: Field Study 1 to 15 and participating organisations

Field study	Organisation	Gender	Age	Location
Filed study 1	Business	Male	55	Port Elizabeth/ semi-urban
Filed study 2	Business	Male	60	East London Urban
Filed study 3	Business	Male	44	OR Tambo/ Rural
Filed study 4	Government official	Female	42	Provincial Government
Filed study 5	Government official	Female	30	Local Municipality
Filed study 6	Government official	Male	33	Nelson Mandela Metro/ Urban
Filed study 7	Media institution	Male	35	Print media

Filed study 8	Media institution	Female	28	Electronic media (radio)
Filed study 9	Media institution	Female	35	Electronic media (radio)
Filed study 10	NGO	Female	49	Urban
Filed study 11	NGO	Female	24	Semi-urban
Filed study 12	NGO	Male	36	Rural
Filed study 13	Youth structure	Female	28	Semi-urban
Filed study 14	Youth structure	Female	23	Rural
Filed study 15	Youth structure	Male	36	Urban

Field studies 16 and 17 represent two participant observations of community engagement sessions that the Office of the Premier had facilitated on behalf of the Provincial Government to interact with the members of the community. Premier, Members of the Executive Councils (MECs) and mayors represented government in the community engagement sessions.

Table 6.2: Field studies 16 and 17

Field study	Participant observation	Number attended
Field study 16	Community engagement session – Buffalo City Metropolitan in East London	350
Field study 17	Community engagement session – OR Tambo District Municipality in Mthatha	335

6.4.   DATA COLLECTION

Semi-structured interviews were employed to collect research data. According to Bradford and Cullen (2012), qualitative semi-structured interviews is one of the most dominant and widely used methods of data collection within the social sciences.

Evans (2017) asserts that they are valuable because they allow researchers to explore subjective viewpoints and to gather in-depth accounts of people's experiences. Typically, themes from theory and literature were used to develop an interview schedule for the semi-structured interviews. According to Moriarty (2011), interviews remain the most common data collection method in qualitative research and is a familiar and flexible way of asking people about their opinions and experiences. The above author further asserts that one attraction for researchers is that a considerable amount of data can be generated from an interview lasting one or two hours.

The semi-structured interviews conducted for this research permitted enough flexibility which enabled the researcher to pose questions and the interviewee to respond freely to the topic being raised. The researcher asked follow-up questions if the participants' responses to the initial question did not adequately address certain areas of interest for the study.

According to Britten (1995), semi-structured interviews are conducted on the basis of a loose structure consisting of open-ended questions that define the area to be explored, at least initially, and from which the interviewer or interviewee may diverge in order to pursue an idea in more detail. The interview guide consisted of three main semi-structured questions, and probing questions, which were primarily posed to solicit more information on the subject. Open-ended main questions, and follow-up questions were asked only if a participant's response to the initial question did not cover certain topics of interest. All interviews were tape recorded, and responses to each question were immediately transcribed verbatim.

The interview schedule was divided into the following three domains of inquiry:
• Public views of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government corporate reputation.
• Media relations
• Emotional attachment to the Provincial Government.

The research questions focused on exploring the views, experiences, perceptions and overall impressions of the participants about the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The questions also investigated participants' opinions of the media's role in the Eastern Cape, and whether it fulfilled its watchdog role.

Follow-up and probing questions were also used in order to attain participants' in-depth understanding of the study phenomenon. Table 6.3 below illustrates questions that constituted the interview schedule and were used to source data for the research problem.

Table 6.3: Interview schedule used for the collection of data

Items	Probing questions
What are the publics' views about the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government?	• Are you happy with the quality of services as provided by the Eastern Cape Provincial Government? Elaborate. • Do you think the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is innovative in its endeavours to enhance its service delivery programme? Why? • How do you feel about the performance of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government? Based on its performance, does the Eastern Cape Provincial Government meet the expectations of the citizens in its endeavour to provide services? And explain how? • What is your view about the governance structures of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government? Do you think the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is conducting itself ethically and in a transparent manner? • What is your view about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government citizenship? Elaborate with examples. Do think people of the Eastern Cape receive adequate information about the Provincial Government programmes? • What is your view about the Eastern Cape government's quality of leadership? Illustrate your views with examples. • Do you think the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is the best workplace? Elaborate.
What is the effect of the media coverage on the Eastern Cape Provincial Government?	• How does the media generally report about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government? • What is your view about the Eastern Cape government's relations with the media?

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	• In your view, does the media play a watchdog role in the Eastern Cape? How?
	• What is your view on how the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is projected on social media platforms?
	• Do you think the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has embraced social media platforms in its communication endeavours? And elaborate.
	• Does the Eastern Cape Provincial Government face any potential reputational risks on the social media platforms?
What is the emotional attachment of the public to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government?	• What is your overall impression/esteem about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government?
	• What are your feelings about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government? Elaborate.
	• Would you say you trust the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, and why?
	• Would you say you admire the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, and why?

Research data were also collected through participant observations. Kumar (2011:133) describes observation as a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place. The researcher observed two community engagement sessions that were coordinated by the Premier of the Eastern Cape. The researcher took field notes and noted every action that would enhance the data. Field notes and a recorder were used to capture the proceedings, which were transcribed verbatim after each participant observation.

6.4.1. Research procedures

The following section outlines procedures that the researcher undertook to ensure the scientific soundness of this research study.

I. Research piloting

Kvale (2007) asserts that a pilot test will assist the research in determining if there are flaws, limitations, or other weaknesses within the interview design and will allow him or her to make the necessary revisions prior to the implementation of the study. In this case, the researcher identified participants who almost have similar interests as those that have been purposively sampled to participate in the study. For example, prior to the formal in-depth interviews with research participants, the researcher conducted two mock interviews with his two colleagues and a member of the Council of Churches in order to fine-tune the interview schedule. The piloting exercise assisted the researcher to identify areas of ambiguity in the research questions and to refine them.

II. Data collection time frames

Both in-depth interviews and participant observations were conducted between February 10 and April 18, 2019. Interviews were conducted in English as all participants could understand and articulate their views and opinions in English. For the two Provincial Government community engagement sessions, an indigenous language (Xhosa) was predominantly used, and the researcher had to translate conversations into English. For in-depth interviews, prior appointments were made with the participants and dates of the interviews were pre-arranged to suit their schedules. All interviews were conducted at participants' offices or places of work.

III. Data collection and storage

The researcher developed an interview schedule, which he used to collect the primary data through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Significantly, the use of the interview schedule demonstrated a structure to the interviews, and the researcher could draw detailed information from participants. All interviews were tape recorded, and subsequently transcribed verbatim.

Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2014: 302) send a caveat that it is usually important to transcribe everything rather than try to decide which data are relevant and which are not. In line with the above authors, for this study transcription of data was done directly on the word processor to facilitate the moving around of data and searching for particular concepts and themes later on. The data were stored on a personal computer, and a back-up in the form of an external hard drive, and saved in the cloud.

IV. Confidentiality and consent

The researcher started off the interviews by explaining the aim of the interview and emphasising the confidentiality and that the participant would be anonymous. The researcher informed the interviewees that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time, should they feel so. All the interviewees were given a consent form prior to the interviews which they were requested to sign as a consent to participate in the study. The researcher further sought permission from the interviewee to record the interview.

V. Scientific soundness of the data

Morrow (2005) states that qualitative researchers acknowledge that the very nature of the data they gather and the analytic processes in which they engage are grounded in subjectivity. In order to ensure rigour in qualitative research, Creswell (2000) cautions that qualitative inquirers need to demonstrate that their studies are credible. It is, however, crucial to note Marrow's (2005) comment that all research is subject to researcher bias; qualitative and quantitative perspectives have their own ways of approaching subjectivity and are very much influenced by the paradigms guiding the research. For this study, the researcher applied reflexivity, reliability, validity, triangulation, and trustworthiness to enhance scientific rigour of the research findings.

- *Reflexivity*

Palaganas (2017) defines reflexivity as a process of introspection on the role of subjectivity in the research process in which researchers continuously reflect on their values and recognise that as researchers they are part of the social world. In this case, the researcher continuously reflected on his own personal values, experiences, interests, beliefs and political orientations that could influence the research process. During the collection of data, the researcher was aware that as a citizen of the Eastern Cape and employee of the Provincial Government, he shared some of the experiences of the participants. In view of this potential bias that could impact on the quality of the research findings, it was critical that in line with Burger's (2013) opinion, the researcher increasingly focused on self-knowledge and sensitivity; better understood the role of the self in the creation of knowledge; carefully self-monitored the impact of his biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on his research; and maintained the balance between the personal and the universal.

- *Reliability*

Babbie and Mouton (2014:119) define reliability as a matter of whether a particular technique applied repeatedly to the same object, would yield the same result each time. Leedy and Ormrod (2014:93) furthermore add that reliability, more generally, is the consistency with which a measuring instrument yields a certain consistent result when the entity being measured has not changed. However, Merriam and Tisdell (2016:250) argue that reliability is problematic in qualitative research, because human behaviour is never static, nor is what many experience necessarily more reliable than what one person experiences. In order to ensure consistency and reliability, the researcher piloted the interview schedule on three participants prior to the in-depth interviews, to check if the questions were relevant and unambiguous. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that questions were clear and that he asked participants about things that would be relevant to them. The use of various sources of data, such as interviews and observations, also ensured that research findings were reliable. The consistent use and reference to the theoretical concepts and themes derived from literature improved the reliability of the research findings.

- *Validity*

Leedy and Ormrod (2014:91) describe validity as the extent to which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure. Mohajan (2017) adds that the validity of the research is an extent at which requirements of scientific research methods have been followed during the process of generating research findings. Merriam and Tisdell (2016:243) furthermore argue that, because human beings is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research, interpretations of reality are accessed directly through their observations and interviews. Therefore, viewed in this manner, validity is a definite strength of qualitative research.

In order to further offset ambiguity and enhance validity, the researcher ensured that questions asked were followed up with probing questions, in order to ensure that participants understood the questions and provided relevant answers.

- *Trustworthiness*

Pilot and Beck (2014) define trustworthiness, or the rigour of a study, as the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and the methods used to ensure the quality of a study. Qualitative researchers consider dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability as trustworthiness criteria to ensure the rigour of qualitative findings (Anney, 2014; Connelly, 2016; Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams & Blackman, 2016).

To enhance the study's credibility, the researcher adopted Lincoln and Guba's (2000) approach, in which they claim that credibility can be achieved by prolonged engagement with participants; persistent observation in the field; researcher reflexivity; and participant checks, validation, or co-analysis. The in-depth interviews and observations inherently provide the researcher with an opportunity to spend reasonable time within the research setting. In line with Anney's (2014) view, this approach helped the researcher to gain an insight into the context of the study, which minimises the distortions of information that might arise due to the presence of the researcher in the field.

To promote transferability, the researcher "provided sufficient information on research context, processes, participants, and researcher–participant relationships to enable the reader to decide how the findings may transfer" (Marrow, 2005). Furthermore, the researcher takes cognisance of Lincoln and Guba's (2000) view that the researcher cannot specify the transferability of the findings; he or she can only provide sufficient information that can then be used by the reader to determine whether the findings are applicable to the new situation.

To ensure that research results were dependable, the researcher adopted Marrow's (2005) approach by demonstrating how the study unfolded, detailing chronology of research activities and processes. For confirmability, the researcher reflected on the potential biases and how to guard against its influence on the study.

- *Triangulation*

Leedy and Ormrod (2014:104) describe triangulation as the collection of multiple sources of data with the hope that they will all converge to support the results of the study. According to Anney (2014) triangulation involves the use of multiple sources and different methods, investigators, sources, and theories to obtain corroborating evidence. Triangulation in this case entailed using in-depth interviews and participant observations as sources of data. For this study, the researcher could look for common concepts and themes that appear in the data gathered from both data sources. In this regard, Anney (2014) asserts that different sources of data, such as interviews and participant observation, enhance the quality of the data overall. The researcher also used multiple theoretical sources to interpret research data.

6.5.   DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis involves organising, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:480). Qualitative data analysis is essentially an inductive strategy (Merriam, 1994) and a researcher primarily uses detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by a researcher (Thomas, 2006).

There are various forms of qualitative data analysis mentioned in the academic literature, however, in this case, the researcher used thematic analysis and computer software in the form of a Leximancer analysis. The researcher's approach worked well for the volume of data that was gathered and analysed. Two forms of analysis were undertaken to glean data from various sources, and they are discussed in the succeeding sections.

6.5.1. Thematic analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Dixon-Woods, Agarwal, Jones, Young and Sutton (2005) suggest that thematic analysis allows clear identification of prominent themes, and organised and structured ways of dealing with the literature under these themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that the thematic analysis process starts when the analyst begins to notice, and look for, patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest in the data – this may be during data collection. The above authors further assert that thematic analysis is useful because it enables researchers to examine, from a constructionist methodological position, the meanings that people attach to their experiences, the significance it has in their lives, and, more broadly, their social constructions of reality. Further, Maguire and Delahunt (2017) state that the main goal of a thematic analysis is to identify themes, i.e. patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and to use these themes to address the research or say something about an issue.

The conceptual framework of the thematic analysis for the study's in-depth interviews and observational data is primarily grounded on the theoretical perspectives of Braun and Clarke (2006) as illustrated below:

Stage 1: Become familiar with the data

Stage 2: Generate initial codes

Stage 3: Search for themes

Stage 4: Review themes

Stage 5: Define themes

Stage 6: Write-up

In line with the above approach, the most important step of data analysis in the study pursued, was to summarise data as it is being collected. As noted by Saunders *et al.* (2009:517), summarising usually involves condensing the meaning of large amounts of text into fewer words. Through summarising, the researcher became conversant with the principal themes that emerged from the interview, or observation.

This approach served to familiarize the researcher with the data and to begin the process of organizing and structuring the data; and furthermore, this increased the researcher's awareness of themes and categories in the data.

I.   Stage 1: Familiarisation of the data

The main data gathering methods for this study were in-depth interviews and participant observation. To formulate research questions, the researcher identified pertinent concepts from the study's theoretical framework. For the in-depth interviews, audio-recoding was used after which they were transcribed verbatim. The researcher re-read the transcribed recorded interviews and cleaned up the data. Observation data were also transcribed soon after each observation.

The analysis of interview transcripts and field notes was based on deductive or theoretical analysis, which according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area. The researcher formulated research questions using concepts derived from the theoretical framework.

The first step in thematic analysis involved becoming closely familiar with the data by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts and the field notes (Evans, 2017). In this case, the researcher listened to audio-tapes and transcribed verbatim. The researcher transcribed the interviews and the observations in the same order that they were conducted as soon as the researcher returned from fieldwork.

The fact that the researcher transcribed 15 interviews and two observations enhanced his understanding of the data. Riessman (in Braun & Clarke, 2006) argues that the process of transcription, while it may seem time-consuming, frustrating, and at times boring, can be an excellent way to start familiarising yourself with the data.

As suggested by Evans (2017), the researcher consistently reminded himself of the overarching research questions, as these questions guided thinking about the data and what to consider to be worthy of a theme. According to Javadi and Zarea (2016) researchers recommend active repeated reading so that you become familiar with all aspects of your data. It was, therefore, necessary to repeatedly read the data in order to detect potential themes relevant to the study, grounded on the theoretical framework.

II.   *Stage 2: Generating initial codes*

The second Stage begins when you have read and familiarised yourself with the data, and have generated an initial list of ideas about what is in the data and what is interesting about them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Crowe, Inder and Porter (2015) state that initial coding involves examining the data, keeping the research question at the forefront. For example, as suggested by the above authors, while reading the interview and observation transcripts, the researcher focused on what the participant was saying in relation to what they think about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government corporate reputation.

In this Stage, the researcher adopted Braun and Clarke's (2006) theory-driven coding. This approach permitted the researcher to approach the data with specific questions in mind that he wished to code around. During this Stage, the concepts and themes from literature where used for initial manual coding, to see if what the researcher acquired from the interviews was the same as what was found in the literature review (Mkombe, 2018:146).

III. *Stage 3: Searching for themes*

Braun and Clarke (2006) posit that a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. The above authors observe that this phase begins when all data have been initially coded and collated, and you have a long list of the different codes you have identified across your data set.

In this Stage, the researcher is starting to analyse codes, and to consider how different codes may be grouped together (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This Stage constituted a manual process of identifying potential themes based on literature and theory. Once themes were manually identified, the next step involved defining and naming themes through the Leximancer Software analysis.

IV. *Stage 4: Reviewing themes*

During this Stage, the researcher reviews, modifies and develops the preliminary themes that were identified in Step 3 (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this Step, the Leximancer software programme was used to analyse the data. Leximancer generates concept matrix maps that identify the principal concepts and themes (Douglas, 2010). Further, the size, brightness and centrality of each concept in the map indicates its importance in relation to other concepts. The software is interactive and allows the researcher to directly search, add, remove, and merge terms as well as the above automatic process (Harwood *et al*., 2015).

The researcher removed terms that were not related to the study, which the participants used frequently in their responses - terms such as for example, "look", "things", "making", "doing", "fact", etc. The researcher furthermore had to establish if the themes that were generated from literature and theory to be included in the interview schedule also reflected in the group of themes generated in the concept map. Similar versions of the words identified (often plural and non-plural versions of words) from the software were manually merged into singular preliminary concepts such as (i) area and (ii) areas (Hyndman & Phil, 2017).

Maguiret and Delahunt (2017) assert that themes should be coherent and they should be distinct from each other. The authors advise researchers about things they should think about in identifying themes, which include:

• Do the themes make sense?

• Do the data support the themes?

• Am I trying to fit too much into a theme?

• If themes overlap, are they really separate themes?

• Are there themes within themes (subthemes)?

• Are there other themes within the data?

The researcher also read the data report tab on the right of the concept map that is associated with each theme, to consider if there is any relationship. The next step entailed considering if themes are relevant in the context of the data. Javadi and Zarea (2016) postulate that the data inside the themes should be meaningfully related to each other and the themes should be explicitly differentiable. The researcher merged some themes due to homogeneity, such as service and services, area and areas, etc. At the end of this phase, the researcher had a good idea on what differentiates the themes, how they were matched and the whole story they tell about the data (Javadi & Zarea, 2016).

V.   *Stage 5: Defining and naming themes*

At this point, the researcher defines and further refines the themes that they will present for analysis, and then analyse the data within them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Further, the authors clarify that by "define and refine" they mean identifying the "essence" of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures. Finally, Leximancer generates a concept map which is analysed, identifying relationships between themes. The researcher adopted Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach in which they state:

> "*For each individual theme, you need to conduct and write a detailed analysis. As well as identifying the "story" that each theme tells, it is important to consider how it fits into the broader overall "story" that you are telling about your data, in relation to your*

research question or questions, to ensure there is not too much overlap between themes."

VI.   *Stage 6: Generate report*

The sixth phase begins when you have a good set of themes and you do the final analysis by writing and reporting on them (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). Braun and Clarke (2006) state that Phase 6 begins when you have a set of fully worked-out themes, and involves the final analysis and write-up of the report. The researcher presents a report based on the themes that the concept map highlighted and that were identified from the data. Javadi and Zarea (2016) argue that it is important to note that the story of themes is expressed accurately, consistently, logically, without repetition and with attraction through or from within the themes.

6.5.2. Leximancer analysis

This study used Leximancer Software to analyse qualitative data that the researcher collected through in-depth interviews and participant observations. Sotiriadou (2014) points out that Leximancer provides a form of automated analysis based on the properties of texts. In essence, Leximancer uses lexical relationships and a thesaurus to develop "concepts" and then "themes" from documents, and one of Leximancer's most appealing features is that it enables the user to automatically identify significant themes (i.e., words with the greatest number of relationships to other words) and concepts (i.e., words that occur frequently) in text without any prior knowledge of its contents (Harwood, Gapp & Stewart, 2015).

Computer software has a great capacity for organising massive amounts of data, and facilitating analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2006:221). In view of the vast amount of data that the researcher was confronted with in this qualitative study, computer-assisted data analysis aided in organising or categorising of the data. Leximancer provided a text analytics tool that could be used to analyse the content of collections of textual documents and to display the extracted information visually (Leximancer User Guide, 2018:03).

Marroun (2015) posits that Leximancer performs both conceptual and relational content analysis. Marroun furthermore draws a distinction between the two forms of Leximancer analysis. For example, in *conceptual analysis*, transcripts are measured for the presence and frequency of concepts. Such concepts can be words or phrases, or more complex definitions, such as collections of words representing each concept. *Relational analysis,* by contrast, measures how such identified concepts are related to each other within the documents. Leximancer measures the co-occurrence of concepts found within the text, automatically extracts this information, and represents the information visually for comparison.

Leximancer is an analysis tool that takes text documents and creates a visual lexical map creating a 'helicopter' view of the data (Gapp *et al.*, 2013). The above authors add that this map contains representative themes and concepts that are drawn from the text in addition to how they are related to each other. Leximancer generates a two-dimensional map displaying the relationships between the themes and concepts as well as assisting the researcher in the interpretation.

It displays the primary theme by a red or hot colour and these themes are summarised into circles that are named after the prevailing concept within that group (Harwood *et al.*, 2014). The theme is also identified by the largest 'dot' within that group. The author further states that hot colours (i.e. red, orange) depict stronger themes with subsequent themes and their strength is shown through cooler colours (i.e. blue, green). Theme size also denotes the frequency of concepts. Douglas (2010) add that the size, brightness and centrality of each concept in the map indicates its importance in relation to other concepts.

Another important functionality of the Leximancer programme, according to Stewart and Chakraborty (2010), is that it also calculates the relative co-occurrence of concepts to generate a matrix which in turn is used to generate a visual display that illustrates the connectedness of concepts. Each concept is linked to the original reference text. This allows the user to revisit the analysis and impose specific limitations on the analysis, or seed the analysis with key terms or concepts. Angus, Sean and Wiles (2013) point out that Leximancer generates its own lists and relationships based on the input text.

The above authors add that an advantage of generating the concept list automatically is that the list is statistically reliable and reproducible, being generated from the input text itself, whereas manual lists require checks for coding reliability and validity. Further, Leximancer uses word occurrence and co-occurrence counts to extract major thematic and conceptual content directly from an input text.

Consistent with Penn-Edwards' (2010) viewpoint, Leximancer could be instructed to merge terms used by participants, which, for the purposes of this study, were deemed to be indicative of the same concept, such as area and areas, services and service, corruption and corrupt. Further, Leximancer provides a visual display of the relationships among themes and concepts whereby if respondents link issues in their interviews, concepts in the map overlap or are located in close proximity. As noted by Gapp, Stewart, Harwood and Woods (2013), of greater importance in this case, is the interactive map which allowed the researcher to remove concepts that the software highlighted, but in validation were not relevant. Leximancer generates a two-dimensional map displaying the relationships between the themes and concepts as well as assisting the researcher in the interpretation.

Leximancer had the following strengths for this study:

- Large amounts of text from in-depth interviews and participant observations could be subjected to analysis in a routine manner, using consistent methodology that generates a repeatable outcome (Stewart & Chakraborty, 2010).
- The Leximancer programme could extract a populated list from the text documents that displays the weighted term classifications and connections between key words (Hyndman, 2017).
- The existing data and the relationships among them determined which concepts were important, rather than the researcher pre-determining which concepts should be found in the data, which also decreased the researcher's possible subjectivity in data analysis (Kivunja, 2013).
- Leximancer produced results without the requirement for manual intervention. This software has been developed to identify a number of concepts and interrelationships without the need for researcher intervention (Sotiriadou, 2014).

- Leximancer was highly consistent in the way it classified text and identified the relationships between concepts; the same result was produced no matter how many times a data set was coded and recoded (Angus, Rintel & Wiles, 2013).
- The Leximancer system could conduct both forms of analysis, measuring the presence of defined concepts in the text, as well as how they are interrelated (Leximancer Manual, 2011).
- The concept editing stage gave the researcher the opportunity to merge concepts that were closely interconnected, if they needed to, to delete any that the researcher felt crowded the Concept Map unnecessarily or others that may be regarded as "nonsense concepts" (Kivunja, 2013).

Leximancer weaknesses for the study:

- Leximancer names each "theme" after its most prominent "concept." A first Concept Map often produced unexpected or unusual themes and in some instances the researcher's first thought was "This does not tell me anything" (Wilk, Soutar & Harrigan, 2019)
- The thematic and conceptual meaningfulness of the visual output can also be improved by manually renaming the themes in the Concept Map, enabling the Map to better reflect the themes' composition and their overall thematic essence (Wilk, *et al.* 2019).

6.6.   CONCLUSION

This Chapter outlined the research design, which was appropriate to answer the research question. As it has been reiterated in this study, there is paucity of academic work on the public sector reputation, therefore, the research design enabled an in-depth-analysis of the phenomenon. This Chapter outlined the sampling strategy that ensured that relevant participants were recruited into the study through purposive sampling. The purposive sample included business organisations, NGOs, media houses, government officials and youth structures. The identification of these structures ensured that relevant data were obtained in order to answer the research question.

Furthermore, the application of the qualitative approach for this study proved insightful as the researcher obtained in-depth insights on the phenomenon through interviews and participant observations. The use of the interpretive paradigm ensured that the researcher interacted with research participants in their natural settings and experienced how they constructed the reality of their environment. A self-administered semi-structured interview schedule was used in order to source the data. This Chapter also reflects on how the large amounts of data were analysed using both the thematic and Leximancer Software, which generated Concepts Maps that are presented in Chapter Seven. While Leximancer Software has substantially improved the analysis of qualitative data, it was equally essential to reflect on its potential weaknesses, which are further outlined in this Chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DATA ANALYSIS

7.1. **INTRODUCTION**

This Chapter represents results from 17 field studies, for which data were collected from three business representatives, three government officials, three NGOS, three media houses, representatives from three youth structures, and two observations of government community engagement sessions. A total of 15 in-depth interviews and two participant observations from two government community engagement sessions took place.

The researcher went through all the processes of familiarising himself with the data, by listening to the recorded responses and transcribing the recordings verbatim, then reading, and reviewing scripts several times. The researcher used the Leximancer data analysis tool to analyse the data. The results were generated from Leximancer, and they show the most common concepts and themes from the in-depth interviews and observations data. During data analysis, a Leximancer concept map was therefore created for each interview conducted and are represented below as field studies. For example, Field studies 1 to 15 illustrate results from interviews with representatives from various organisations and Field studies 16 and 17 depict results from observations of two government community engagement sessions.

7.2. FIELD STUDY 1
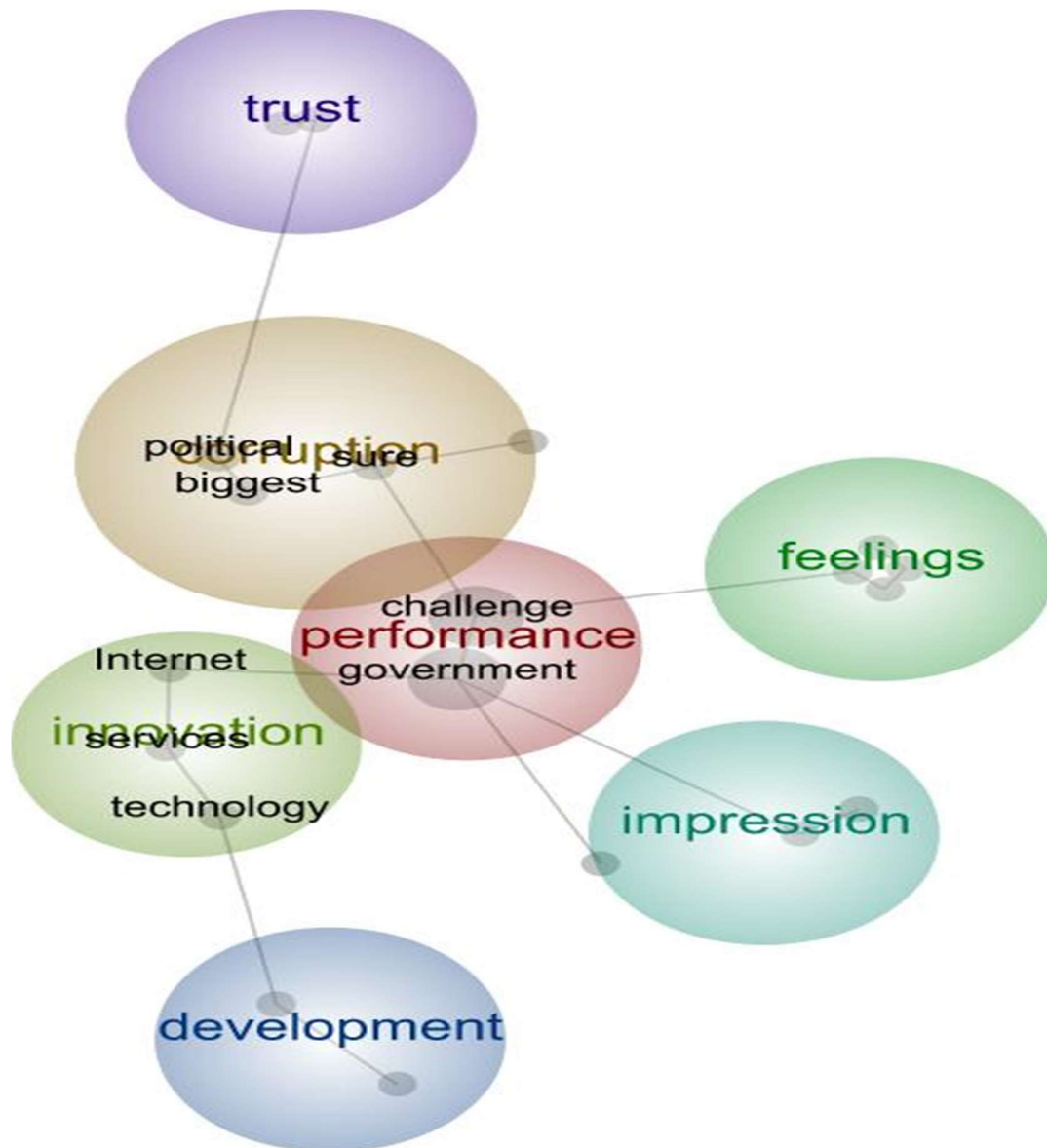
Figure 7.1: Field Study 1 Concept Map

Table 7.1: Shows Field Study 1 Concept Map results

Theme	Hits	Concepts
Performance	30	Challenges, government
Corruption	7	Political, biggest, sure
Innovation	5	Internet, technology, service
Feelings	4	Feelings
Trust	2	Trust
Impressions	2	Impressions
Development	1	Development

7.2.1. Theme 1: Performance

The theme *performance* had 30 hits, which is the biggest hit relative to other themes. It refers to the performance of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government as perceived by the people of the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

The performance theme is internally linked to two concepts, which are *challenges* and *government*. This shows that people feel that government performance is facing challenges in meeting the expectations of the citizens.

External links

Performance as a central theme is linked to five other themes, and these are: *corruption*, *innovation*, *development*, *impression* and *feelings*. This shows that performance is the most important indicator of the efficacy of the Provincial Government. The link with *technology* and *development* is through the *government, Internet, services* and *technology* concepts, which implies that the development trajectory of government may be influenced by the extent to which it harnesses technology such as the Internet in enhancing the quality of its services. Performance is embedded in corruption and innovation themes, which shows a close relationship among the themes. The link to the corruption theme is through the concepts *biggest* and *challenge*, which shows that corruption is the biggest challenge that impacts performance of the Provincial Government, because resources that are meant to improve

delivery of services are misappropriated through corrupt activities. Further, the theme is linked to the feelings theme through the *challenge* concept, which shows that people feel that the Provincial Government performance faces challenges. The link to impression is through the *government* concept which shows that people form opinions about government based on how they perceive its performance, and this may create emotional attachment or vice versa.

7.2.2. Theme 2: Corruption

The *corruption* theme had seven hits, which is the second highest hit in the Concept Map, which refers to the perceived corruption within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

Internal links/relationships

The corruption theme is internally linked to the *political, sure* and *biggest* concepts, which shows that political interference is surely the biggest element that perpetuates corruption within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

External links/relationships

The corruption theme is embedded in the performance theme, which shows a close relationship between the two concepts. The link to performance is through the *challenge* concept, which illustrates that corruption poses a challenge to the performance of government because resources that are intended to deliver services to people are squandered. The link with the trust concept shows that corruption erodes trust that people have in the Provincial Government, because corruption thwarts government efforts to fulfil its mandate of meeting the expectations of the people by delivering services. Due to corruption, citizens view the Provincial Government as the main contributor to their poor socio-economic conditions and trust declines.

7.2.3. Theme 3: Innovation

The *innovation* theme had five hits, and the third largest hit in the concept map. This theme refers to innovative initiatives that the Provincial Government employ to improve service delivery in the Eastern Cape.

Internal links/relationships

The innovation theme is linked to the following concepts: *services, technology* and *Internet.* This shows that in order to deliver quality and sustainable services to the people, the Provincial Government should embrace technology by promoting access to the Internet to enable information sharing.

External links/relationships

Innovation is directly linked to performance and development. The relationship between innovation and performance is strong, as innovation overlaps with performance, and vice-a-versa. The strong relationship between the two themes shows that innovation can be a very strong determinant of the Provincial Government's performance and can enhance service delivery. The theme links with the development theme through the *services* and *technology* concepts, which shows that technology can play a pivotal role in the provision of quality services in the Eastern Cape. Further, this shows that doing things differently and embracing the new technologies can accelerate development in the Eastern Cape.

7.2.4. Theme 4: Feelings

The *feelings* theme received four hits, and it refers to the attachment and the feelings that people of the Eastern Cape have about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

Internal link/relationships

The feelings theme had *feelings* as a theme.

External links/relationships

The feelings theme is linked to the performance theme via the *challenge* concept. This relationship shows that people of the Eastern Cape feel that the Provincial Government faces challenges in its performance, and this invariably impact service delivery.

Further, due to performance challenges, the Provincial Government is unable to deliver services and meet basic needs of the people, which influences their feelings about government not to accept it as legitimate.

7.2.5. Theme 5: Trust

Trust had two hits, and it refers to the trust that people of the Eastern Cape have in the Provincial Government. This is also about whether they trust that the government will deliver on its promises of fulfilling their expectations.

Internal link/relationship

Trust has *trust* as a concept.

External link/relationship

The trust theme is directly related to the corruption theme as people lose trust in the Provincial Government due to perceived unethical activities.

7.2.6. Theme 6: Impressions

Impressions as a theme had two hits, and it refers to the overall impression people of the Eastern Cape form about the Provincial Government, whether or not they can recommend the Provincial Government based on its ability to meet the expectations of the people of the Eastern Cape.

Internal link/relationship

Impressions has *impressions* as a concept.

External links/relationships

The impressions theme is linked to performance through the *government* concept because people of the Eastern Cape form impressions based on their perception of the Provincial Government's performance. Further, the theme links with innovation via the *government* and *Internet* concepts, which is an illustration that people develop impressions on the extent to which the Provincial Government has introduced the Internet to improve the provision of services and its performance thereof.

This link also relates to the extent to which the Provincial Government adapts to change and executes its functions differently, which influences people's overall impression about it.

7.2.7. Theme 7: Development

Development had 1 hit, which was the lowest hit. This theme refers to the development initiatives of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, and how such initiatives improve the lives of the people.

Internal link/relationship

Development has *development* as a concept.

External links/relationships

The development theme is related to innovation through the *technology* and *services* concepts. The extent to which the Provincial Government embraces *technology* in delivering *services* will advance development in the Eastern Cape. The development theme is also linked to the performance theme through *technology*, *Internet*, *services* and *government* concepts.

7.3. FIELD STUDY 2
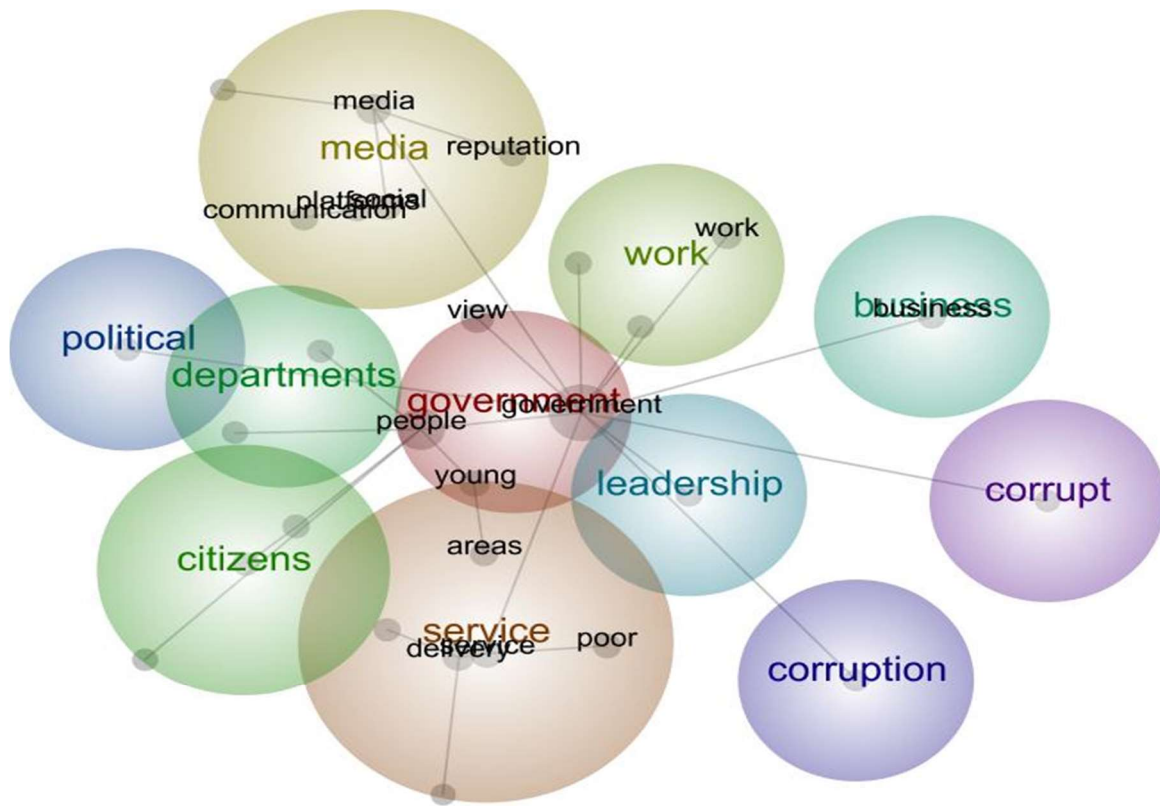
Figure 7.2: Field Study 2 Concept Map

Table 7.2: Field Study 2 Concept Map results

Themes	Hits	Concepts
Government	324	Government, people, view, young
Media	88	Media, social, communication, platforms, reputation
Service	62	Service, delivery, poor, areas

Work	35	Work
Business	32	Business
Corruption	17	Corruption
Political	16	Political
Citizens	16	Citizens
Leadership	14	Leadership
Departments	13	Departments
Corrupt	10	Corrupt

7.3.1. Theme 1: Government

The *government* theme generated 324 hits and has the highest hits. The government theme refers to the Provincial Government in the Eastern Cape that is seized with the constitutional mandate to provide basic services to people.

Internal links/relationships

The government theme is linked to *people, view* and *young* as concepts, and this internal relationship means that people, especially young people, in the Eastern Cape view the Government as incapable of fulfilling their needs, such as the provision of jobs and business opportunities.

External links/relationships

Government is complexly linked to all the nine themes on the Concept Map. The direct link with the *media* theme is because people form perceptions about the Provincial Government based on what they receive from the media. It slightly overlaps with *service* and *leadership*, which shows a strong relationship. The direct link with the service theme shows that people expect government to provide good services and their overall impression about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government largely hinges on the extent to which government fulfils the mandate.

The relationship with the *work* theme shows that people generally form perceptions about the Provincial Government as a workplace. The link with the *business* theme shows that the business sector forms opinions about how the Eastern Cape Provincial Government conducts its business. The link to *corruption*, *leadership* and *political* themes illustrates that people of the Eastern Cape form opinions about government – as a political entity – leadership and corruption. The link to *departments* shows that all government operations are embedded in various departments and people form views about government based on their experiences with various government departments.

7.3.2. Theme 2: Media

Media generated 88 hits on the Concept Map, and it refers to various media houses that report on the Provincial Government's actions.

Internal links/relationship

The media theme is linked to *reputation, platforms* and *communication* as concepts. Invariably, media provides platforms for government communication and plays a pivotal role in determining or influencing the Provincial Government's reputation.

External links/relationships

The media theme is directly linked to the *government* and *departments* themes. The theme slightly overlaps with the departments theme, because media gives coverage on the Provincial Government based on activities of various departments in the Eastern Cape. The media plays a vital role in reporting about government departments' actions that may include exposing malfeasance, which otherwise people would not know about due to a lack of transparency and limited communication.

7.3.3. Theme 3: Service

The *service* theme had 62 hits, and it refers to the service that the Provincial Government departments and municipalities provide to the people of the Eastern Cape.

Internal link/relationship

The service theme has *areas, deserve,* and *poor* as concepts. This internal link implies that people, particularly from the rural areas of the Eastern Cape, receive poor service from various Provincial Government departments and municipalities.

External link/relationship

The service theme overlaps with *citizens*, *government*, and *leadership*. The link with citizens and government themes is because people expect government departments to provide quality services in order to make their lives better. Further, in order to provide quality service, the Provincial Government needs capable, visionary leadership who puts people first, and show a high degree of competence.

7.3.4. Theme 4: Work

The *work* theme had 35 hits, and it refers to the Provincial Government as a workplace.

Internal links/relationship

The work theme is linked to the *work* concept.

External links/relationships

The work theme is directly related to the government theme as the Provincial Government is also a workplace and people form views about how it treats its employees.

7.3.5. Theme 5: Business

The *business* theme generated 32 hits, and it refers to the business sector within the Eastern Cape that relies on the Provincial Government for policy direction.

Internal links/relationships

The business theme has *business* as a concept.

External links/relationships

The business theme is directly related to *government* as business has vested interests in Eastern Cape Provincial Government policies and performance because they impact on their

operations. Policies include, among others, those that create conducive business environments, and promote investment and tourism in the Eastern Cape.

7.3.6. Theme 6: Corruption

The *corruption* theme generated 17 hits, and it relates to the fact that the Provincial Government may indulge in unethical activities that may impact service delivery, and its reputation.

Internal links/relationships

Corruption has *corruption* as a concept.

External links/relationships

The corruption theme is linked to the *leadership* and *government* themes. The link with leadership and government shows that it is people in leadership within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government that are prone to corruption.

7.3.7. Theme 7: Political

The *political* theme generated 16 hits, and it refers to political leadership within the Provincial Government, which includes the Premier, MECs, Mayors, Directors-General, Government Senior Management and Municipal Managers.

Internal links/relationships

The political theme has *political* as a concept.

External links/relationships

The political theme is directly linked to departments theme as government departments are associated with extreme political interference, which in many ways encumbers performance of the Provincial Government.

7.3.8. Theme 8: Citizens

Citizens had 16 hits, and it refers to people that reside in the Eastern Cape and who look up to government to provide them with public goods as prescribed in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

Internal links/relationships

The citizens theme is linked to *citizens* as a concept.

External links/relationships

The citizens theme is embedded in the *service* and *departments* themes. The link with service and departments illustrates that citizens expect government departments to provide services as required by the Constitution. Further, this theme is linked to government through the *people* concept, which shows that as citizens, people of the Eastern Cape expect the government to meet their expectations.

7.3.9. Theme 9: Leadership

The *leadership* theme had 14 hits.

Internal links/relationships

The leadership theme has *leadership* as a concept. the Eastern Cape Provincial Government leadership is assigned to oversee government departments and municipalities by, among other things, ensuring that government resources are efficiently managed and used to provide services.

External links/relationships

The leadership theme overlaps with the government and services themes and it shows a strong relationship with the two themes. This relationship shows that Eastern Cape Provincial Government leadership has a responsibility to provide services to people of the Eastern Cape.

7.3.10. Theme 10: Departments

The *departments* theme generated 13 hits, and this theme represents departments of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government that are responsible for providing services to the people of the Eastern Cape.

Internal links/relationships

The departments theme has *departments* as a concept.

External link/relationship

The departments theme is directly linked to *political*, *government*, *citizens*, *media* and *service* themes. The link with political, service, and government themes is because the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is a political entity and people expect it to provide services.

 A link with media shows that citizens largely rely on the media to receive information on the operations of government departments.

7.4. FIELD STUDY 3
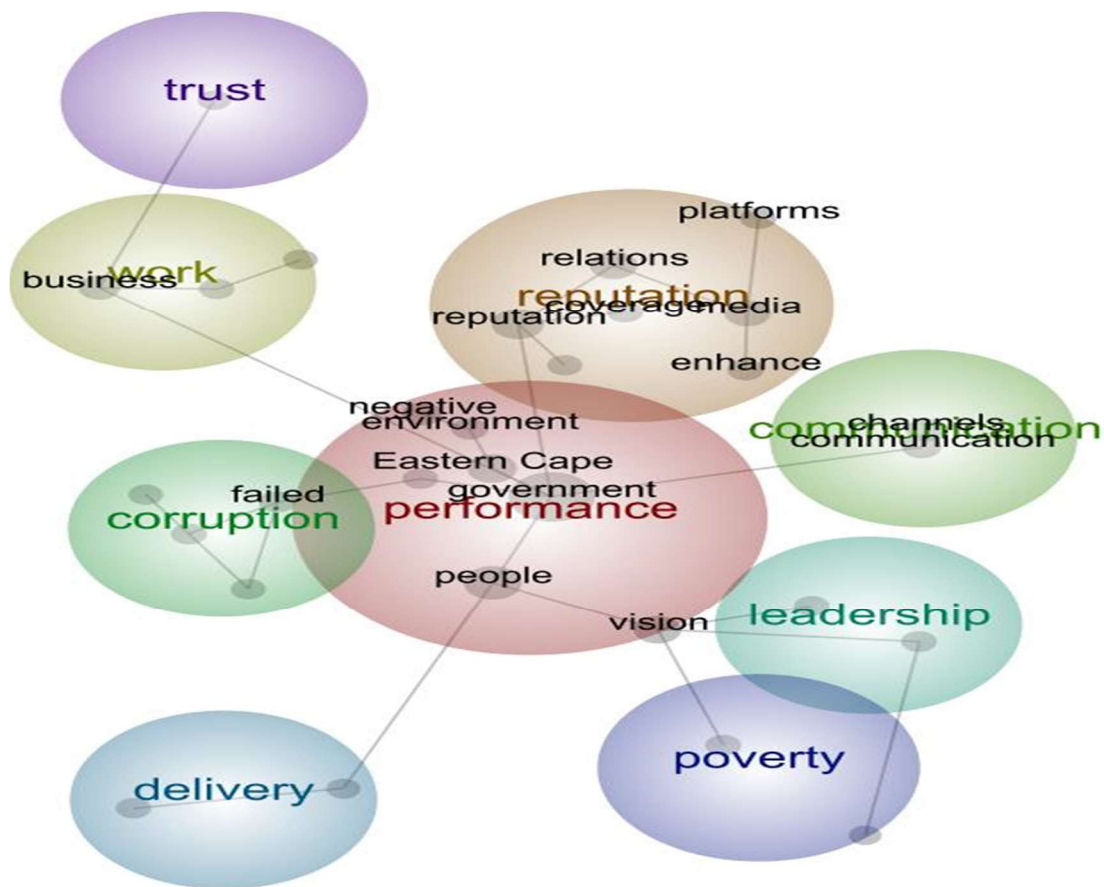
Figure 7.3: Field Study 3 Concept Map

Table 7.3: Shows Field Study 3 Concept Map results

Themes	Hits	Concepts

Performance	46	Negative, vision, environment, Eastern Cape, government, people
Reputation	18	Platforms, relations, coverage, media, reputation, enhance
Communication	8	Change, people
Work	5	Business
Corruption	4	Failed
Leadership	3	Leadership
Poverty	3	Poverty
Delivery	3	Delivery
Trust	2	Trust

7.4.1. Theme 1: Performance

Performance generated 46 hits, which is the biggest as depicted in the Concept Map. This theme refers to the performance of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government in delivering basic services to the people.

Internal links/relationships

The performance theme *has negative, vision, environment, Eastern Cape, government* and *people* as concepts. This internal relationship illustrates that people of the Eastern Cape are generally negative about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government and its performance, and they strongly feel that its leadership lacks vision.

External links/relationships

The performance theme is intricately linked to all the other seven themes, which are: *reputation*, *communication*, *work*, *corruption*, *leadership*, *poverty* and *delivery*. The link partially overlaps with reputation which illustrates the close relationship and the fact that poor performance of the Provincial Government may impact on its reputation.

Communication, delivery and leadership are also an important link, because Eastern Cape Provincial Government is obliged to communicate with its citizens to update them on its service delivery plans and performance, and invariably this requires a visionary leadership.

The link with work and environment shows that the Provincial Government must create sound working conditions for its employees. The Provincial Government's poor performance increasingly leads to a high rate of poverty, because services are not provided to the people.

7.4.2. Theme 2: Reputation

Reputation has generated 18 hits, and this refers to the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

Internal links/relationship

The reputation theme has *platforms, relations, coverage, media* and *enhance* as concepts. It is pivotal that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government builds and strengthens relations with various media houses so that it can use them as platforms for positive coverage and reinforce its reputation.

External links/relationships

Reputation is slightly embedded in *performance*. The link with performance is because reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is predicated on its performance. People form perceptions about government on the basis of their views on its performance level.

7.4.3. Theme 3: Communication

The *communication* theme had 8 hits, and this relates to how the Eastern Cape Provincial Government manages communication to empower people with information.

Internal links/relationships

Communication has *channels* as a concept, as the Eastern Cape Provincial Government must create multiple channels of communication to ensure that its messages reach diverse people of the Eastern Cape.

External links/relationships

The communication theme is directly related to *performance* because communication acts as a vehicle in ensuring that people are informed about government plans and processes.

Communication, therefore, plays a vital role in determining people's perceptions of government performance.

7.4.4. Theme 4: Work

Work generated five hits, and it refers to the Provincial Government as a place of work.

Internal links/relationships

Work has *business* as a concept.

External links/relationships

The work theme is directly linked to *trust* and it shows that the Provincial Government work environment and how it treats its employees may influence people's trust in the government. The link with performance is through the *negative, environment* and *Eastern Cape government* concepts. People perceive the Eastern Cape Provincial Government as having a negative work environment.

7.4.5. Theme 5: Corruption

The *corruption* theme had four hits.

Internal links/relationships

The corruption theme has *failed* as a concept. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government has consistently failed to provide quality basic services due to high levels of corruption.

External links/relationships

The corruption theme is embedded in performance and vice versa, and this shows that corruption has an enormous potential to retard Eastern Cape Provincial Government performance because resources that are intended to serve the needs of the people are squandered.

7.4.6. Theme 6: Leadership

Leadership had three hits.

Internal links/relationship

Leadership has *leadership* as a concept.

External links/relationships

The leadership theme is linked to performance through the *vision* and *people* concepts. This shows that people of the Eastern Cape believe that visionary leadership is crucial in enhancing government performance, because it is leadership that provides direction on how the government institutions must be managed. The leadership theme overlaps with poverty, and this relationship shows that leadership is instrumental in ensuring that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government renders meaningful services and mitigates any potential poverty inclinations.

7.4.7. Theme 7: Poverty

The *poverty* theme generated three hits, and it refers to poverty that the people of the Eastern Cape experience as a consequence of the Provincial Government's failure to look after their needs. The majority of people in the Eastern Cape have limited access to basic services and experience high levels of poverty. The Eastern Cape is the second poorest province in the country, which is an indication of the extent of poverty in the Province.

Internal links/relationships

Poverty has *poverty* as a concept.

External links/relationship

The poverty theme is related to *leadership* and *performance* via the *vision* concept, which essentially elucidates that where there is no visionary leadership, performance is adversely affected and poverty prevails. An effectively performing government is characterised by visionary leadership and low levels of poverty.

7.4.8. Theme 8: Delivery

The participant mentioned *delivery* three times during the interview, and it refers to the delivery of basic services in the Eastern Cape.

Internal links/relationships

The delivery theme has *delivery* as a concept. The mandate of the Provincial Government is to deliver basic quality services to the people in order to improve their lives.

External links/relationships

Delivery is directly linked to the *performance* theme. This direct relationship is because the performance of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is largely contingent on its delivery of basic services to the people.

7.4.9. Theme 9: Trust

Trust generated two hits, and it relates to the trust people have in the Provincial Government that it will fulfil its promises.

Internal links/relationships

The trust theme has *trust* as a concept.

External links/relationships

Trust is linked to the *work* theme and this illustrates that the workplace can determine the level of trust people place in the Provincial Government as an ideal place to work.

7.5. FIELD STUDY 4
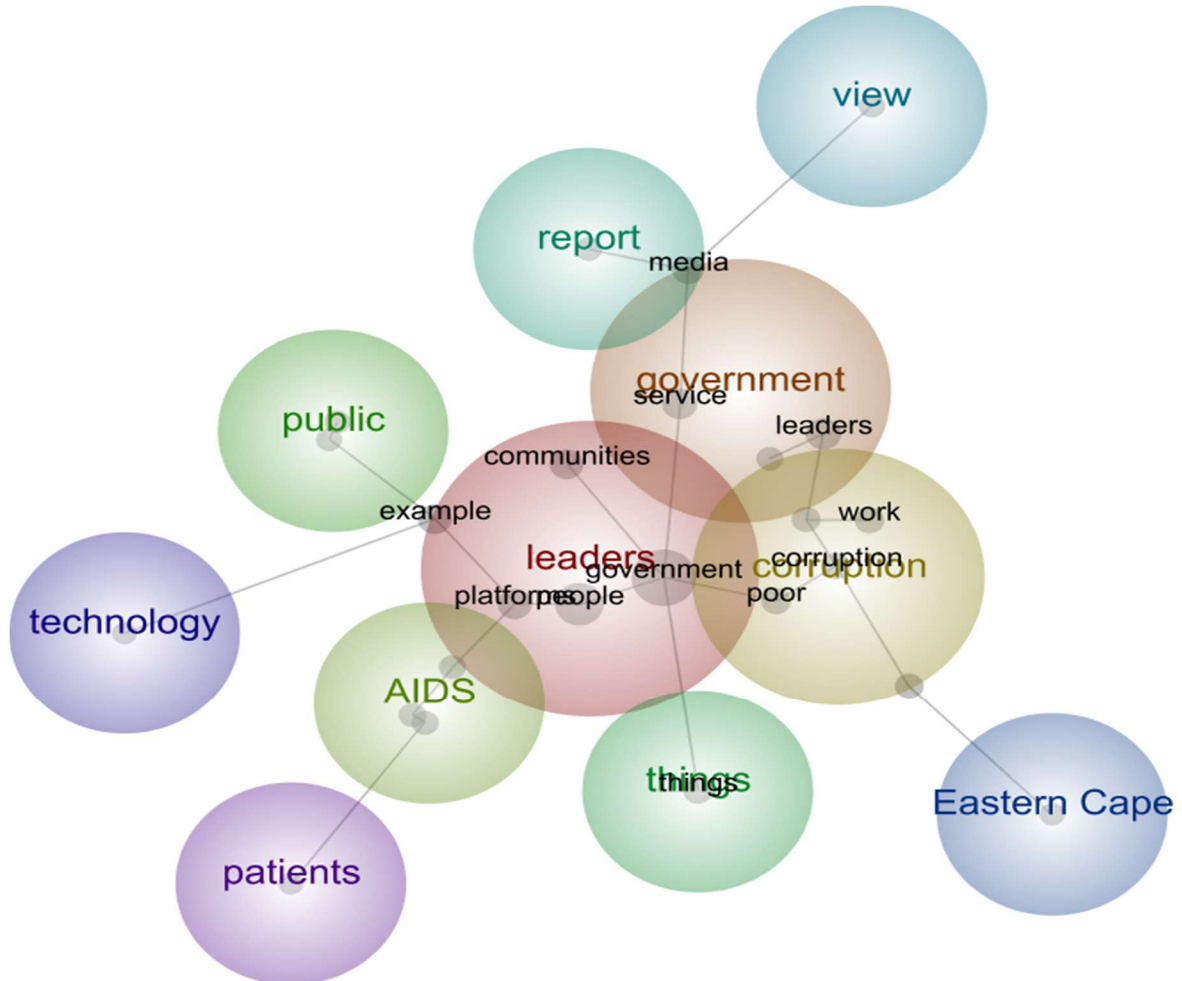
Figure 7.4: Field Study 4 Concept Map

Table 7.4: Shows Field Study 4 Concept Map results

Themes	Hits	Concepts
Leaders	39	Government, people, platforms, communities
Government	19	Leaders, service,

Corruption	11	Poor, work
Trust	6	Trust
Public	6	Public
AIDS	4	AIDS
Report	3	Media
Technology	3	Technology
Patients	2	Patients
Eastern Cape	2	View
View	2	Eastern Cape

7.5.1 Theme 1: Leaders

Leaders has generated 39 hits, and is the most central theme on the Concept Map. Provincial Government leaders include the Premier, Members of the Executive Council, Mayors and Council, Directors-General and Municipal Managers, and members of the executive management.

Internal links/relationships

Leaders has *communities, government, people* and *platform* as concepts. The Provincial Government leaders must use various media platforms in order to reach people from different communities.

External links/relationships

This theme overlaps with the corruption and government themes, because people of the Eastern Cape perceive leaders of government as fraught with corruption. Further, the theme is embedded in the AIDS theme, as the pandemic of HIV-AIDS is attributed to poor leadership within government. The direct relationship with trust demonstrates the significance of building trust with citizens. The link with the public theme exemplifies how critical it is for the Provincial Government leaders to treat the public as customers in order to sustain

legitimacy within the society they serve. This theme is also linked to technology because effective leaders embrace innovations, for example, they prioritise the use of technology.

7.5.2. Theme 2: Government

Government generated 19 hits, and this refers to the Provincial Government of the Eastern Cape which comprises both the provincial and local spheres.

Internal links/relationships

This theme has *service* and *leaders* as concepts. Leaders play a crucial role within the Provincial Government system, especially in the determination of policy imperatives. Their role includes ensuring that resources are utilised efficiently and services are sufficiently made available to the citizens.

External links/relationships

This theme overlaps with the *leaders* and *corruption* themes and this shows a close relationship between the themes because government leaders in the Eastern Cape are often associated with corruption due to increasing service delivery failures. The theme slightly overlaps with *report* via the *media* concept, as the media frequently report on what government does to meet the expectations of the people. For example, media reports perpetuate negative public perceptions about government leaders and the level of corruption. Further, the theme is linked to the *view* theme via media, because people form views about government based on what they hear or read in the media.

7.5.3. Theme 3: Corruption

The *corruption* theme has generated 11 hits, and it refers to growing cases of corruption within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

Internal links/relationships

This theme has *work* and *poor* as concepts. In the Provincial Government, corruption represents a *poor* governance system, where leaders renege in their *work,* and indulge in unethical practices which invariably thwart the service delivery efforts.

External links/relationships

Corruption is interrelated to the *government* and *leaders* themes and this shows how government and its leaders are often associated with corruption. The theme is also directly linked to the Eastern Cape as people develop attitudes about the Eastern Cape based on their perceptions of corruption within the Provincial Government.

7.5.4. Theme 4: Trust

Trust had six hits, and it refers to trust that people of the Eastern Cape have in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. Often people's trust in government is reinforced by the extent to which the government fulfils its promises and meet their expectations.

Internal links/relationships

The trust theme has *trust* as a concept.

External links/relationships

This theme is slightly embedded in the *leaders* theme, which shows a stronger relationship between the themes. The theme is also linked to leaders through the *government* concept as trust in government is chiefly determined by the action its leaders, who create platforms for meaningful communication and service delivery, take.

7.5.5. Theme 5: Public

This theme generated six hits, and refers to people or citizens in the Eastern Cape that benefit from the Provincial Government services.

Internal links/relationships

The *public* theme has *public* as a concept.

External links/relationships

This theme is linked to *leaders* via the concepts *examples* and *platforms* because the Eastern Cape Government leaders have to create platforms of communications for the citizens, for example by involving them in the decision-making through public participation.

7.5.6. Theme 6: AIDS

The participant mentioned the theme *AIDS* four times, and it refers to people of the Eastern Cape that are affected or effected by HIV-AIDS.

Internal links/relationships

This theme has *AIDS* as concept.

External links/relationships

There is a close relationship between the AIDS theme and the *leaders* theme because citizens expect government leaders to take necessary actions and make resources available to fight the scourge of the HIV-AIDS pandemic in the Eastern Cape. The theme is also directly related to patients, because the Eastern Cape has many people that live with HIV-AIDS.

7.5.7. Theme 7: Report

This theme received three hits, and it refers to media reports about the Provincial Government. Citizens receive reports about government actions in the media.

Internal links/relationships

This theme has *media* as a concept. Media consistently reports on the Provincial Government activities, and citizens essentially rely on media reports to receive information about government programmes, especially where government is less transparent.

External links/relationships

The report theme overlaps with the *government* theme, and is linked to government via the *media* concept. Media ensures that the manner in which government renders service is monitored, and people are kept abreast about developments within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The link with the *view* theme is through the *media* concept as it is through the media reports that citizens form views about government.

7.5.8. Theme 8: Technology

Technology had three hits, and it relates to how the Eastern Cape Provincial Government embraces new technological platforms to enhance service delivery and access to information.

Internal links/relationships

This theme has *technology* as a concept.

External links/relationships

The theme is related to the *leaders* theme and this is a crucial relationship as it accentuates the significance of the government leaders' commitment to adapt rapidly to new technological changes.

7.5.9. Theme 9: Patients

This theme had two hits, and it refers to the people of Eastern Cape who attend the public health facilities – especially those that have been effected by HIV-AIDS –   that are under the ambit of the Provincial Government.

Internal links/relationship

This theme has *patients* as a concept. Patients who attend clinics and hospitals in the Eastern Cape experience poor service due to incompetent government officials.

External links/relationships

This theme is linked to the *AIDS* theme and this relationship refers to people that are affected by the AIDS pandemic and rely on the Provincial Government for health support.

7.5.10. Theme 10: Eastern Cape

This theme was mentioned by two participants and it is about the Province of the Eastern Cape and its government.

Internal links/relationships

The *Eastern Cape* theme has *Eastern Cape* as a concept.

External links/relationships

This theme is directly linked to *corruption*, because people develop feelings about the perceived unethical conduct of the Provincial Government.

7.5.11. Theme 11: View

View generated two hits, and it refers to the views of the people of the Eastern Cape about the Provincial Government's actions.

Internal links/relationships

This theme has *view* as a concept.

External links/relationships

The theme is linked to the *report* theme via the *media* concept. The relationship between the *view* theme and *report* is central because citizens develop views about the Eastern Cape Government based on the reports they receive from various media houses.

7.6. FIELD STUDY 5
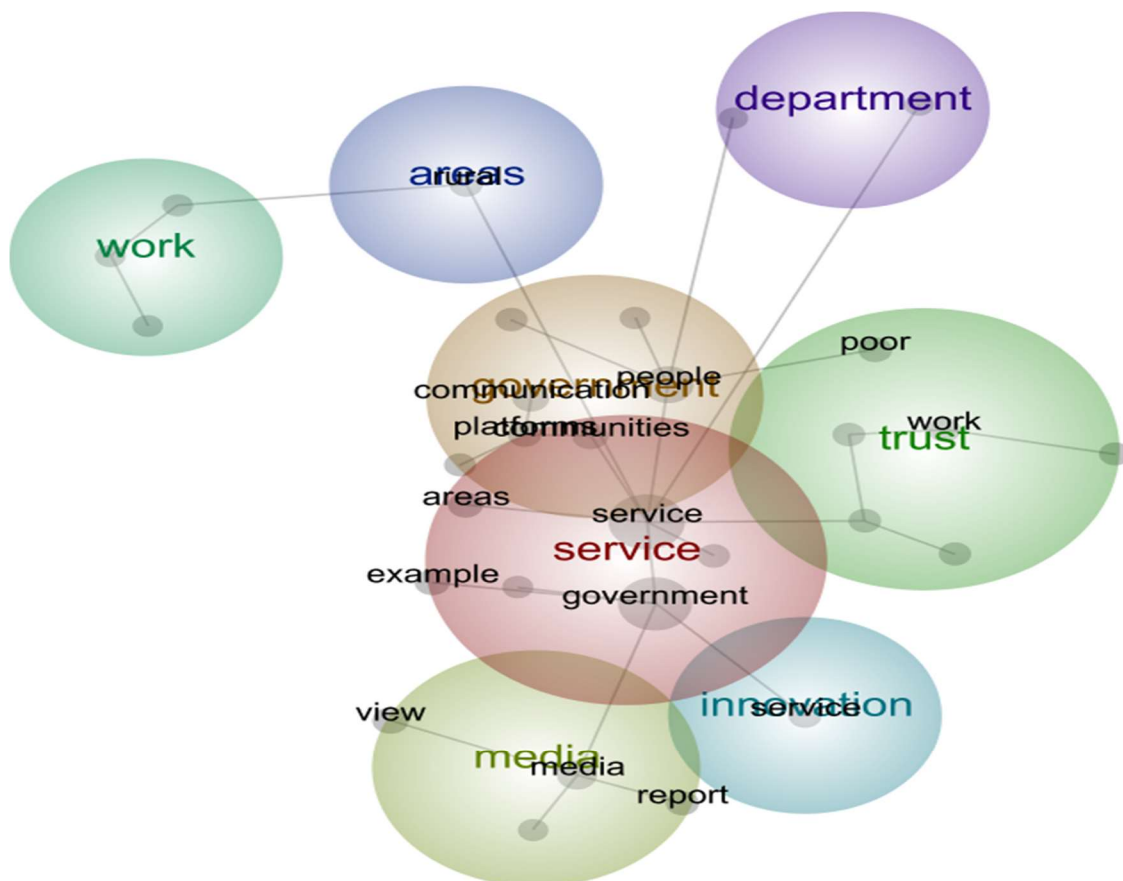
Figure 7.5: Field Study 5 Concept Map

Table 7.5: Field Study 5 Concept Map results

Theme	Hits	Concepts
Service	35	Areas, government
Government	14	People, communication, communities, platforms
Media	10	Report, view
Trust	8	Work, poor
Innovation	8	Service
Department	3	Department
Rural	2	Areas
Work	2	Work

7.6.1. Theme 1: Service

The *service* theme had 35 hits, and it refers to a service that the Provincial Government renders to the people of the Eastern Cape.

 Internal links/relationship

This service theme has *areas* and *government* as concepts. It is crucial that government establishes effective systems to provide services to people in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape.

External link/relationships

The service theme overlaps with the government theme via the *communities* and *platforms* concepts. This is a very strong relationship, as government has a constitutional obligation to provide services to the communities, for example, government utilises various platforms of communication to inform communities about the service. The service theme overlaps with the *trust*, *innovation* and *media* themes, which is a demonstration of the close relationship between the themes.

7.6.2. Theme 2: Government

The *government* theme has generated 14 hits, and it relates to the Provincial Government that provides services to the people of the Eastern Cape to improve their lives .

Internal links/relationships

Government has *people, communication, communities* and *platforms* as concepts. Developing meaningful communication platforms to reach communities must be a high government priority.

External links/relationship

This theme is embedded in the service theme, and this shows a strong relationship between the two themes. The service theme slightly overlaps with *trust* and is linked via the *poor* concept as poor service may diminish trust in government. This theme is directly linked to the areas and department themes.

7.6.3. Theme 3: Media

A total of 10 participants mentioned the *media* theme, and it refers to various media houses that report on government.

Internal links/relationships

This theme has *report* and *view* as a concepts.

External links/relationships

This theme overlaps and is closely related to the *service* and *innovation* themes. It is linked too the *service* theme via the *government* concept, because media reports on the government's service delivery processes. It is through media that in certain instances members of the public receive information about government's service delivery matters. The media theme slighty overlaps with innovation.

7.6.4. Theme 4: Trust

This theme generated eight hits, and it refers to the *trust* people have in government.

Internal links

Trust has *poor* and *work* as concepts. People's trust in government may be impacted by the poor working conditions.

External links

The trust theme shows strong link with the *service* theme, and this is chiefly because the trust in Provincial Government is fundamentally incumbent upon the perceived ability to provide services. This theme slightly overlaps with the service and government themes, and it shows that the trust of the people of the Eastern Cape in the Provincial Government relies much on the service it renders.

7.6.5. Theme 5: Innovation

This theme had eight hits, and this refers to innovative initiatives that the Provincial Government pursue to improve the delivery of services to the people.

Internal links

This theme has *innovation* as a concept.

External links

The relationship partially overlaps with the *media* and *service* themes. This is because there are new, innovative media platforms that government can embrace to enhance service delivery and its communication strategies.

7.6.6. Theme 6: Department

The *department* theme had three hits, and it refers to the Eastern Cape Provincial departments that provide services to citizens.

Internal links

This theme has *department* as a concept.

External links

The theme is linked to *service,* because government departments are seized with the responsibility of providing services to the people of the Eastern Cape in order to improve lives.

7.6.7. Theme 7: Rural

The *rural* theme generated two hits, and it specifically refers to the rural areas of the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

Rural has *areas* as a concept. The Eastern Cape Province is predominantly rural and poor, therefore, the Provincial Government must prioritise providing basic services to rural areas.

External links

The rural theme is directly linked to the Government theme, as it is the Provincial Government that has an exclusive mandate to develop and provide services to the rural areas of the Eastern Cape that experience high rates of poverty and unemplyment.

7.6.8. Theme 8: Work

The *work* theme had two hits, and it essentially relates to the Provincial Government as an ideal place to work.

Internal links

This theme has *work* as a concept.

External links

The theme is directly linked to the *areas* theme, which shows that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government may also provide work in rural areas, which is often undesirable due to poor working conditions.

7.7. FIELD STUDY 6

Figure 7.6: Field Study 6 Concept Map

Table 7.6: Shows Field Study 6 Concept Map results

Theme	Hits	Concept
Communication	27	Eastern Cape, departments, examples
Government	18	Service, government
Poverty	14	Office, premier, development
Media	11	Media, social
Corruption	10	Corruption
Service	9	Poor, service
Perceptions	6	People
Innovation	5	Innovation

Trust	4	Houses, fact
Employees	4	Employees
Feeling	3	Feelings

7.7.1. Theme 1: Communication

Communication generated 27 hits, and it refers to the Provincial Government communication with people of the Eastern Cape through various platforms. Communication is a conduit between the Provincial Government and the Eastern Cape citizens.

Internal links

This theme has *Eastern Cape* and *departments* as concepts. Provincial departments should engage in communicating with people through various platforms, including social media platforms.

External links

The theme is linked to *government* through the *service* concept. The relationship between the communication theme and government is essential because communication provides platforms for government to engage its people about service delivery issues. The theme is linked to service through the *poor* concept because where there is perceived poor service delivery, there is also a lack of communication. The link with poverty through the *development* concept shows that in order to reduce poverty, people should be involved in development initiatives through rigorous communication processes. The communication theme is linked to *trust* through the *houses* concept because people have lost trust in the Provincial Government due to a lack of communication on the progress on their applications for houses. Further, the theme is related to *innovation* via the *departments* and *Eastern Cape* concepts. The Provincial Government must keep pace with the rapid technological developments to ensure that their communication is effective and meaningful.

7.7.2. Theme 2: Government

The *government* theme had 18 hits.

Internal links

This theme has *service* as a concept. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa has mandated the Provincial Government to provide basic services to the people of the Eastern Cape.

External links

Government overlaps with the *perceptions* theme, and is linked via the *people* concept. This close relationship shows that people of the Eastern Cape form perceptions about how the Provincial Government conducts itself. The government theme is directly linked to *communication* because the Provincial Government is obliged to provide information to people through various communication platforms and channels. This theme is linked to *corruption* through the *people* concept, and this is because people perceive government to be fraught with corruption. The government theme is linked to *service* through the *departments* concept, and this is because government departments are responsible for the provision of services to the citizens.

7.7.3. Theme 3: Poverty

Poverty had generated 14 hits, and it refers to the poverty that the people of the Eastern Cape experience due to poor service delivery and a lack of development.

Internal links

The poverty theme has *premier, office* and *development* as concepts. The Office of the Premier should drive development initiatives in order to reduce the high rate of poverty in the Eastern Cape.

External links

Poverty is linked to *communication* through the *development* concept. In order to alleviate high levels of poverty, the government must involve people in its development initiatives through effective communication. The poverty theme is also linked to *government* through the *service* concept, and this illustrates that poverty results from the Eastern Cape Government's failure to deliver basic services to the people.

7.7.4. Theme 4: Media

Media had 11 hits, and it refers to the various media houses and social media platforms that report about the Provincial Government.

Internal links

This theme has *social* as a concept. The Provincial Government must embrace social media as communication platform.

External links

The *media* theme is linked to *trust* through the *social* and *houses* concepts. This essentially shows that social media can influence people's trust in the Provincial Government, and people's biggest concern in the Eastern Cape is slow delivery of houses. There is an important relationship between the *media* and *feelings* theme, because citizens form opinions about the Provincial Government based on what they hear from the media. The media represents a communication platform for the Provincial Government, and it is linked to communication through the houses concept.

7.7.5. Theme 5: Corruption

Corruption had 10 hits, and it relates to corruptions that occurs within the Provincial Government.

Internal links

This theme has *corruption* as a concept.

External links

The *corruption* theme is directly linked to *perceptions*, and this illustrates that citizens form perceptions of high levels of corruption within the Provincial Government. There is also a relationship between *corruption* and *government*, which is through the *people* concept. People of the Eastern Cape attribute a myriad of socio-economic challenges of the Eastern Cape to the rampant corruption within the Provincial Government.

7.7.6. Theme 6: Service

The *service* theme had nine hits.

Internal links

This theme has *poor* as a concept.

External links

The service theme is linked to *communication* through the *poor* and *departments* concepts. Poor service delivery in the Eastern Cape is attributed to government departments who downplay the role of communication.

6.7.7. Theme 7: Perceptions

Perceptions had generated six hits, and here it specifically relates to perceptions that people form about the Provincial Government based on their experiences.

Internal links

This theme has *people* as concept. People of the Eastern Cape form perceptions about the Provincial Government.

External links

The perceptions theme overlaps with *government*, *corruption* and *employees*. A strong link with the government theme indicates that citizens form perceptions about the Provincial Government based on their experiences with how the government conducts itself. The relationship with corruption is quite relevant because people of the Eastern Cape form perceptions about the levels of corruption within the Provincial Government. Perceptions are also formed about the Provincial Government employees' level of competence and how they discharge their duties.

7.7.8. Theme 8: Innovation

This theme received five hits, and it refers to the extent to which the Eastern Cape Provincial Government embraces new technologies and easily adapt to change in an endeavour to expedite service delivery.

Internal links

The innovation theme has *innovation* as a concept.

External links

This theme is also linked to *service* through the *departments* concept, and this is because government departments have to improve service delivery by harnessing new innovative technologies.

7.7.9. Theme 9: Trust

Trust had four hits, and it refers to the trust people of the Eastern Cape have in the Provincial Government.

Internal links

The trust theme has *houses* as concept. The extent to which the Provincial Government provides houses will largely determine the trust people have in the Government.

External links

This theme is linked to the *communication* and *media* themes via the *houses* concept. The Provincial Government must use various media platforms to update people, which is made in respect to their applications for houses. Trust is also linked to *poverty* through the *houses*, *example* and *development* concepts.

7.7.10. Theme 10: Employees

Employees generated four hits, and it refers to the employees of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

Internal links

This theme has *employees* as a concept.

External links

The employees theme is directly linked to *government*, and this illustrates the fact that the government officials are tasked to provide services to the people of the Eastern Cape; they are the contact point for the Provincial Government. The employees theme overlaps with the *perceptions* theme, and this strong relationship shows that citizens invariably form perceptions about how government employees treat them at service points.

7.7.11. Theme 11: Feeling

This theme had three hits, and it refers to the *feelings* of the people of the Eastern Cape about the Provincial Government, and how it fulfils its promises.

Internal links

The feeling theme has *feeling* as a concept.

External links

This theme is directly linked to the *media* theme. Reports that people receive from various media platforms influence their feelings towards the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

7.8. FIELD STUDY 7
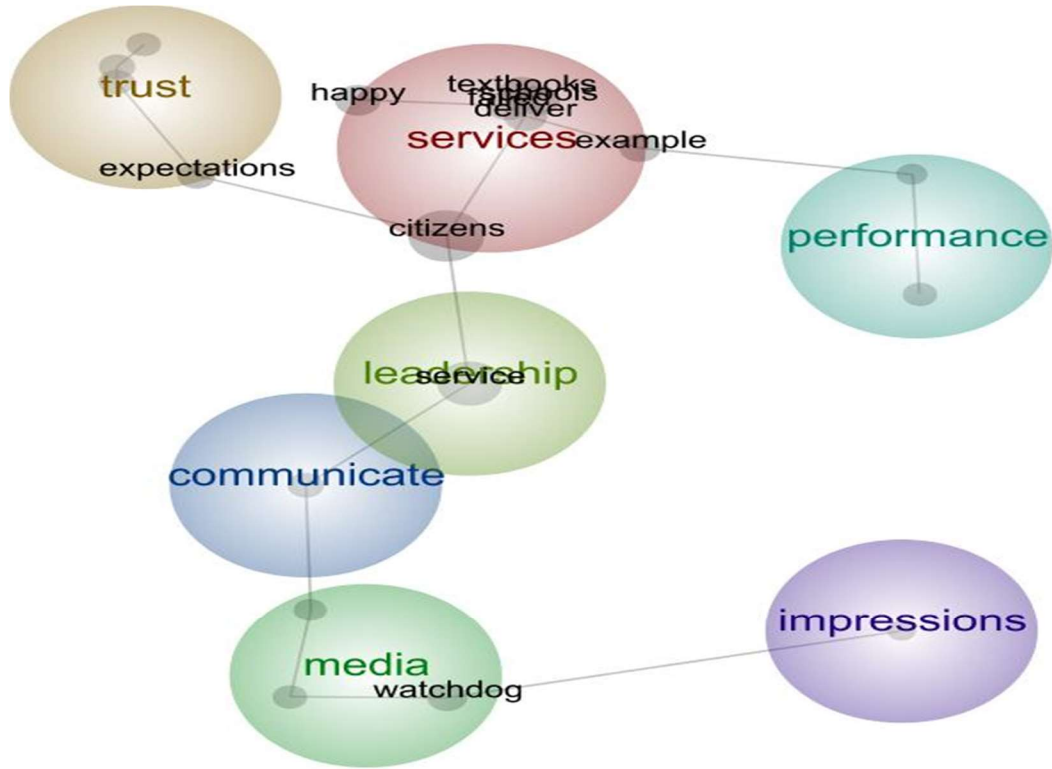
Figure 7.7: Field Study 7 Concept Map

Table 7.7: Shows Field Study 7 Concept Map results

Theme	Hits	Concepts
Services	324	Happy, textbooks, deliver, example, citizens
Trust	88	Expectations
Leadership	51	Service
Media	35	Watchdog
Impressions	32	Impressions

Performance	17	Performance
communicate	16	Communicate

7.8.1. Theme 1: Services

Services generated the biggest hits totalling 324, and it refers to services that the Eastern Provincial Government provides to fulfil the needs of the citizens through rigorous delivery of quality basic services.

Internal links

This theme has the following concepts: *happy, textbooks, deliver* and *citizens.* Citizens are generally not happy with how the Provincial Government delivers services, especially the delivery of textbooks to schools.

External links

The *services* theme is linked to the *leadership* theme through the *citizens* concept, and the importance of this relationship is that citizens hold the Provincial Government leadership accountable for the delivery of quality basic services. The link with *performance* shows that the extent to which the Eastern Cape Provincial Government delivers services, characterises its level of performance. The link with *leadership* is quite crucial because effective delivery of services requires a strong provincial government leadership. The services theme is also linked to *trust* through the *citizens* and *expectations* concepts.

7.8.2. Theme 2: Trust

Trust had 88 hits, and it relates to the trust people have in the Provincial Government that it will fulfil its promises.

Internal links

This theme has *expectations* as a concept. People of the Eastern Cape have expectations that the Provincial Government will fulfil its promises of delivering basic quality services.

External links

Trust is linked to the *services* and *leadership* themes via the *expectations* and *citizens* concepts. This is an important relationship, because in order to build trust, the Eastern Cape Provincial Government leadership must strive to meet the expectations of the citizens by delivering quality basic *services*.

7.8.3. Theme 3: Leadership

This theme generated 51 hits, and it refers to the *leadership* within the Provincial Government.

Internal links

The leadership theme has *service* as a concept. Easter Cape Premier, MECs, Mayors, HODs and Municipal Managers must play a proactive role in ensuring that services are provided to the people of the Eastern Cape.

External links

This theme shows a strong relationship with *communicate*, and this is because in order to be effective, the Eastern Cape Provincial Government leadership must constantly communicate with citizens. The link with *services* and *trust* is through the *citizen* and *expectations* concepts. The Eastern Cape Government leadership must strive to meet the expectations of the citizens by providing basic *services*, thus heightening *trust* in government.

7.8.4. Theme 4: Media

This theme had 35 hits, and it related to media platforms that give publicity on the actions of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

Internal links

The media theme has *watchdog* as a concept. The media plays a watchdog role by monitoring and reporting on what the Provincial Government is doing.

External links

This theme is directly linked to *communicate*, and this link shows that the media is an important platform to communicate government information. The link with *impressions* is

critical because citizens form opinions about the Provincial Government on the basis of media reports.

7.8.5. Theme 5: Impressions

This theme has generated 32 hits, and it refers to the *impressions* that people form about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. Citizens will form overall impressions based on their perceptions of how the Provincial Government delivers on its mandate.

Internal links

The impressions theme has *impressions* as a concept.

External links

This theme is linked to the *media* theme through the *watchdog* concept, and this is because through the watchdog role, the media exposes serious weaknesses within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government and citizens form impressions based on such exposés.

7.8.6. Theme 6: Performance

This theme generated 17 hits, and it refers to the performance of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

Internal links

The performance theme has *performance* as a concept.

External links

This theme is directly linked to *services*. The performance of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is largely contingent on its capacity to deliver quality basic services.

7.8.7. Theme 7: Communicate

This theme had 16 hits, and it refers to the extent to which the Easter Cape Provincial Government communicates with the citizens, and whether there is sufficient sharing of information on government plans and programmes.

Internal links

Communicate has *communicate* as a concept.

External links

The communicate theme overlaps with the *leadership* theme and this shows a strong relationship. Citizens expect government leadership to constantly communicate and integrate them into the government decision-making processes.

7.9. FIELD STUDY 8
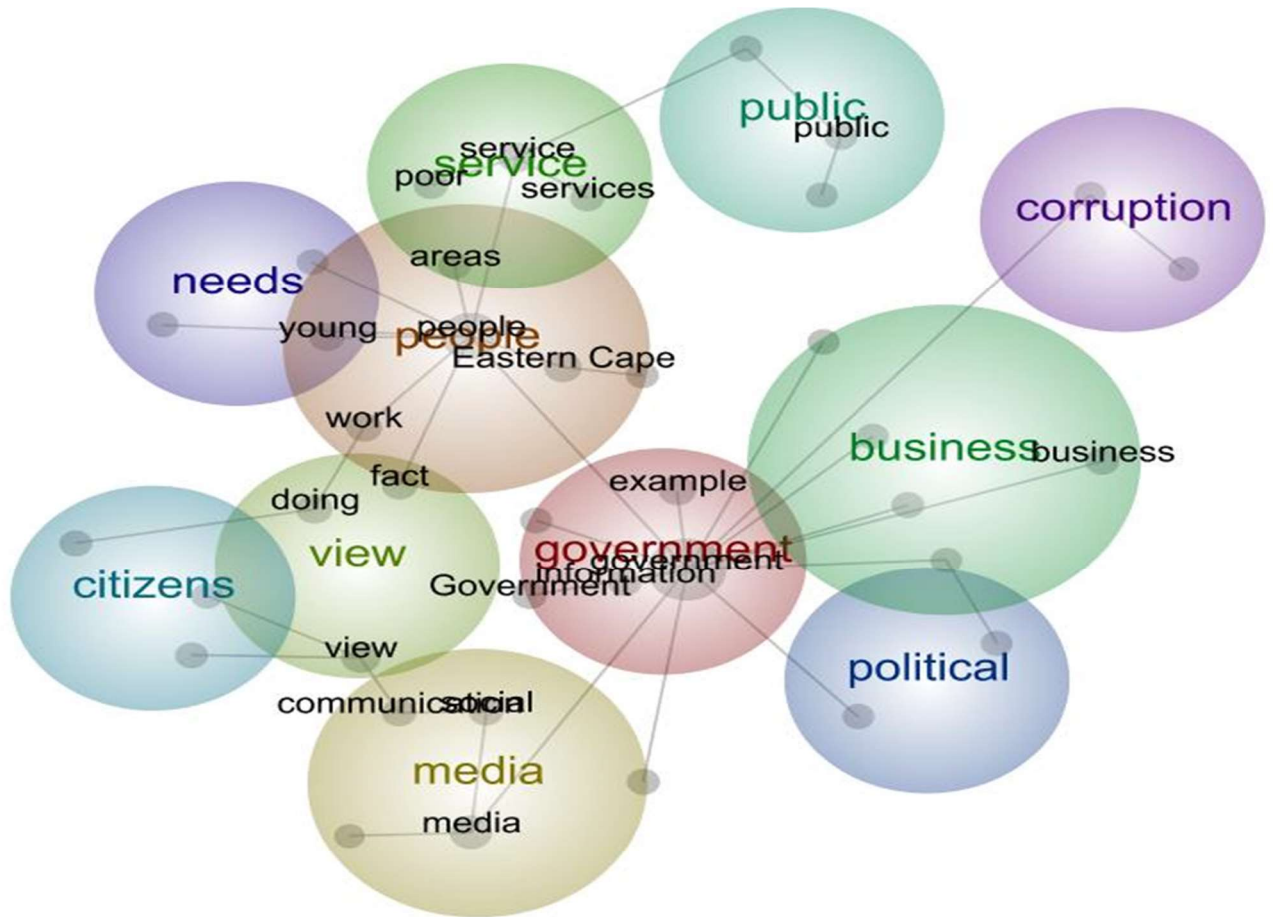
Figure 7.8: Field Study 8 Concept Map

Table 7.8: Shows Field Study 8 Concept Map results

Theme	Hits	Concepts
Government	362	Government, example, information
People	228	People, Eastern Cape, work, young, areas
View	105	View, doing, fact
Media	99	Media, social, communication
Service	84	Service, poor, services
Business	32	Service
Citizens	24	Business
Public	23	Public
Corruption	21	Corruption
Needs	17	Needs
Political	17	Political

7.9.1. Theme 1: Government

Government generated 362 hits which is the biggest hit, and it refers to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government is at the centre to fulfil expectations of citizens through the provision of basic quality services.

Internal links

The government theme has *information* as a concept. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government has to ensure that people constantly receive information on its programmes.

External links

This theme shows an overlap with the *business* theme, which illustrates the fact that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government should play a fundamental role in creating an enabling environment for business to thrive. The theme is linked to *political*, which illustrates that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is characterised by political interference. The link with *media* is because media has an immense influence on the people and often sets the agenda in the public discourse. The link with *corruption* and *people* shows that people of the Eastern Cape perceive the Provincial Government as fraught with corruption.

7.9.2. Theme 2: People

The *people* theme made 228 hits, and it refers to people in the Eastern Cape who are beneficiaries of the Provincial Government services.

Internal links

The theme has the following as concepts: *people, Eastern Cape, work, young* and *areas.* Young people of the Eastern Cape believe that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is not an ideal place to work.

External links

This theme overlaps with *service* and *needs*, which shows a strong relationship between the themes. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government has a mandatory responsibility to provide quality basic services in order to meet the needs of the people. The link with *view* shows that people have views about how the Eastern Cape Provincial Government conducts its business.

7.9.3. Theme 3: View

The *view* theme has received 105 hits, and it refers to how people view the Provincial Government.

Internal link

This theme has *view* and *young* as concepts. Young people in the Eastern Cape view the Eastern Cape Provincial Government in a negative light due to perceived poor service delivery, among other things.

External links

The view theme is partially embedded in *people*, *citizens* and *media* themes, which demonstrates strong relationships. People have specific views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government service delivery capability, while various media houses also express their views through publicity on government actions.

7.9.4. Theme 4: Media

This theme generated 99 hits, and it refers to media institutions that play a critical role in providing information on the Eastern Cape Provincial Government's activities.

Internal links

The media theme has *social* and *communication* as concepts. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government should embrace social media in its communication machinery in order to heighten information sharing.

External links

This theme is directly linked to view, because people form views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government based on what is reported on in the media. There is also a significant link with *citizens* through the *view* concept. Media publicity influence citizen's views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, and they form perceptions on the basis of what media has marshalled into the public domain.

7.9.5. Theme 5: Service

Service had 84 hits, it refers to the service that the Provincial Government provides to the people of the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

This theme has *service* as a concept.

External links

The service theme is embedded in the *people* theme, and vice versa, and this is because people of the Eastern Cape expect the Eastern Cape Provincial Government to provide good

customer service. The theme is directly linked to the public theme, and this shows that the public in the Eastern Cape expect good service from the Provincial Government.

7.9.6. Theme 6: Business

Business had 32 hits, and it refers to business organisations in the Eastern Cape that are significant Eastern Cape Provincial Government stakeholders.

Internal links

Business has *business* as a concept.

External links

The business theme overlaps with the *government* theme and vice versa, which demonstrates a strong relationship. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government regulates policy direction for business, and in return business grows the economy. There is a reciprocal relationship between the two entities.

7.9.7. Theme 7: Citizens

This theme had 24 hits, and it represents people that reside in the Eastern Cape and benefit from the services of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

Internal links

Citizens has *citizens* as a concept.

External links

The citizen theme overlaps with *view* and this shows strong relationships, because citizens have views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government based on their experiences in interacting with various government departments.

7.9.8. Theme 8: Public

Public had 23 hits, and it refers to the public in the Eastern Cape who are consumers of government services.

Internal links

The public theme has *public* as a concept.

External links

The public theme is directly linked to *services* as people rely on the Provincial Government services for their survival.

7.9.9. Theme 9: Corruption

Corruption generated 21 hits, and here it relates to corruption within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

Internal links

Corruption has *corruption* as a concept.

External links

The corruption theme is directly related to *government,* because the Provincial Government is mostly associated with corruption.

7.9.10: Theme 10: Needs

The *needs* theme had 17 hits, and it refers to the needs of the people of the Eastern Cape, which the Provincial Government must fulfil.

Internal links

The needs theme has *need* as a concept.

External links

This theme is directly linked to the *people* theme, and there is an overlap between the two themes. This shows that there is a strong relationship between the themes, and this is because the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is obligated to meet the needs of the people in order to obtain acceptance and be regarded as an effective institution. The social contract between the Provincial Government and people depends on the government's ability to deliver on its promises.

7.9.11. Theme 11: Political

This theme had 17 hits, and it refers to the *political* role within the Provincial Government.

Internal links

Political has *political* as a concept.

External links

This theme is linked to *government*, because politics impacts on how the Eastern Cape Provincial Government strives to discharge its constitutional mandate. The overlap with *business* shows the close relationship because it is the government that sets the policy direction for business.

7.10. FIELD STUDY 9

Figure 7.9: Field Study 9 Concept Map

Table 7.9: Shows Field Study 9 Concept Map results

Theme	Hits	Concepts
Trust	21	Government, people, citizens, media, poor
Media	8	Platforms, service
Development	7	Services, provide
Communication	5	Communication
Government	4	Trust
Citizens	4	Citizens
Needs	3	Needs, failing
Unemployment	2	Unemployment
Services	2	Services

6.10.1 Theme 1: Trust

The *trust* theme has generated 21 hits, and it refers to the trust people have in the Provincial Government of the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

This theme has *government, people, citizens, media* and *poor* as concepts. The citizens' trust in government is mostly determined by the quality of services it provides.

External links

This theme is closely related to *media* because media plays a pivotal role in building citizen trust in government through regular publicity of government matters that otherwise citizens would not have known about. The trust theme overlaps with *government*, which shows a close relationship. Trust is linked to the government theme via the *report* concept, as citizens receive media reports about what occurs within the government institutions, which can have an impact on the trust citizens have in the Provincial Government.

The trust theme is linked to the media theme through the *service* and *platforms* concepts as the media provides citizens with platforms to access government. Trust is also linked to *development* via the *government* and *provide* concepts, which illustrate the fact that the Provincial Government must accelerate the provision of services in order meet its development agenda.

7.10.2. Theme 2: Media

This theme generated eight hits, and it refers to media institutions and platforms that report on the Provincial Government.

Internal links

The media theme has *service* and *platforms* as concepts. The Provincial Government should utilise various media platforms to communicate services to the people.

External links

This theme is directly linked to the *trust* theme, and this is because the media has interest in the actions of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government and exercises a watchdog role, and this may impact on the trust people have in government. The theme also overlaps with *communication*, which shows a strong relationship. The media provides credible and wide-ranging communication platforms for government to profile its programmes and services. The media is also a formidable source of information for the people of the Eastern Cape.

7.10.3. Theme 3: Development

This theme had seven hits, and here it refers to the *development* initiatives that the Provincial Government undertakes to improve the lives of the people.

Internal links

The development theme has *services* and *provide* as concepts. In order to regain trust of the people, the Provincial Government must accelerate development through the provision of services.

External links

The development theme is linked to the *trust* theme via the *provide* and *government* concepts. The theme is embedded in the *needs* theme, which demonstrates a close relationship between the two themes, because it is through the acceleration of development that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government will be able to fulfil the needs of the citizens.

7.10.4. Theme 4: Communication

The *communication* theme has received five hits, and it refers to communication within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government that seeks to empower people with information on its programme.

Internal links

This theme has *communication* as a concept. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government has an obligation to communicate with people of the Eastern Cape in order to empower them and receive their buy-in.

External links

The communication theme slightly overlaps with the *media* theme, and this essentially illustrates the strong relationship between the themes. The link with media shows that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government can use the media as a communication platform to transmit information to citizens.

7.10.5. Theme 5: Government

The *government* theme has received four hits, and relates to the trust people have in the Provincial Government.

Internal links

This theme has *government* as a concept.

External links

The government theme is embedded in the *trust* theme, and this shows that trust is quite crucial for the Eastern Cape Provincial Government to be accepted by citizens.

This theme is linked to the trust theme via the *report* and *media* concepts, which implies that media reports may influence people's trust in government.

7.10.6. Theme 6: Citizens

Citizens generated four hits.

Internal links

The citizens theme has *citizens* as a concept.

External links

This theme overlaps with *unemployment*, and this relationship shows that citizens are more concerned with unemployment in the Eastern Cape. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government must therefore adopt policy imperatives to alleviate the scourge. Citizens is further linked to *services* as they expect the Eastern Cape Provincial Government to provide quality basic services.

7.10.7. Theme 7: Needs

The *needs* theme has three hits, and it refers to the needs of the people that the Provincial Government strives to fulfil.

Internal links

The needs theme has *needs* as a concept.

External links

This theme overlaps with *services* and *development* and this close relationship shows that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has a mandatory responsibility to fulfil the needs of citizens, and to further drive the development agenda to improve the lives of the people.

7.10.8. Theme 8: Unemployment

This theme generated two hits, and refers to the rate of *unemployment* in the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

Unemployment has *unemployment* as a concept.

External links

Unemployment is directly linked to citizens, because citizens, especially young people in the Eastern Cape, bear the brunt of unemployment, where there is more than 47% unemployed young people.

7.10.9. Theme 9: Services

Participants that mentioned *services* were two.

Internal link

Services has *services* as a concept.

External links

The services theme overlaps with the *needs* theme, because people of the Eastern Cape expect the Provincial Government to fulfil their basic needs. The theme is also linked to citizens who desire rapid provision of services.

7.11 FIELD STUDY 10
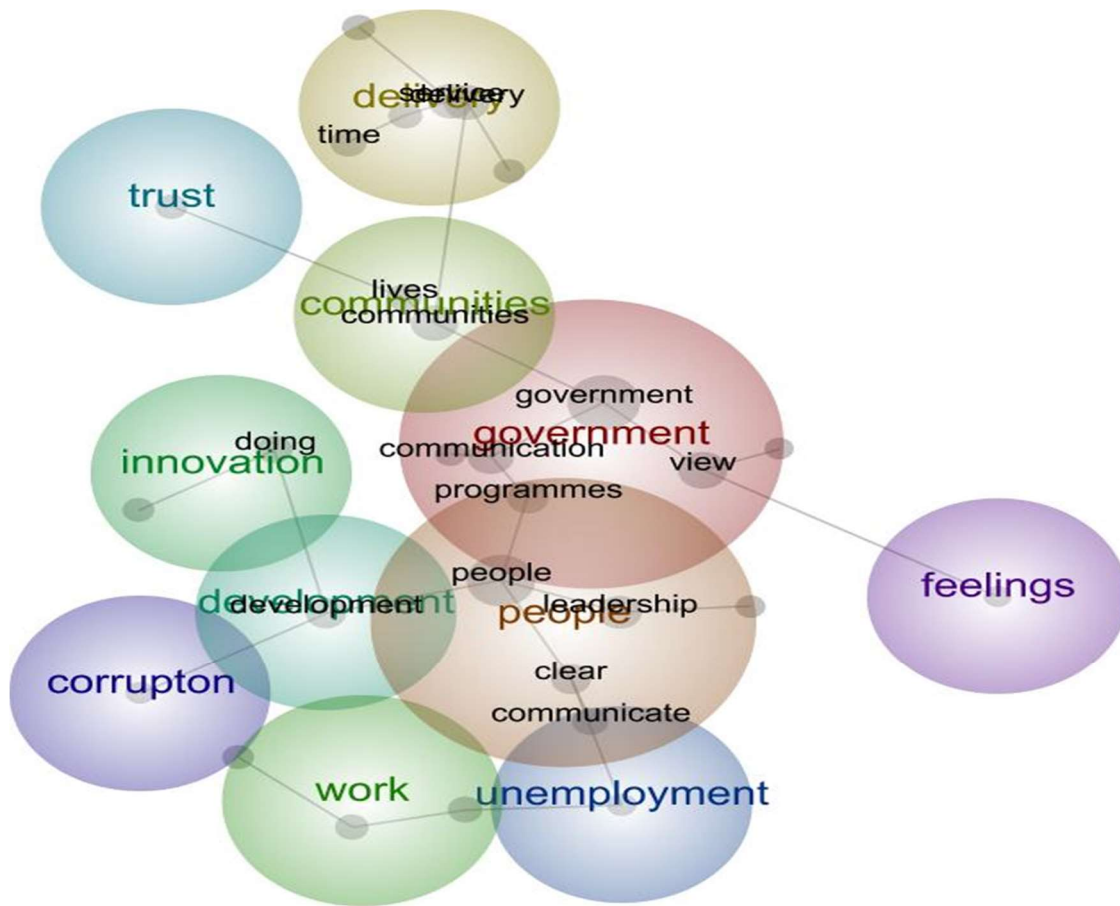
Figure 7.10: Field Study 10 Concept Map

Table 7.10: Shows Field Study 10 Concept Map results

Theme	Hits	Concepts
People	26	People, leadership, clear, communicate
Government	24	Government, view, communication, programmes
Delivery	9	Delivery, service, time
Development	7	Development
Work	7	Work

Communities	7	Communities, lives
Innovation	5	Innovation
corruption	5	Corruption
Unemployment	4	Unemployment
Feelings	3	Feelings
Trust	3	Trust

7.11.1. Theme 1: People

The *people* theme has generated 26 hits, and it relates to people in the Eastern Cape who are beneficiaries of the Provincial Government services. The Provincial Government exists to serve people.

Internal links

This theme has the following concepts: *people, leadership, clear* and *communicate.* People of the Eastern Cape expect the Provincial Government leadership to communicate clear messages on issues that affect them.

External links

There is an overlap with *government*, *development* and *unemployment*, and this shows a strong relationship between the themes. This is because the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is responsible for the development of the people of the Eastern Cape who are currently ravaged by the high rate of unemployment.

7.11.2. Theme 2: Government

The *government* theme had 24 hits, and it refers to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

Internal links

This theme has the following concepts: *view*, *communication* and *programmes*. People are of the view that the communication of government programmes in the Eastern Cape is inadequate.

External links

The *government* theme is closely related to the *communities* and *people* themes. This intricate link is an illustration of the prominent role that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government supposedly should play to meet the needs and expectations of communities and people of the Eastern Cape, who rely exclusively on the government for basic services. The link with *feelings* demonstrates that people form opinions about the Provincial Government based on their experiences.

7.11.3. Theme 3: Delivery

Delivery generated nine hits, and it refers to the delivery of services in the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

The delivery theme has *service* and *time* as concepts. People wait for a long time to access service in some government centers, such as clinics in the Eastern Cape, and this causes immense frustration among people.

External links

This theme is directly linked to *communities* and *trust* themes. The link to communities relates to the fact that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has a mandate to deliver services to communities. It is linked to trust because if the Provincial Government fails to deliver services, citizen trust in government deteriorates.

7.11.4. Theme 4: Development

Development had seven hits, and it relates to the development programmes of the Provincial Government that is intended to change the lives of the people.

Internal links

The development theme has *development* as a concept.

External links

This theme overlaps with *people*, *corruption*, *work* and *innovation*. The strong relationship with people is because people expect the Provincial Government to expedite development. The strong link with corruption shows that rampant corruption within the Provincial Government hampers development. Part of development is the provision of work opportunities within the Provincial Government. The strong link with innovation is because embracing innovation accelerates development.

7.11.5. Theme 5: Work

The *work* theme had 7 hits, and here it refers to Provincial Government officials' dedication to their work.

Internal links

The work theme has work as a concept.

External links

This theme is closely related to *corruption* because officials who work for the Provincial Government are often associated with corruption. The link with *people* and *development* shows that in order to effectively deliver services, the Provincial Government should have people who are very committed to their work and who are competent, which will reinforce development.

7.11.6. Theme 6: Communities

Communities had seven hits, and it refers to communities in the Eastern Cape whose interests are served by the Provincial Government.

Internal links

The communities theme has *lives* as a concept. The Provincial Government must expedite delivery of services so as to improve the lives of the people.

External links

This theme is embedded in *government* and vice versa, and this shows a very strong relationship between the two themes. Eastern Cape communities invariably rely on the

Provincial Government for their development. In cases where the Provincial Government fails to deliver services, trust diminishes.

7.11.7. Theme 7: Innovation

This theme had five hits, and it refers to *innovation* within the Provincial Government, which includes the ability to adapt or embrace change.

Internal links

Innovation has *doing* as concept.

External links

The innovation theme is directly linked to *development* because innovation accelerates development. For example, harnessing the new technological systems would enhance the Provincial Government's efforts to improve service delivery.

7.11.8. Theme 8: Corruption

Corruption generated five hits, and it relates to corruption within the Provincial Government, which is the perceived unethical conduct.

Internal links

Corruption has *corruption* as a concept.

External links

This theme shows a strong relationship with *development*, and this is because if there is perceived corruption within the Provincial Government, development is mired.

7.11.9. Theme 9: Unemployment

Unemployment had received four hits, and it relates to unemployment in the Eastern Cape. The majority of people in the Eastern Cape are unemployed, which is blamed on the Provincial Government's inability to create job opportunities.

Internal links

Unemployment has *unemployment* as a concept.

External links

The unemployment theme overlaps with *people,* which shows a strong relationship, because people of the Eastern Cape experience high levels of unemployment.

7.11.10. Theme 10: Feelings

This theme has three hits, and it refers to *feelings* that people form about the Provincial Government based on the experiences with the government.

Internal links

The feelings theme has *feelings* as a concept.

External links

This theme is directly related *government*, because citizens' feelings determine the extent to which the Provincial Government is legitimised.

7.11.11. Theme 11: Trust

The *trust* theme generated three hits, and here it refers to the extent to which citizens believe that the Provincial Government will deliver on its promises.

Internal links

Trust has *trust* as a concept.

External links

The direct link with *communities* demonstrates that where the Provincial Government reneges in fulfilling its promises, citizens lose trust.

6.12. FIELD STUDY 11
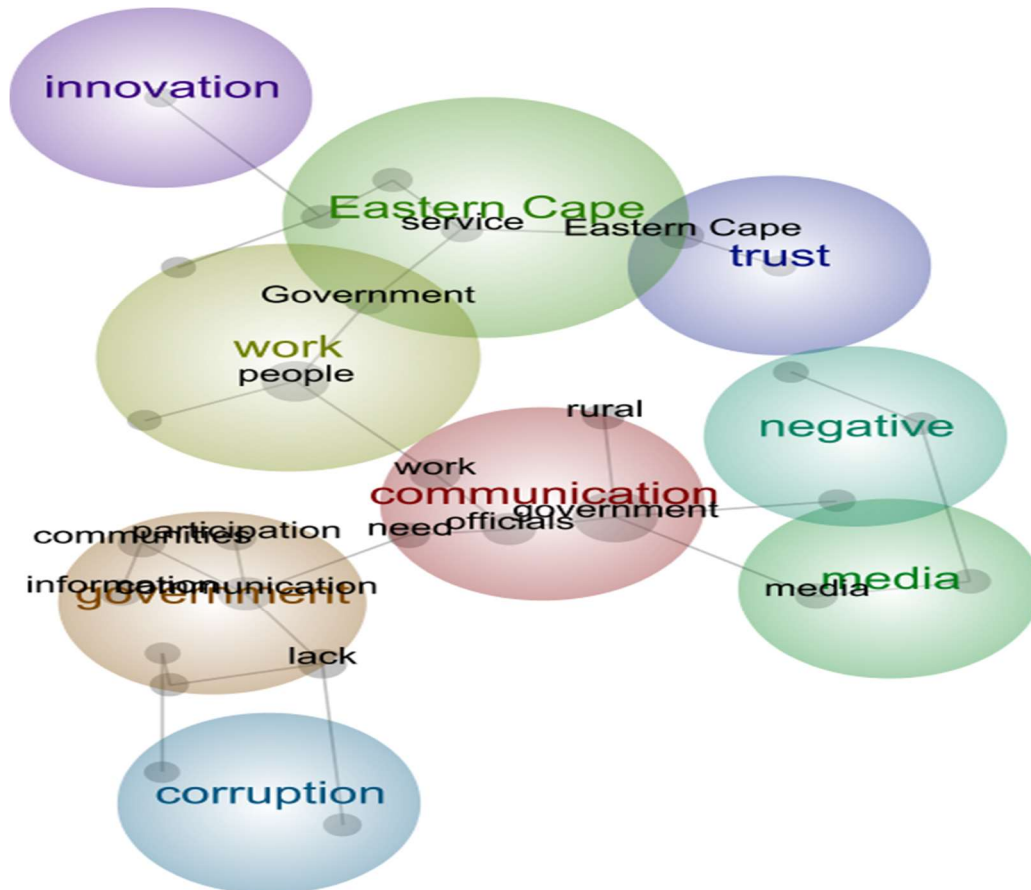
Figure 7.11. Field Study 11 Concept Map

Table 6.11: Shows Field Study 11 Concept Map results

Theme	Hits	Concepts
Communication	37	Government, people, officials, rural
Government	17	Communication, lack, communities, information
Work	15	Work, need, participation

Eastern Cape	10	Eastern Cape, service
Media	7	Media
Innovation	6	Innovation
Trust	3	Trust
Negative	3	Negative
Corruption	2	Corruption

7.12.1. Theme 1: Communication

Communication has generated 37 hits, and it represents the communication of government, which is seized with the responsibility of providing services to the people, among other things.

Internal links

This theme has *government, people, officials* and *rural* as its concepts.

External links

The communication theme is linked to the *work* theme via the *people* concept, as people expect the Provincial Government to provide adequate communication in relation to its work opportunities. The theme is further linked to *media* through the *government* concept, because media is instrumental in communicating the Provincial Government programme, and is a source of information for the people. If the Provincial Government is reluctant to communicate with citizens, inherently negative perceptions develop.

7.12.2. Theme 2: Government

The *government* theme has generated 17 hits, which is the second largest hits, and refers to the Provincial Government of the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

This theme has *communication, lack, communities* and *information* as concepts. The link shows that communities are of the opinion that there is lack of communication and information relating to Provincial Government programmes.

External links

Government slightly overlaps with the *communication* theme, and it is connected through the *people* concept, which demonstrates that the Provincial Government must constantly communicate with people to empower them with information on issues that affect their lives.

 The theme is also linked to *corruption* through the *lack* concept. Lack of communication may perpetuate perceptions of corruption within the Provincial Government, so it is crucial that government is transparent to dispel suspicions of corruption.

7.12.3. Theme 3: Work

Work received 15 hits. This relates to the work of the Provincial Government to deliver services to the people of the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

This theme has *work*, *need* and *participation* as concepts. The Provincial Government must invariably work hard to meet the needs of the citizens, and it is also vital that they participate in government initiatives that affect them in particular.

External links

The theme is directly linked to the *communication* theme. It is also linked to the Eastern Cape theme through *government* and *service* concepts, which shows that the work of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government entails provision of quality service to the people, and it is through communication that the Provincial Government can transparently deliver services.

7.12.4. Theme 4: Eastern Cape

The *Eastern Cape* theme had generated 10 hits. Eastern Cape represents the geographical location of the Provincial Government as the subject of study.

Internal links

The Eastern Cape theme has *service* as a concept.

External links

The theme overlaps with *trust* as diminishing trust in the Provincial Government has a bearing on the Eastern Cape as a Province. It is the Eastern Cape that is perceived to be fraught with

corruption, therefore people develop a concept of the Province instead of the Provincial Government. This theme is directly linked to *innovation*, because the development of the Eastern Cape hinges on the extent to which new innovations are harnessed.

7.12.5. Theme 5: Media

Media generated seven hits, and relates to how various media platforms report on the Provincial Government's work.

Internal links

The media theme has *media* as a concept.

External links

Media slightly overlaps with the *negative* theme. The lack of consistent and credible government communication exacerbates negative media coverage because lack of communication creates an information vacuum that the media immediately supplements through its own reporting. The theme is further connected to *communication* via the *government* concept.

7.12. 6. Theme 6: Innovation

The *innovation* theme had six hits, and it relates to the fact that the Provincial Government must embrace innovation to improve service delivery.

Internal links

Innovation has *innovation* as a concept.

External links

This theme is directly connected to the *Eastern Cape* theme. This is a significant relationship because the Provincial Government needs to embrace new innovative systems – such as online platforms – to communicate with citizens.

7.12.7. Theme 7: Trust

Trust has generated three hits, and it refers to the belief among citizens that the Provincial Government will deliver on its promises of quality basic services.

Internal links

Trust has *trust* as a concept.

External links

The overlap with the *Eastern Cape* theme shows a strong relationship between the two themes. There is a noticeable decline of trust in the Eastern Cape Province due to a myriad of failures of the Provincial Government. The negative media publicity further aggravates the challenges of lack of trust in the Eastern Cape Government. Media publicity, or coverage of Provincial Government, influences citizen trust in government and further weakens its acceptability and legitimacy.

7.12.8. Theme 8: Negative

Negative as a theme had three hits, and it relates to the fact that media reports negatively about the Provincial Government.

Internal Links

The negative theme has *negative* as a concept.
External links

The theme is closely linked to the *Eastern Cape* theme. Media generally report negatively about the Eastern Cape and people also develop negative perceptions based on such reports.

7.12.9. Theme 9: Corruption

Corruption generated two hits, and refers to the Provincial Government's misuse of resources, which results in corruption, among other things.

Internal links

Corruption has *corruption* as a concept.

External links

The theme is linked to *government* through the *lack* concept. Perceived lack of government communication is associated with deliberate concealment of acts of corruption within the Provincial Government.

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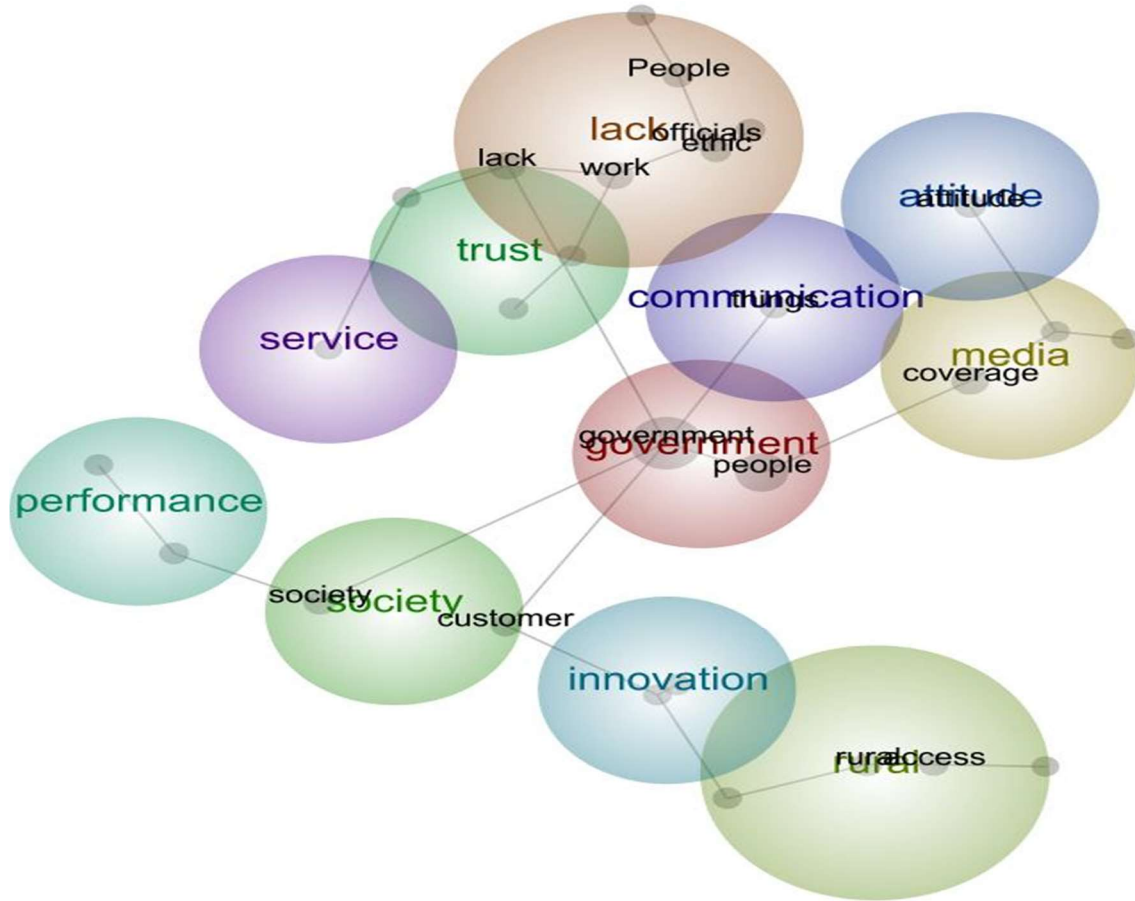
7.13. FIELD STUDY 12

Figure 7.13. Field Study 12 Concept Map

Table 7.12. Shows Field Study 12 Concept Map results

Themes	Hits	Concepts
Government	50	Coverage, government, people
Lack	11	Lack
Media	11	Coverage
Society	10	Society, customer
Communication	5	Communication

Attitude	5	Attitude
rural	4	Rural, access
Service	4	Service
Innovation	3	Attitude
Performance	2	Performance
Trust	2	Trust

7.13.1. Theme 1: Government

Government generated 50 hits, which is the biggest hits of all the themes. Government represents the Eastern Cape Provincial Government which is responsible for the provision of services.

Internal links

The government theme has *people* as a concept.

External links

This theme is central and embedded in the *communication* theme, as an illustration that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government needs to prioritise communication with its citizens**.** The theme is connected to *media* through the *coverage* and *people* concepts. People of the Eastern Cape predominantly receive information about government through media coverage, which largely influences their attitude towards government. The link to the society theme through the *customer* concept accentuates the fact that society expects Eastern Cape Provincial Government to treat them as customers through excellent customer service. The theme is also linked to innovation through the *customer* concept, which shows that the Provincial Government should embrace innovative systems to render service to people.

7.13.2. Theme 2: Lack

Lack has 11 hits, and it relates to the lack of various aspects that would enable the Provincial Government to seamlessly deliver services. This may include the lack of skills among government officials, lack of resources, lack of communication, etc.

Internal links

The lack theme has *people, work, officials* and *ethic* as key concepts.

External links

This theme overlaps with *communication* and *trust*. The link to trust via the *officials*, *work* and *ethic* concepts shows that citizens' trust in government has waned due to a perceived poor work ethic among officials. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government officials are often associated with high levels of incompetency.

7.13.3. Theme 3. Media

The *media* theme has generated 11 hits, and it relates to how the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is portrayed on various media platforms. Media sets the agenda in the public discourse and often has a strong influence on how people view their own government.

Internal links

Media has *coverage* as a concept. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government receives media coverage, and it may be positive or negative.

External link

This theme is linked to the *government* theme through the *coverage* and *people* concepts. It is through media coverage that people can receive information, and form opinions about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The media theme slightly overlaps with both *communication* and *attitude*, and this is because media as a communication platform is instrumental in influencing attitudes of people towards the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

7.13.4. Theme 4: Society

This theme has had 10 hits, and refers to the Eastern Cape *society* that depends on the Provincial Government for services.

Internal links

Society has *customer* as a concept. The Provincial Government must provide quality service to the people of the Eastern Cape.

External links

The society theme is directly linked to *performance* because the Eastern Cape society expects the Provincial Government to meet their expectations through better performance. The link to *innovation* is via the *customer* concept, which illustrates that in order to improve customer service, the Provincial Government should embrace innovation.

7.13.5. Theme 5: Communication

Communication generated five hits, and it shows that the Provincial Government communication is inadequate to empower people with information on service delivery programmes.

Internal link

Communication has *things* as a concept.

External links

This theme overlaps with the *media*, *government*, *trust*, *lack* and *attitude* themes. This close relationship with various themes demonstrates the central role of communication within the Provincial Government operations.

7.13.6. Theme 6: Attitude

Attitude had five hits, and it refers to the attitudes or the overall impressions that people of the Eastern Cape have towards the Provincial Government.

Internal links

The attitude theme has *attitude* as a concept.

External links

This theme is slightly embedded in *communication* and *media*. The salient lack of communication within the Provincial Government influences people's attitude, and negative media publicity also perpetuates negative attitudes towards government. The negative attitudes create a gap between the Eastern Cape Provincial Government and its people.

7.13.7. Theme 7: Rural

The *rural* theme has generated four hits, and it refers to the rural areas of the Eastern Cape that depend on the Provincial Government for services.

Internal links

This theme has *access* as a concept. Due to poor roads infrastructure many rural areas in the Eastern Cape are unable to access basic services.

External links

The rural theme is linked to innovation through the *access* concept. People from the rural areas of the Eastern Cape have no access to the new innovations, such as Internet and emails.

7.13.8. Theme 8: Service

Service had four hits, and it refers to service that the Provincial Government provides to the people of the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

The service theme has *service* as a concept.

External links

This theme is linked to the *trust* and *government* themes via the *lack* concept. People's trust in the Provincial Government diminishes where they feel that they are not offered good and quality services.

7.13.9. Theme 9: Innovation

The *innovation* theme generated three hits, and it refers to innovations that the Provincial Government has embraced to enhance service delivery in the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

This theme has innovation as a concept.

External links

Innovation is embedded in the *rural* theme, and this shows a strong relationship between the two themes. Innovation is an important initiative through which the Provincial Government can transform rural areas, and ensure that they are integrated into the broader society through revolutionised communication. The link with *society* is through the *customer* concept, which demonstrates that innovation would ensure that society enjoy good customer service.

7.13.10. Theme 10: Performance

The *performance* theme had two hits, and it refers to performance of the Provincial Government in delivering basic services to the people.

Internal links

This theme is internally linked to *performance* as a concept.

External links

Performance is linked to *society* and *government* through *society* as a concept. The Eastern Cape society expects the Provincial Government to improve its performance in order to ensure swift delivery of services.

7.13.11. Theme 11: Trust

Trust has generated two hits, and it refers to the trust that the citizens have in the Provincial Government.

Internal links

The trust theme has trust as a concept.

External links

This theme overlaps with *service* and *lack* themes. People of the Eastern Cape believe that there is lack of good customer service, and their trust in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has deteriorated.

7.14. FIELD STUDY 13
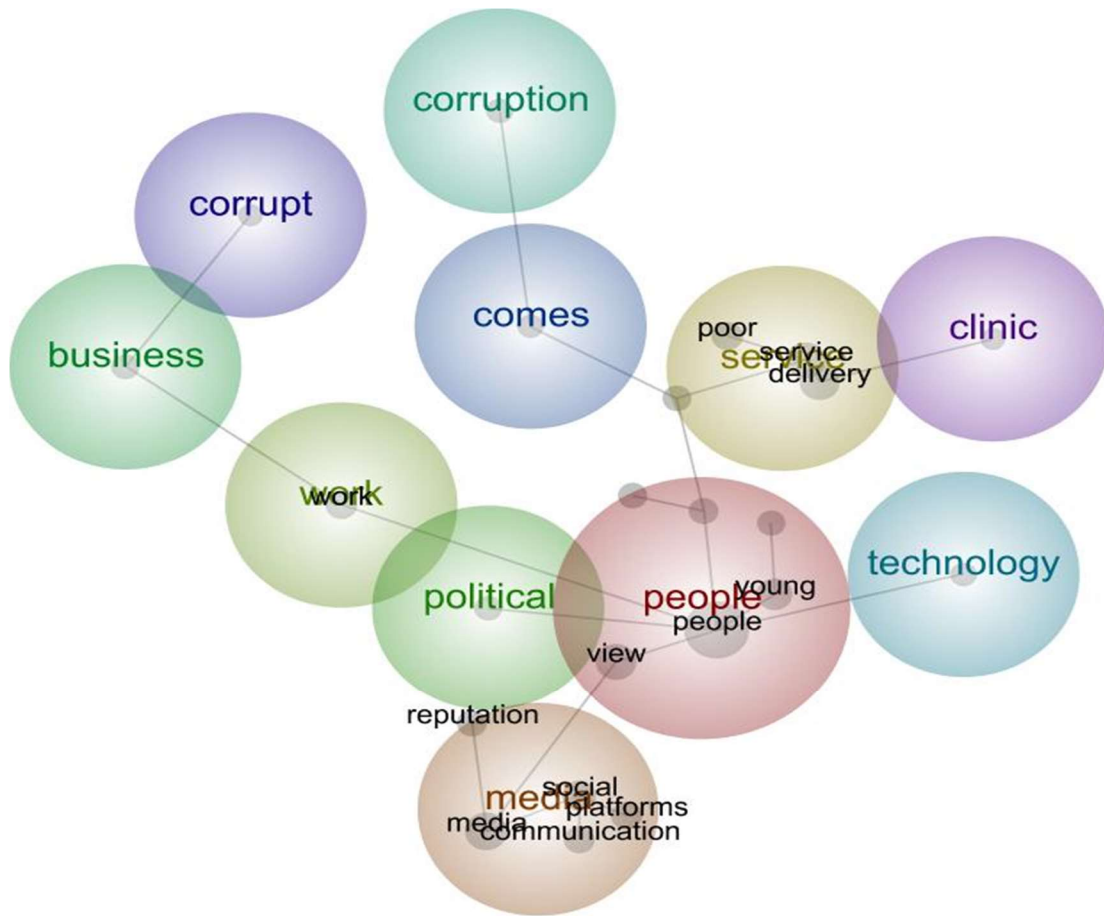
Figure 7.13. Field Study 13 Concept Map

Table 6.13. Shows Field Study 13 Concept Map results

Theme	Hits	Concepts
People	169	People, view, young
Media	88	Media, social, platforms, communication, reputation
Service	51	Service, delivery, poor
Work	35	Work
Business	32	Business
Corruption	17	Corruption

Political	16	Political	
Technology	12	Technology	
Performance	9	Performance	
Clinic	5	Clinic	

7.14.1. Theme 1: People

The *people* theme has received 169 hits, which is the biggest number of hits, and it refers to people of the Eastern Cape who rely on the Eastern Cape Provincial Government for services.

Internal links

This theme is linked to *view* and *young* as a concepts. Young people of the Eastern Cape are of the view that the Provincial Government does not care for them as they increasingly experience high rate of unemployment and poverty.

External links

The people theme overlaps with the *political* theme, and the link shows strong relationship because young people look up to the political leadership to resolve their socio-economic challenges in the Eastern Cape. The theme is also linked to media through the *view* and *reputation* concepts. People are of the view that the media can potentially impact on the reputation of the Provincial Government.

7.14.2. Theme 2: Media

Media has received 88 hits, and it refers to how the media reports on the Provincial Government.

Internal links

The media theme has *social, platforms, communication* and *reputation* as concepts. Among the available media platforms, social media is increasingly becoming a formidable communication platform that the Provincial Government should embrace in order to strengthen its reputation.

External links

This theme is linked to the *political* theme through the *reputation* concept. Media publicity can impact the reputation of the Provincial Government political leadership (e.g. the Premier, MECs & Mayors), especially in instances where media reports are negative. The link with *people* is through the *view* concept, which essentially indicates that young people of the Eastern Cape view the media as an important source of information about the Provincial Government.

7.14.3. Theme 3: Service

The *service* theme had 51 hits, and it refers to the quality of service that the Provincial Government provides to the people of the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

This theme has *delivery* and *poor* as concepts. The people of the Eastern Cape experience poor service delivery due to poor performance of the Provincial Government.

External links

The link with *people* and *performance* illustrates that people expect the Provincial Government to improve its performance in order to provide quality basic services. Service slightly overlaps with the *clinic* theme, and this close relationship is because clinics in the Eastern Cape are associated with very poor service.

7.14.4. Theme 4: Work

Work had 35 hits, and it refers to the work of government as it strives to provide services to the people of the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

The work theme has *work* as a concept.

External links

This theme overlaps with the *political* theme because the work of the Provincial Government is largely influenced by political interference. Further, the theme is directly linked to *business*, and this shows that government should work directly with business.

7.14.5. Theme 5: Business

Business generated 32 hits, and it refers to the business organisations that operate in the Eastern Cape and are influenced by the Provincial Government policy direction.

Internal links

The business theme has *business* as a concept.

External links

The link to *corruption* and *work* shows that businesses in the Eastern Cape are concerned with how government conducts its work and the growing cases of corruption.

7.14.6. Theme 6: Corruption

Corruption has generated 17 hits, and it refers to corruption that occurs within the Provincial Government.

Internal links

The corruption theme has *corruption* as a concept.

External links

This theme is directly linked to *performance*. The high rate of corruption invariably impacts on the performance of the Provincial Government, because resources that are intended for service delivery are surreptitiously diverted into individuals' pockets.

7.14.7. Theme 7: Political

The *political* theme had 16 hits, and it refers to the political leadership of the Provincial Government.

Internal links

Political has *political* as a concept.

External links

This theme is embedded in the *work* and *people* themes, which shows a close relationship. It is also linked to *media* through the *reputation* concept. Media publicity on political leadership is often negative and this impacts the reputation of the Provincial Government.

7.14.8. Theme 8: Technology

This theme scored 12 hits, and it refers to *technology* that the Provincial Government has embraced to enhance its provision of basic services, including communication processes.

Internal links

Technology has *technology* as a concept.

External links

The direct link to the *people* theme shows that young people believe that Provincial Government should prioritise the digitisation of its operations in order to enable them to access information, among other things. Young people need information on how they can access Provincial Government services, including accessing advertised employment opportunities.

7.14.9. Theme 9: Performance

This theme had nine hits, and it refers to the performance of the Provincial Government in its endeavor to deliver quality services.

Internal links

Performance is internally linked to *performance* as a concept.

External links

This theme has a close relationship with *service* and *corruption*. In cases where people believe that performance of the Provincial Government is poor, it follows that service delivery is equally affected. Similarly, in cases where there is a perceived high rate of corruption, performance of the Provincial Government is unfavorably impacted.

7.14.10. Theme 10: Clinic

Clinic had five hits, and it refers to clinics in the Eastern Cape that provide public health services to the people.

Internal links

The clinic theme has *clinic* as a concept.

External links

This theme is interrelated to the *service* theme. Clinics in the Eastern Cape are associated with a high level poor customer service.

7.15. FIELD STUDY 14

Figure 7.14. Field Study 14 Concept Map

Table 7.14. Field Study 14 Concept Map results

Theme	Hits	Concepts
Media	175	Government, view, people and work
People	79	Media, communication
Information	51	Information
work	35	Province
Corruption	17	Corruption
Trust	17	Trust
Political	16	Political
Leadership	14	Areas

Service	10	Service
Feelings	7	Feelings

7.15.1. Theme 1: Media

Media generated the second largest number of hits at 175, and it relates to media publicity about the actions of the Provincial Government.

Internal links

The media theme has *government, view, people* and *wo*rk as concepts. People view the work of government through media reports, and this is due to perceived poor communication in the Provincial Government.

External links

This theme is intricately linked to many of the other themes. This is because the media is to a greater extent the source of information on the work of the Provincial Government, and this invariably impacts people's trust in the political leadership, especially where there is perceived corruption and limited communication.

7.15.2. Theme 2: People

The *people* theme had 175 hits.

Internal links

People has *media* and *communication* as concepts. The Government does not have a clear communication strategy to inform people about its programmes, as a consequence people rely on media reports for government related information.

External links

This theme is linked to the *media* theme via the *media* and *view* concepts and this is because people form views about the Provincial Government based on what is reported on in the media.

7.15.3. Theme 3: Information

Information had 51 hits, and it refers to the information about the Provincial Government.

Internal links

Information has *information* as a concept.

External links

The information theme is embedded in *media*, and vice versa, and this shows a strong relationship between the two themes. The relations is based on the fact that the media is a major source of information and has a strong influence on the perceptions of government.

7.15.4. Theme 4: Work

Work had 35 hits, and it refers to the work of the Provincial Government in delivering services.

Internal links

This theme has *work* as a concept.

External links

The work theme is directly related to the *corruption* theme. It is also connected to the *media* theme.

7.15.5. Theme 5: Corruption

The *corruption* theme gathered 17 hits, and it refers to corruption within the Provincial Government.

Internal links

The corruption theme has *corruption* as a concept.

External links

This theme is related to the *work* theme. Corruption adversely impacts on the work of government and results in poor service delivery because resources that are meant to improve provision of service are misappropriated through corrupt activities.

7.15.6. Theme 6: Trust

This theme has generated 17 hits, and it refers to the *trust* that people of the Eastern Cape have in the Provincial Government.

Internal links

The trust theme has *trust* as a concept.

External links

Trust partially overlaps with the *media* and *political* themes. This relationship is because media reports on the weaknesses of political leadership influences people's trust in the Provincial Government. This theme is also connected to the *service* theme via *areas* as trust in government in rural areas has sharply declined due to a lack of or poor services.

7.15.7. Theme 7: Political

Political generated 16 hits, and it refers to political leadership within the Provincial government.

Internal links

The political theme has *political* as a concept.

External links

The theme slightly overlaps with *trust* as trust in political leadership has declined remarkably. Further, the theme is related to *media* via the *work* concept, and this is because the work of political leadership may inspire negative media reporting.

7.15.8. Theme 8: Leadership

The *leadership* theme had 14 hits, and refers to the leadership of the Provincial Government, which include the Premier and the MECs.

Internal links

Leadership has *leadership* as a concept.

External links

The leadership theme is directly linked to the *feelings* and *media* themes.

7.15.9. Theme 9: Service

The *service* theme had 10 hits.

Internal links

Service has *service* as a concept.

External links

Service is directly linked to *trust* as the delivery of quality service enhances trust in the Provincial Government or vice versa.

7.15.10. Theme 10: Feelings

The *feelings* theme generated seven hits.

Internal links

This theme has *feelings* as a concept.

External links

Feelings is interrelated to the *leadership* theme. People develop feelings about the leadership of the Provincial Government based on their experiences.

7.16. FIELD STUDY 15
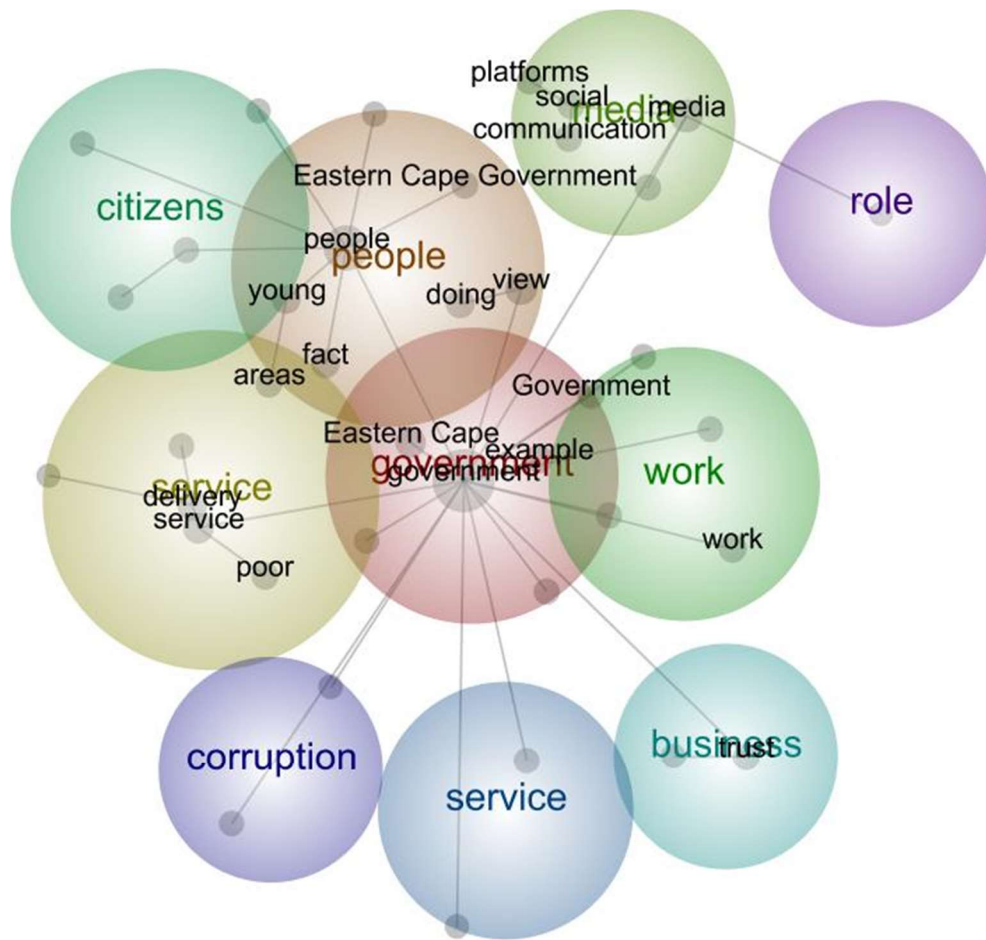
Figure 7.15. Field Study 15 Concept Map

Table 7.15. Shows Field Study 15 Concept Map results

Theme	Hits	Concepts
Government	324	Government, Eastern Cape, example, Government
People	197	People, view, young, Eastern Cape Government

Media	79	Media, social, communication, platforms
Service	62	service, delivery, poor, areas
Work	35	Work
Business	32	Business
Corruption	17	Corruption
Citizens	16	Citizens
Role	8	Role

7.16.1. Theme 1: Government

Government generated 324 hits, and it refers to the Provincial Government of the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

The government theme has *Eastern Cape* as a concept.

External links

This theme is the most powerful theme and it is centrally connected to all the other themes. It overlaps with *people*, *service* and *work* themes. People depend on the Provincial Government work for the basic services. The theme is further linked to *corruption*, *service* and *business*.

7.16.2. Theme 2: People

People had 197 hits, and it refers to the people of Eastern Cape who depend on the Provincial Government for services.

Internal links

This theme has the following concepts: *view, young* and *Eastern Cape Government.* Young people in the Eastern Cape view government as ineffective, unable to fulfil their needs, such as the provision of employment and business opportunities.

External links

This theme shows a strong relationship with *government*, *service* and *citizens*. People of the Eastern Cape rely on government for services. A link with government is relatively strong because government provides services to people using taxes.

7.16.3. Theme 3: Media

Media generated 79 hits, and it refers to the media publicity about the Provincial Government.

Internal links

The media theme has *social, communication* and *platforms* as concepts. Social media is increasingly becoming an important communication platform for the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

External links

The media theme is directly linked to the *role* and *government* themes. Media plays a significant role in exposing actions of government, especially actions that impede its capacity to deliver services.

7.16.4. Theme 4: Service

Service had 62 hits, and it refers to the service that the Provincial Government renders to the people of the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

The service theme has *delivery*, *poor* and *areas* as concepts. People from the rural areas – in particular – believe that there is poor service delivery in the Eastern Cape.

External links

This theme has a strong relationship with *citizens*, *government* and *people*. The overlap demonstrates that people of the Eastern Cape expect the Provincial Government to deliver quality services. There is, however, a strong perception that there is poor service delivery in the Eastern Cape.

7.16.5. Theme 5. Work

The *work* theme had 35 hits, and it relates to the work of government of the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

This theme has *work* as a concept.

External links

Work overlaps with *government*, and this shows a strong relationship between the two themes. In executing its work, the Provincial Government provides services to the people of the Eastern Cape.

7.16.6. Theme 6: Business

Business had 32 hits, and it refers to business institutions that work with the Eastern Cape Provincial Government in developing the economy of the Province.

Internal links

The business theme is linked to *business* as a concept.

External links

Business is directly linked to *government*. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government creates an environment for business to operate through the enabling policies. Further, it slightly overlaps with Service.

7.16.7. Theme 7: Corruption

Corruption has generated 17 hits, it refers to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government's perceived corrupt activities.

Internal links

Corruption has *corruption* as a concept.

External links

The corruption theme is linked to the *government* theme because the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is generally associated with corruption. It also partly overlaps with *service* because people ascribe poor service delivery to corruption.

7.16.8. Citizens

The *citizens* theme generated 16 hits, and it refers to people that reside in the Eastern Cape and are beneficiaries of the Provincial Government services.

Internal links

The theme has *citizens* as a concept.

External links

This theme shows a strong relationship with *people* and *service*. This overlap is because people who reside in the Eastern Cape as citizens expect the Provincial Government to meet their expectations by delivering services.

7.16.9. Theme 9: Role

Role has generated 8 hits, and it refers to the role that media plays in exposing the weaknesses of the Provincial Government.

Internal links

The role theme has *role* as a concept.

External links

This theme is directly linked to *media*, and it shows that people of the Eastern Cape expect the media to play a critical role to expose Provincial Government information. It is also linked to *government* through the *media* concept, which again illustrates that there is an expectation that the media must play a watchdog role to monitor the actions of the Provincial Government.

7.17. FIELD STUDY 16

Figure 7.16. Field Study 16 Concept Map

Table 7.16. Shows Field Study 16 Concept Map results

Theme	Hits	Concepts
Performance	46	Government, Ward
People	37	People, questions
Service	17	Service, lack
Participation	15	Public community, members
Leadership	14	Man, capacity
Young	12	Anger
Impression	12	Area
Feelings	10	Feelings

| Poverty | 4 | Poverty |
| Quality | 3 | Quality |

7.17.1. Theme 1: Performance

Performance had 46 hits, and it refers to the performance of the Provincial Government as it endeavors to fulfil its mandate.

Internal links

The performance theme has *government* and *ward* as concepts. The performance of the Provincial Government in relation to service delivery occurs at the ward level of the local government sphere.

External links

The performance theme overlaps with *leadership*, *quality* and *people*. It is linked to *quality* and *leadership* through the *ward* concept, which demonstrates that performance of the Provincial Government at the local government ward level is incumbent on councilors' leadership qualities. Further, performance is directly linked to *service* because it is through service delivery initiatives that the Provincial Government's performance can be assessed.

7.17.2. Theme 2: People

The *people* theme had 32 hits, and it refers to the people of the Eastern Cape who rely on the Provincial Government for services.

Internal links

This theme has *questions* as a concept. People raise question in relation to services that government renders.

External links

The theme slightly overlaps with impression, performance and participation. The link to impression is through the *poor* concept, which signifies that people of the Eastern Cape have poor impressions about the Provincial Government.

The link to *performance* and *participation* shows that people are not happy with the performance of the Provincial Government and do not participate in government decision-making processes. The direct link to *poverty* is an indication of the extent to which people of the Eastern Cape experience poverty. Further, the people theme is linked to *young* through the *anger* concept, which shows that young people in the Eastern Cape are angry with the Provincial Government because of the perceived lack of opportunities for young people.

7.17.3. Theme 3: Service

Service had 17 hits, and it refers to service that the Provincial Government provides to the people of the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

The service theme has *lack* as a concept.

External links

This theme is linked to *participation* through the *lack* and *members* concepts. This relationship shows that members of the community feel that there is lack of participation in the Provincial Government initiatives. The link to *performance* is through the *people* and *government* concepts. The service theme slightly overlaps with *quality*, which accentuates the significance of the provision of basic quality services to the people of the Eastern Cape.

7.17.4. Theme 4: Participation

Participation generated 15 hits, and it refers to the participation of people in the processes of the Provincial Government.

Internal links

The participation theme has the following internal concepts: *public*, *community* and *members*.

External links

This theme is linked to the *service* theme through the *lack* and *members* concepts. This relationship demonstrates that members of the public are of the view that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government deprives them an opportunity to participate in the decision-making on issues that affect them.

It is also linked to *performance* through the *people* concept and this essentially shows that people view lack of participation as an element of poor service delivery because they are not kept in the loop on issues that affect them. Participation slightly overlaps with *people* and *impression*, which illustrates that people of the Eastern Cape form impressions about the Provincial Government based on the perceived degree of participation in government processes.

7.17.5. Theme 5: Leadership

This theme had 14 hits, and it refers to *leaders* within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

Internal links

Leadership has *capacity* as a concept.

External links

Leadership is embedded in the *feelings* theme. The link is through the *capacity* and *poor* concepts, which depicts that people of the Eastern Cape generally have negative feelings about the leadership quality of the Provincial Government. Further, it overlaps with *quality* and *performance*, and this close relationship shows that quality leadership is essential to enhance the performance of the Provincial Government. The link with *performance* through the *ward* concept is because councilors are very instrumental as leaders of government at the local level.

7.17.6. Theme 6: Young

Young theme had 12 hits, and it refers to the young people in the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

Young theme has *anger* as a concept. Young people of the Eastern Cape are angry with the Provincial Government, because they suffer from high unemployment rate.

External links

Young theme is linked to People through the *anger* concept, and this demonstrates that young people express anger towards the Provincial Government because they are of the view that it ignores their needs as young people.

7.17.7. Theme 7: Impression

Impression generated 12 hits, and it refers to the impression that people have about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

Internal links

Impression theme has poor as a concept. People of the Eastern Cape have poor impressions about the Provincial Government.

External links

Impression theme slightly overlaps with People and Participation, which shows that people form impressions about the Provincial Government based on their perception of the level of participation. The link to People theme is through the *poor* concept which shows that the overall impression of the people of the Eastern Cape about the Provincial Government is generally poor.

7.17.8. Theme 8: Feelings

Feelings theme had 10 hits, and it refers to the feelings people of the Eastern Cape have towards the Provincial Government.

Internal links

Feelings has *poor* as a concept. People of the Eastern Cape have poor feelings about the Provincial Government leadership.

External links

Feelings theme is embedded in Leadership and shows a very strong relationship. The link is through *poor* and *capacity* concepts. The implication of this relationship is that people's feelings about Provincial Government leadership capacity are generally poor.

7.17.9. Theme 9: Poverty

Poverty theme had four hits, and refers to poverty that the people of the Eastern Cape experience.

Internal links

Poverty theme has *poverty* as a concept.

External links

This theme is directly linked to People theme because it is the people of the Eastern Cape that face adversity of poverty.

7.17.10. Theme 10: Quality

Quality theme had three hits, and it refers to the quality of leadership of the Provincial Government.

Internal links

Quality theme has *quality* as a concept.

External links

This theme slightly overlaps with Service, Performance, and Leadership themes. The close relationship with these themes emphasises the pivotal role of quality service and leadership as a validation of good performance of the Provincial Government. However, the salient poor service delivery in the Eastern Cape is an expression of poor quality of leadership.

7.18. FIELD STUDY 17
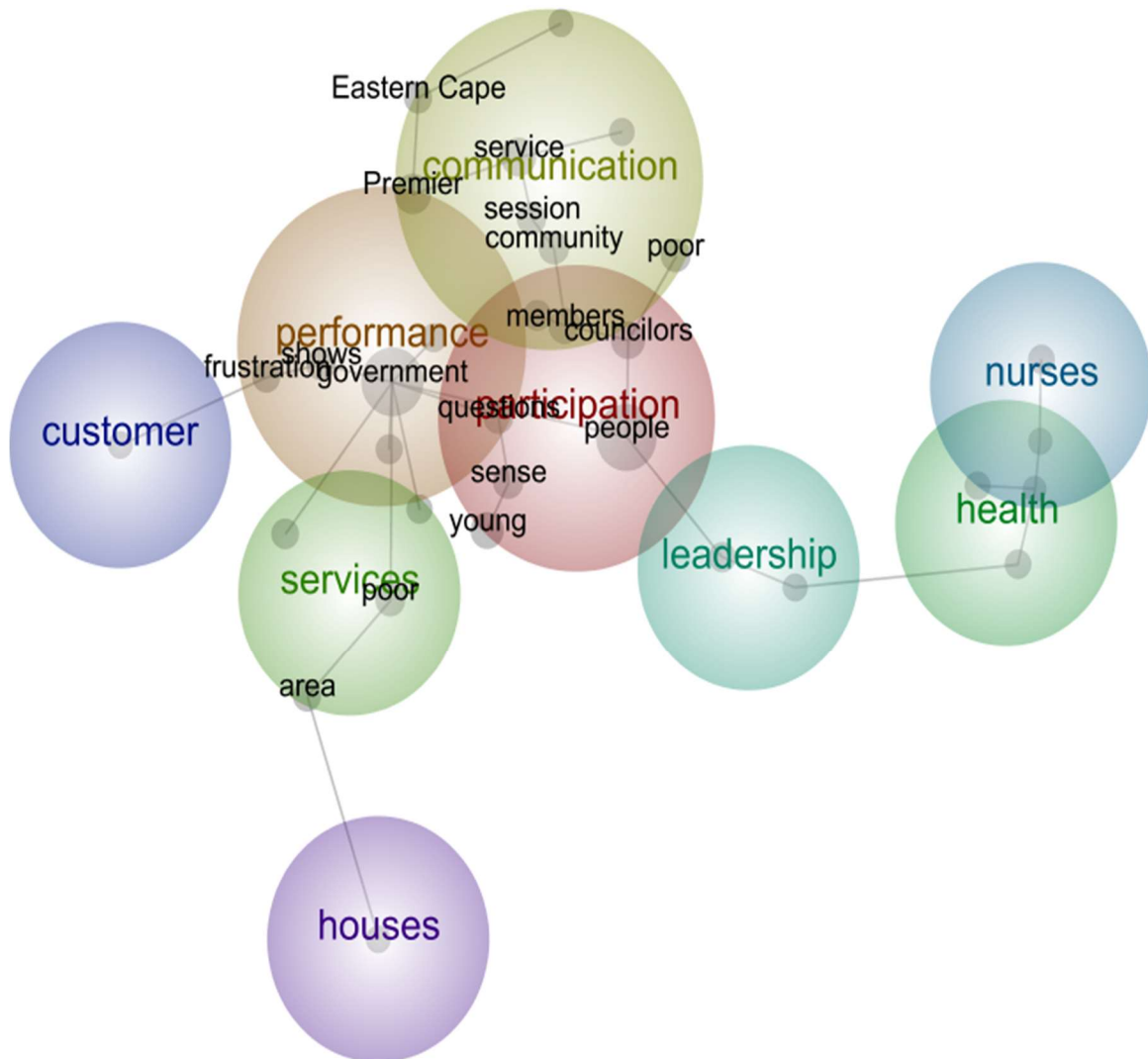
Figure 7.17. Field Study 17 Concept Map

Table 7.17. Sows Field Study 17 Concept Map results

Theme	Hits	Concepts
Participation	128	People, young, councilors, members and questions
Communication	61	Eastern Cape, poor, session, community, Premier, service
Performance	29	Frustration, government
Customer	26	Customer
Services	14	Poor, area
Leadership	14	Leadership
Health	10	Health
Nurses	10	Nurses
Houses	7	Houses

7.18.1. Theme 1: Participation

Participation had 128 hits, and it refers to people's participation in the Provincial Government decision- making processes, especially service delivery decisions that are intended for them.

Internal links

Participation theme has the following concepts: *people, young, councilors, members and questions.* It is mostly young people that raise service delivery questions to the councilors and other members of government.

External links

Participation theme is a very strong theme and is centrally linked to all the other themes. It further overlaps with Customer, Performance and Communication themes, and this is an amply manifestation of the strong relationship with the themes. For example, performance of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government impacts citizens as its customers.

Moreover, effective communication with citizens and meaningful participation in government processes are key indicators of effective performance. Participation is also directly related to leadership because performance of the Provincial Government wholly hinges on the quality of leadership.

7.18.2. Theme 2: Communication

Communication theme generated 61 hits, and it refers to the communication of the Provincial Government in its endeavor to empower people with information and include them in decision-making processes.

Internal links

Communication theme has the following concepts*: Eastern Cape, poor, session, community, Premier, service.* The relationship with the concepts implies that community members expect the Premier to facilitate regular sessions in order to alleviate government poor communication.

External links

This theme overlaps with Performance and Participation themes. A government with commendable performance encourages participation of citizens or its customers to the decision-making processes. It also slightly overlaps with Communication because it is through communication that the Provincial Government can promote public participation in its processes, and ensure that its people are timely informed about its programmes.

7.18.3. Theme 3: Performance

Performance theme generated 61 hits, and it refers to performance of the Provincial Government.

Internal links

Customer theme has the *Eastern Cape* as a concept.

External links

Performance theme is embedded in both Participation and Communication, which illustrates strong relationship. It is linked to Communication through the *premier*, concept as Premier

represents the entire Provincial Government and should set the tone in promoting public participation.

7.18.4. Theme 4: Customer

Customer theme generated 26 hits, it refers to people of the Eastern Cape that receive services from Provincial Government.

Internal links

Customer theme has *customer as a* concept.

External links

Customer theme partly overlaps with Performance, and is linked through the *frustration* concept. This shows that people of the Eastern Cape show frustration at the poor performance of the Provincial Government.

7.18.5. Theme 5: Service

Service theme had 14 hits, and it relates to the service that the Provincial Government provides to the people of the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

Service theme has *area* and *poor* as concepts, which implies that people from various areas of the Eastern Cape are unhappy with poor services.

External links

Services theme slightly overlaps with Performance as it through the provision of services that the Provincial Government's performance can be measured. Further it is directly linked to Houses theme because people of the Eastern Cape feel that the Provincial Government has not done enough to provide houses.

7.18.6. Theme 6: Leadership

Leadership generated 14 hits, and it refers to the leadership of the Provincial Government both at provincial and local level.

Internal links

Leadership is internally linked to *leadership* as a concept.

External links

Leadership theme partially overlaps with participation as it is the responsibility of leadership to inspire and promote public participation. It is linked to Health theme, and this illustrates that the Department of Health in the Eastern Cape is associated with extreme levels of poor service due to poor leadership.

7.18.7. Theme 7: Health

Health theme had 10 hits, and it refers to the Department of Health facilities within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

Internal links

Health theme has *health* as a concept.

External links

This theme is directly related to Leadership theme and this is because people of the Eastern Cape associate the Provincial Department of Health with poor leadership due to perceived poor service at its various facilities. The theme slightly overlaps with nurses, because it is nurses who serve people at the health facilities and are often associated with poor customer service.

7.18.8: Theme 8: Nurses

Nurses theme generated 10, and it refers to nurses that work for the Easter Cape Department of Health Department.

Internal links

Nurses theme has *nurses* as a concept.

External links

Nurses theme is embedded in Health theme and vice versa. Nurses render service to patients that attend health facilities, and often they are associated with extreme poor customer service.

7.18.9: Theme 9: Houses

Houses theme generated seven hits, and it refers to the provision of houses in the Eastern Cape.

Internal links

Houses theme is linked to *houses* as a concept.

External links

Houses theme is linked to Services via the *area* and *poor* concepts. Poor service delivery in the Eastern Cape is reflected on the high level of frustration in many areas which is compounded by perceived poor performance in the delivery of houses. Communities express their frustration through myriad service delivery protests that have been staged in various communities of the Eastern Cape.

7.19. CONSOLIDATED THEMES ACROSS CASES

In this section, a consolidated approach on themes that commonly apply across the 17 cases – which included both the in-depth interviews and participant observations – is presented. A Concept Map that consolidates the common themes across all the cases is also used as an illustration of the prevalent themes.

Figure 7.18. Consolidated Themes Concept Map
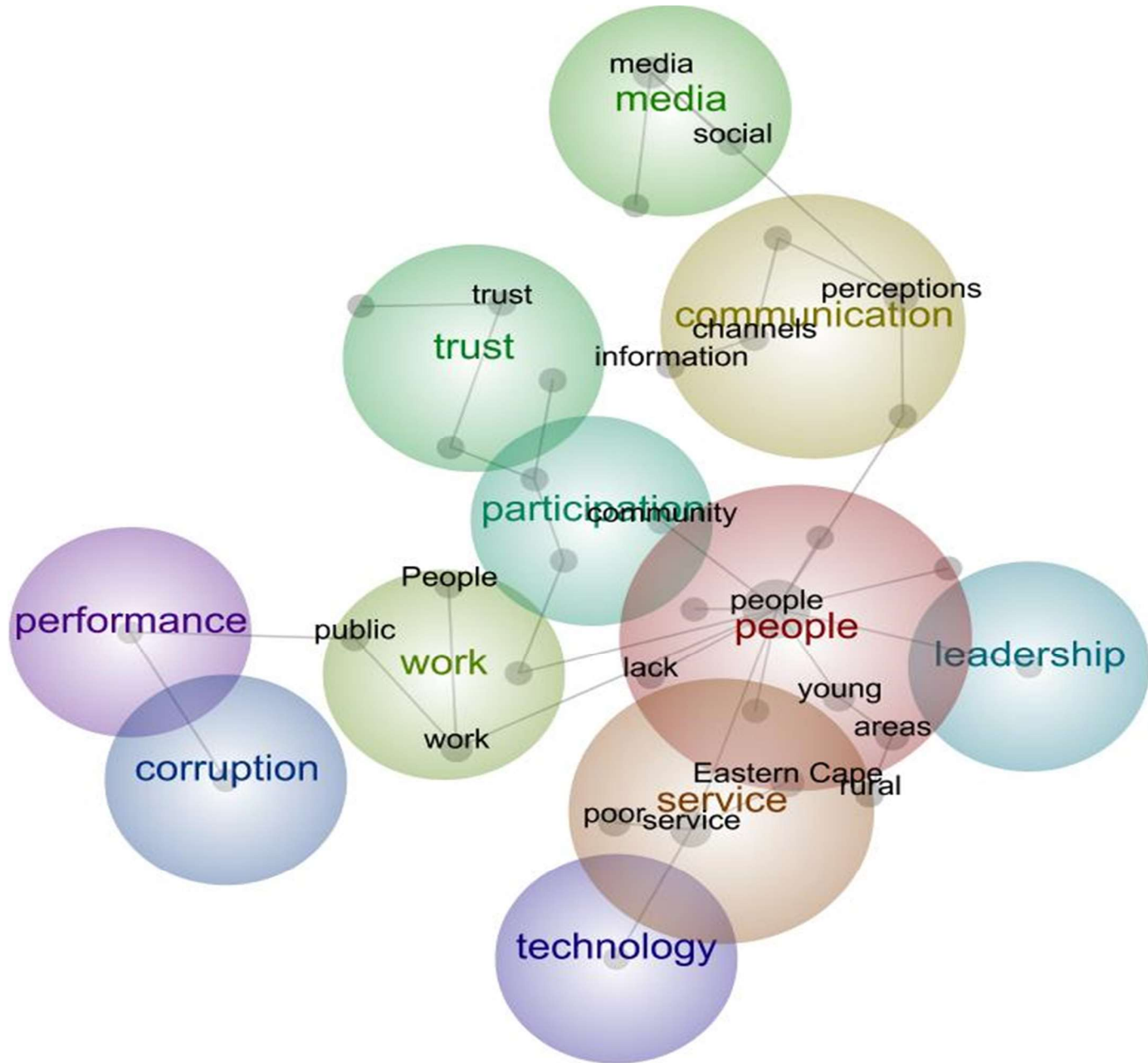
Table 7.18. Sows consolidated themes of the 17 cases

Theme	Hits	Concepts
People	457	Young, areas
Service	308	Eastern Cape, ruaral, poor
Communication	135	Perceptions, channels, information
Performance	86	Performance
Leadership	83	Leadership
Corruption	83	Corruption
Trust	45	Trust
Media	45	Social
Participation	38	Community
Technology	38	Technology
Work	38	People, public

Overview of prevalent themes across all cases

7.19.1 People theme

People theme is the most prevalent theme across the 17 cases, with the highest hits of 457. Across all the cases people theme came out as the most important theme with *young and areas* as the main concepts. This highlights the fact that people from the rural areas and young people have issues with the manner in which the Eastern Cape Provincial Government conducts itself in providing basic services. Young people are largely unemployed and fustrated, and they look up to the Provincial Government to provide job opportunities for them.

7.19.2. Service theme

Service theme had the second highest hits of 308, with *Eastern Cape, rural and poor* as the key concpets. This is related to the fact that Eastern Cape Province is predominantly rural and very poor. There is an increasing concern among the people that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has failed to provide quality services to the rural people as they continue to live in dire poverty.

7.19.3. Communication theme

Communication is also an important theme that is prevalent across the cases, with the thrid highest hits of 135. It has *perceptions, channels and information* as the concepts. This theme highlights the fact that people of the Eastern Cape perceive the Provincial Government as not having adequate chennels to provide infromation to the citizentry about the developments that directly affect them. People are not adequately informed about the programmes of the Provincial Government, especially those that reside in the rural areas.

7.19.4. Performance theme

Performance received 86 hits as the fourth highest theme in the Concept Map. Performance theme has *performance* as its concept. This theme highlights the fact that people of the Eastern Cape are not happy with the performance of the Provincail Government as it endeavours to deliver services. Its performance is associated with high cases of maladministration and corruption.

7.19.5. Leadership theme

Leadership theme is an important theme and had 83 hits with *leadership* as its concept. Poor performance of the Provicial Government is attributed to the lack of good, quality leadership. The systemic failure of the Provincial Government to deliver on its mandate is placed squarely on the diminishing leadership quality. Cadre deployment is regarded as the main factor that contributes to the detoriorating leadership within the Provincial Government.

7.19.6. Corruption theme

It is also important to note that Corruption is the sixth most prevalent theme across the cases with 83 hits. Corruption theme has *corruption* as its concept, and people percieve it as the most important element of governance failure within the Provincial Government. Its leadership is associated with high levels of corruption that increasingly compromise performance and much-needed service delivery in the Eastern Cape.

People are of the view that corruption within the Provincial Government is rampant and responsible for the depletion of limited resources that are supposed to benefit poor people and enhance the development of the province.

7.19. 7. Trust theme

This theme had 45 hits and is one of the most common themes across all cases with *trust* as its concept. Due to perceived poor performance and escalating cases of corruption, people of the Eastern Cape do not trust the Provincial Government. People are of the conviction that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has failed to fulfill its promises of improving lives through the provision of qulaity services.

7.19.8. Media theme

Media theme is the eight most common theme across all cases and had 45 hits. The theme had *social* as its concept. This highlights the fact that social media is becoming an important force in determining the reputation of the Provincial Government. People are of the view that the Provincial Govenrment has not done enough to embrace the rapidly evolving socila media to enhace its communication machinery. There is also a view that there are very poor relations between the Provincial Government and media, and often media reports negatively about government, which impacts on government reputation.

7.19.9. Partcipation theme

This theme had 38 hits, and has *community* as its concept. This highlight the fact that people of the Eastern Cape are concerned with the lack of community particpation in the Provincial Government programmes. Government seems to be failing to meaningfully consult with communities on matters that directlty affect them. The lack of community particpation in the Provincial Government decision-making processes has precipitated community unrests, where people revolt against government due to lack of understanding of the intentions of government.

7.19.10. Technology theme

This theme is the 10th most common theme across the cases, and had 38 hits with *technology* as its concept. The importance of the theme relates to the fact that people of the Eastern Cape are not necessarily convinced that the Provincial Government is doing enough to harness the new technologies in its endeavours to heighten service delivery in the Eastern Cape.

7.19.11. Work theme

This theme is the 11th most prevalent theme across all the cases with 38 hits. It has *people* and *public* as its concepts. People of the Eastern Cape are of the view that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is not the right place to work for. Eastern Cape increasingly experiences an exodus of people into other provinces due to its unconducive work environment. It loses high quality people to provinces such as Gauteng and Western Cape.

7.20. CONCLUSION

In this Chapter, the results of the research were outlined. During the data collection stage all the 15 in-depth interviews were recorded and transcribed soon after each session. Similarly, the researcher recoded and transcribed data that was accessed during the two participant observations. The transcribed data was then analysed using the Leximancer Software, which had the capacity to analyse massive amounts of data and this Chapter served to highlight the results that were generated. A total of 15 in-depth interviews from various structures and data from two participant observations were analysed using the Leximancer Software. The Software generated concepts maps, which were individually analysed and explained in this Chapter in terms of the themes and concepts generated, explicating what they imply as well as the potential relationship among them.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RESEARCH FINDINGS

8.1.   INTRODUCTION

In this Chapter, the results of the primary, as well as the three secondary research questions that the researcher formulated for the study are being addressed. In order to address the results, reviewed literature; theories that are embedded in literature; and empirical findings as reflected in the interviews and participant observation data, are used. Direct quotations from in-depth interviews and participant observation are presented to support research findings.

The study was qualitative in nature, and the research questions sought to gain in-depth insight of the participants' perspectives and views on the reputation management of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The research questions primarily focused on the public views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government reputation management, the media effects on Provincial Government and the public emotional attachment to the Provincial Government as depicted in Figure 8.1 below.

Figure 8.1: Public sector reputation management concepts
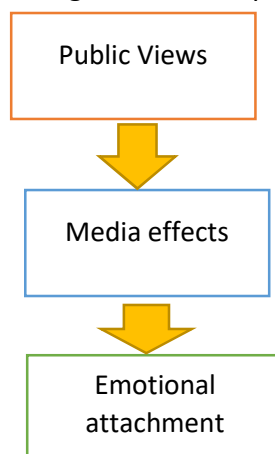
Source: Researcher's conceptualisation based on literature and empirical data

In this Chapter various variables that emerged from both literature and empirical data on the publics' views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government reputation management, media effects and emotional attachment are outlined, and they constitute findings for the study. The variables that emerged from the empirical data and the literature include quality of services, performance, leadership, communication, innovation, public participation, corporate governance, and corruption and fraud. The findings of the study also highlight variables that emerged from the media effects concept, which include media coverage, media relations, watchdog role, social media and reputational risks. Furthermore, the findings addressed variables that relate to the publics' emotional attachment, which comprised overall impression, feeling, trust, admire, customer service and Batho Pele. The findings of the study are based on the variables as outlined above, and they are further used to develop the public sector reputation management conceptual framework.

The researcher mainly focused on understanding how people make sense out of their lives, and their perceptions of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government reputation as a study phenomenon. This Chapter seeks to present findings on the perceptions of the participants about the Provincial Government reputation, backed by the literature review. As part of the thesis presentation, the researcher first answers the three secondary research questions, after which the main research question will be answered. The research problem is then addressed. As part of this Chapter, the conceptual framework for the management of the reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is presented, and management implications and suggestions for future research are proposed.

8.2. ADDRESSING SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study offers perspectives on the reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. A comprehensive literature review, including a pertinent theoretical framework, was undertaken to provide answers to research questions. Research participants provided their views and perceptions in the endeavour to ultimately address the research questions. Research findings were addressed as follows:

1. In answering Research Question One, findings on the public views about the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government were addressed.

2. In answering Research Question Two, findings of the media effects on the Eastern Cape Provincial Government were addressed.

3. In answering Research Question Three, findings of the public's emotional attachment to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government were addressed.

The findings discussed below are based on data obtained from the in-depth interviews with 15 stakeholders of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government and participant observations of two community engagement sessions.

8.2.1. Research question 1

What are the publics' views about the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government?

MacMillan *et al.* (2002) are of the view that members of the public will have views about the reputation of the organisation that can significantly affect the organisation concerned. Consistent with the above literature perspective, the findings of this study reveal that generally, people of the Eastern Cape do not have a positive view of the Provincial Government reputation management. The literature corroborates the findings and asserts that while the reputation of public sector organisations has developed over time, impressions of public sector organisations are plagued by negative connotations (Davenport *et al*. 2013). This aligns with Munyoro and Magada's (2016) assertion that most public sector organisations the world over are characterised by a persistently negative reputation.

According to Wearaas and Moar (2015:02), governments the world over suffer from an extreme image deficit, which is associated with negatively charged words such as inefficiency, bureaucracy, waste, incompetence, and rigidity.

The extant literature highlights *quality of services* as one of the drivers of the public's views of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government corporate reputation. Nixon and Mallett (2017) are of the view that the provision of public services is an important source of state legitimacy, and better access to basic services, social protection, or livelihood assistance leads to more positive perceptions of the government. For Fombrun *et al*. (2017) all stakeholders and customers can be expected to develop perceptions of a company based on its products and services. Fombrun *et al*. (2015) are of the view that people assess and form perceptions of a company's offerings based on whether they are thought to be high in quality, in value and in service, and in their ability to meet customers' needs. Literature further shows that a successful organisation stands behind its products (Zhang & Schaefer, 2009), develops innovative products and services (Romenti, 2010) and offers innovative, value for money, and high quality products and services (Fombrun *et al*. 2015).

Managa (2012) states that in the second decade of South Africa's post-apartheid constitutional democracy, a growing concern has been expressed about the government's inability to deliver the public services that its people yearn for and are entitled to – and that they have, since 2004, taken to the streets to demand. This is aligned with the empirical data, which show that generally, people are of the view that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government does not have the capacity to deliver quality services. All the participants interviewed for the study expressed a great deal of disillusionment with the Eastern Cape Provincial Government's lack of ability to provide services. Referring to the poor state of service delivery in the Eastern Cape, one of the interviewees said:

> *"Majority of communities in the Eastern Cape still live in poverty and there is so much misery, especially in the rural areas and townships. Provision of services and development in the Eastern Cape show so much inequalities and government services do not reach the majority of people. I can also say that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has the worst customer service. For example, people have to travel long distances to access government services and in some instances they are not attended.*

Unfortunately, the majority of people that require government services are poor people from the rural areas and often they spend money to travel to government service points only to be told to come back tomorrow by the very insensitive government employees.

The empirical findings copiously demonstrate that people are generally disgruntled with the manner in which the Provincial Government has reneged in fulfilling stakeholder expectations. Nixon and Mallet's (2017) work is consistent with the empirical findings of the study, and assert that service delivery is one of many factors shaping people's perceptions of government, and that service delivery has a potential to damage people's perceptions of government, thus losing necessary support – which is a *social contract.* This is in line with legitimacy theory, which states that any social institution and business, without exception, operates in society via a social contract, expressed or implied, whereby its survival and growth are based on: the delivery of some socially desirable ends to society in general and, the distribution of economic, social, or political benefits to groups from which it derives its power (Deegan, 2000; Makela, 2012; and Mousa & Hassan, 2015; Suchman, 1995). Oftentimes, service delivery is the rallying point of the ruling party's electioneering, and people base their voting decisions on the promises that resonate with their aspirations.

However, the study findings clearly illustrate that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has increasingly failed to deliver quality services in line with the expectations of the citizens. These empirical findings contradict the social exchange theory, which, according to Adam and Sizemore (2016) suggests that people form and maintain relationships based on what benefits or resources those relationships can bring them and in general, social relationships are pursued when the transaction of benefits is rewarding to both parties. For example, while citizens benefit from public goods, the incumbent government equally relies on their votes to remain in power. That said, in view of the empirical evidence, the inability of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government to provide quality services is a betrayal to citizens who might have voted the incumbent Government into power with expectations that they would access quality services that would potentially change their lives. One interviewee had this to say:

"I am absolutely unhappy with how they do things. They are dismally failing to meet the expectations of people. Many rural areas in particular are still struggling to access

basic services such as water, electricity and good roads. I am very surprised that we still have so many mud schools in the Eastern Cape after 25 years of democracy."

The empirical data from the observations also show that members of the community are frustrated with the lack of service delivery in the Eastern Cape. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government, it would seem, has been promising service delivery which has not been fulfilled. People continue to live in poverty, especially young people are adversely affected by high rate of unemployment in the Eastern Cape. The Eastern Cape has the highest number of unemployed young people in the country, and this already has the potential to exacerbate social problems such as crime.

While members of the public raised questions expressing their sense of discontentment with the pace of service delivery, leaders seem to be defending themselves at all costs. During a community engagement session, a woman in her 50s expressed her own frustration with government:

> *"I can hardly see what this government is doing. Go to our hospitals and see how people struggle for services, people stay there for days without being attended. People die in our hospitals in numbers and this government is doing nothing about that. Our nurses do not care for people in hospitals, I am also very afraid to go to our hospital.*

The study's empirical findings have revealed that *performance* is a crucial driver of the public's perceptions of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. All the interviewees indicated that the performance of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is poor, and it has dismally failed to fulfil its promises. One interviewee expressed an opinion that:

> *"The performance of this government in my view is completely dismal. It is very difficult to imagine how this government would improve its performance with the current calibre of public servants who have no customer care at all. If you go to the government service centres you are guaranteed very poor treatment by the public servants. This is worrying because in many ways this impacts on service delivery".*

Similarly, the empirical data from the observations indicate that people of the Eastern Cape are generally unhappy with the performance of the Provincial Government. During the community engagement session, a man in his 40s had this to say:

"There are houses that this government promised to renovate for us and we have been waiting for the last five years and nothing has happened. The Mayor also promised to build us toilets in our area, we do not have toilets, and it is a health disaster in our area. In our clinic people are ill-treated by the nurses. The service is so poor you have to wait for the whole day before you can be attended and nurses are very rude. There are no medicine and doctors to attend to a patient. Something must be done to rectify this situation by our government"

Glaser and Denhardt (2000) corroborate the findings and argue that citizens today are quite negative about government performance, and while some of this negativity may be explained by a country's history and culture, there is growing evidence that the distance between citizens and government is reaching unhealthy levels, with the potential for undesirable consequences. Literature further aligns with the empirical findings by noting that by and large, government steps in to provide public goods and services (Besley & Ghatak, 2007), and its performance is viewed from the extent to which quality public services are made available to the electorate (Van de Walle, 2008). Therefore, lack of quality services as characterised by poor performance may culminate in citizens taking to the streets to raise their dissatisfaction over the problem of poor service delivery (Managa, 2007). This is also supported by the World Bank Policy Report's (2016) view that the citizens can take other actions that, although not as tragic as violent conflict, can nevertheless contribute to problems in the public sector, such as throwing garbage in the streets or stealing electricity from public utilities.

Literature juxtaposes good performance with good reputation. Consistent with the above is Briggs's (2006) view that government reputation is only as good as the service it delivers to the community. However, Fombrun and Low (2011) argue that when damaged, a weak reputation drives away customers, repulses investors and mars performance. Boulstridge *et al*. (2000) add that a bad reputation may even contribute to product rejection or avoidance by consumers and stakeholders.

This aligns with the reputation theory which stipulates that reputation is directly linked to the organisation's performance (Neville *at el*. 2005) and is seen by many commentators as an important asset which could be used as a competitive advantage and a source of financial performance (Morley & Sammut, 2006). Reputation theory further accentuates that high-reputation firms experience superior performance and a lower cost of capital (Wang & Smith, 2010).

This is further attestation that performance can drive or hinder corporate reputation of the Provincial Government, depending on how the government manages its performance endeavours. Contrary to literature and the extant theoretical framework, empirical data show that promises relating to the provision of quality services have not been fulfilled by government, and invariably this impacts on the relationship between the Provincial Government and communities. The Provincial Government has not done enough to fulfil its mandate of meeting the needs of the people. It is plagued by enormous inefficiencies and many people still experience extraordinary levels of poverty, high rates of unemployment and inequality in the Eastern Cape.

The findings of the study further attribute the Provincial Government's poor performance to *poor customer service*. One interviewee made a comment: "*What also worries me is the attitude of government workers, which is very bad towards our people. Public servants have very poor attitude which results in very poor customer service".* This is an important comment in view of the fact that citizens rely on public servants, who are at the coalface of service delivery. In the Eastern Cape, the Department of Health is notorious for poor customer care, and invariably it is poor people that bear the brunt of this poor service within the health facilities. All the participants interviewed singled out the Department of Health as a department with the worst customer service in the Eastern Cape.

Clinics located in rural areas and townships appear to experience the most terrible customer service, where research participants reported that in some instances patients have to wait for the whole day before being attended to. It would also appear that the public servants (nurses) that serves communities in the health centres, treat patients in a worryingly inhuman way.

Fourie and Poggenpoel's (2017) work supports the empirical data and state that various aspects impeding service delivery include incompetent public servants, a lack of accountability, poor human resources practices, inadequate procurement practices and a lack of leadership.

It is not uncommon to see a patient dying in the queue waiting to be attended to in a health facility. While other government sectors, such as the local government, experience the same poor customer service, health facilities' poor customer service affects the sick and most vulnerable people in society. In addition to public sector performance, the extant literature identifies the *leadership* dimension as a driver of public sector corporate reputation. The leadership dimension is intended to assess perceptions of leaders as excellent and visionary managers, and strong endorsers of their companies (Fombrun *et al.,* 2015). According to Fombrun and Gardberg (1999) a leader must have a vision, and communicate its values clearly. In other words, stakeholders must be able to relate to values that the organisation espouses. However, the empirical findings of this study show that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government lacks leadership in many respects. All the interviewees consistently expressed dissatisfaction with the calibre of leadership within the Eastern Cape provincial Government.

The findings show that a salient retardation of leadership in the Eastern Cape can be attributed to cadre deployment. The majority of people are appointed into leadership positions based on their political affiliation and they regrettably lack requisite skills to execute the job. The case in point is one of the challenges that confront many municipalities that have experienced stagnation in development due to the lack of appropriate skills in leadership. After 25 years into democracy, many municipalities in the Eastern Cape remain in dire straits, and development has regressed considerably. In this regard, an interviewee expressed a view that:

> *"I must say that cadre deployment retard development in the Eastern Cape. I say this because half the time people that are appointed into leadership position do not necessarily possess the requisite skills. People are appointed on the basis of political affiliation and their role within the political sphere without consideration of their academic qualifications and the experience to do the work".*

These findings are supported by Dartey-Baah (2014), who argues that leadership in Africa is seriously plagued with issues of incompetency, corruption and unaccountable governance. Lanin and Hermanto (2019) further postulate that bad governance in African countries can also be considered to result from the lack of statesmen in the position of governors, and corruption and state robbery is endemic in almost all African countries and is a serious flaw in African leadership.

One interviewee expressed the fact that Eastern Cape Provincial Government leaders are not adequately educated because of the cadre deployment. The level of education within the African National Congress (ANC, the ruling party) is very low, so many of its people are not educated and this creates problems for the implementation of government programmes because they do not possess the relevant skills to lead in their respective deployment positions. The findings further show that what affects good leadership in the Eastern Cape is that there is relatively very old people in leadership positions. One interviewee pointed out that the problem with old people is that they have run out of new ideas and will not make the necessary innovative changes that are in line with the rapid changes that take place in the environment. Fombrun *et al.* (2015) advocate for an appealing leadership that attract favourable media coverage, increasing confidence and trust in the organisation, and thereby building corporate reputation.

Furthermore, the findings of this study highlight *communication* as a crucial driver of public views about the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. All the participants interviewed in the study expressed the view that communication within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is disturbingly poor. In the same vein, the empirical data from the observations show that people are dissatisfied with the quality of government communication. For example, during a provincial community engagement session, a man in his 40s expressed his frustration with the Provincial Government's lack of communication:

> *Premier, we are concerned by the lack of information on government programmes especially for us who reside in rural areas. We hardly know what is going to happen in government or in our own areas. Our councillor is never available to listen to us at least. We are left out of the loop. Is it possible for government to install Wi-Fi in our*

area so we can access Internet services and be able to access government information?"

Luke and Hyns (2013) support these findings and argue that the spate of service delivery protests in South Africa in recent years would appear to indicate that the government is out of touch with the opinions of South African citizens. In view of the empirical data, it would seem that due to salient lack of communication, citizens are experiencing high levels of uncertainty, and therefore frustration, about the programmes of the Provincial Government.

The findings of this study contradict the uncertainty reduction theory, which, according to Thompson *et al*. (2012), expresses the view that communication can generate understanding (or a reduction of uncertainty) and thus serves as the basis of relationship development. Organisations should strive to reduce uncertainty through vigorous communication by providing timely information on issues pertinent to people's development. More importantly, Thompson *et al.* (2012) are also of the view that communication is the primary vehicle for reducing uncertainty. The empirical findings indicate that participants have limited information on the Provincial Government programmes, and this creates a high level of uncertainty which is in contradiction to the uncertainty theory that advocates for the reduction of uncertainty through rigorous communication. One of the significant hindrances of communication in the Eastern Cape is the fact that it is deeply rural, and there are areas where people cannot access government information. Besides, councillors are failing to provide information to citizens, especially since these political leaders are at the coalface of service delivery.

The government of the Eastern Cape is also not communicating in one voice, and communication is not necessarily accorded its rightful strategic role within the Provincial Government. Members of the community can hardly draw a distinction between the provincial and local government, and this demonstrates a lack of integrated government communication. Whilst both the provincial and local sphere present government as providing public goods, it is imperative that citizens draw a distinction between the two spheres of government so that they can understand what to expect from each sphere of government.

Strategic communication has received massive attention in literature and an emphasis has particularly been placed on the significance of according communication an executive role within government institutions.

Furthermore, the arena model supports the findings, as it stipulates that organisations communicate with their stakeholders in different settings or communication arenas, and these arenas represent the realm where the organisations meet their constituents to engage in communication (Aula & Mantere, 2012). In essence, all communication exchanges occur within a particular context, for example "the media is an arena, as are interactions with stakeholders or between employees" (Rensburg & De Beer, 2011). It is, therefore, crucial that organisations create relevant communication arenas in order to fulfil the information requirements of its stakeholders.

The empirical findings show that communication is never part of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government strategic planning, and it is often relegated to the lowest levels of the organisation. The empirical data further show that there is no clear communication strategy on how government intends to reach diverse audiences within the Province of the Eastern Cape. It does not have enough communication platforms or arenas to reach a wide array of communities with information in particular. One interviewee expressed a view:

> "My view is that people are not aware of what government is doing. There is very little information; in fact, to further compound this matter government uses English most of the time when the majority of our people cannot understand English. It means it is targeting wrong people with their communication".

The Eastern Cape remains a largely rural and semi-literate society that requires a tailor-made communication strategy. However, it would appear from empirical data that the majority of communities have limited access to government information and that government is inherently incapable of designing communication systems that incorporate the broad spectrum of society. Invariably, this excludes a relatively huge spectrum of society from the development agenda of the Provincial Government.

Literature has further highlighted *innovation* as a driver of public views about the public sector corporate reputation. In this regard, Da Silva and Batista (2007) posit that governments are aware of the social expectations for automated services and they have been trying to respond to such a pressure by investing in information and communication technologies.

Innovation in the public sector is used to improve service performance and to add value in terms of public benefit (Hwang & Choi, 2012). However, Agolla and Van Lill (2017) argue that in comparison with the private sector, the public sector is confronted by a myriad of challenges that impede its ability to innovate. The empirical data corroborate the literature perspective by accentuating that government has so far done little to embrace innovation. All the participants expressed concern at the slow pace at which the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is harnessing innovation, especially technology. To this effect, one interviewee expressed an opinion that:

> *"It will take time for the Eastern Cape Provincial Government to embrace technology. It may be that Eastern Cape is predominantly rural and it will take time to reach the same level as Gauteng where many services are provided through technology. For example, recently the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape subsidised teachers with computers but the majority of them could not even use those computers, and many have no access to internet."*

The empirical findings show that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is harnessing innovation, albeit at a relatively slow pace. Participants emphasised the importance of the Provincial Government entrenching innovation in its endeavour to improve performance. The empirical data is in line with Agolla *et al*.'s (2016) contention that the quest to improve the quality of services has driven governments, both in the developing and developed world, to adopt innovative approaches, such as e-government, for example, to meet the citizens' demands. Similarly, Ou and Hsu's (2013) study shows that a good corporate reputation benefits a high-tech firm by directly enhancing its internal resources to create value, as well as indirectly by enhancing its innovative capability, which then influences its innovative performance.

Daglio *at al.* (2014) are also of the view that technological progress is advancing at a speed never seen before, opening great opportunities for governments to incorporate new tools and approaches, while placing great pressure on governments to keep pace. Therefore, government needs capacity to adapt quickly to change, and to adopt new technological trends in order to improve its effectiveness in providing quality services to its citizens. However, literature (Mawela *et al.* 2017) further shows that in South Africa there are nevertheless several pockets of success in working towards e-government such as the South African Revenue Services (SARS) e-Filing initiative; the National Automated Archival Information Retrieval System (NAAIRS) to facilitate access to public archived records; and the National Government Portal (www.gov.za) that provides access to government information and services.

While the majority of participants expressed their displeasure with the pace of innovation within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, one interviewee corroborated the above viewpoint of Mawela *et al.* (2017). The findings in this regard indicate that there are pockets of excellence within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, for example, the recent introduction of the broadband programme through the Office of the Premier, which essentially links the remote rural areas with highly sophisticated technology systems that would enhance access to services. There is also a system that has been introduced by the Department of Health that links Cicilia Makiwane Hospital with rural hospitals and other health facilities through which they can access specialist health services.

The findings show that while the pace of innovation within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is moving at a slow pace, however, there are instances of success where innovation is being encompassed. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government efforts to accelerate innovation within its processes are – to a greater degree – hamstrung by the low level of education, especially in the rural areas. In many instances the innovative initiatives, such as new technology initiatives require a certain level of literacy. The empirical data further highlights innovation as a crucial catalyst for development and improved communication in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. Researchers such as Kim *et al.* (2009) and Gerguri and Ramadani (2010) believe innovation is an important measure for expediting the delivery of services to citizens and increasing transparency in government.

In view of empirical data, innovation drives development and communication, which potentially enhance the service delivery mechanisms of government. Communication is inevitably an important pillar of service delivery, as citizens' participation and support of government programmes is largely predicated in the extent of service delivery information that is made available to them. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government is also overwhelmed by the nascent of the new technology-based forms of communication and is obligated to harness them in expediting service delivery.

The findings of this study highlight *public participation* as an important government programme that can potentially benefit the Provincial Government's corporate reputation. The empirical data from observations show that communication with citizens and meaningful participation in government processes are key indicators of effective government performance. This supports the signalling theory, which states that all communications that the company engages in act as signals of what the company is all about, what it stands for and what actions it espouses to fulfil its stakeholders' expectations. Signaling theory draws on the informational role of the reputation which appears to be essential in gaining the audience's trust and confidence in the products and services offered by the company (Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997). Public participation highlights the importance of information that the Provincial Government uses to signal its reputations to its stakeholders. It further represents a form of communication that the Provincial Government uses as a signal that reinforces its corporate reputation.

The empirical findings amply show that there is limited public participation in the processes of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. In this regard, one participant expressed a view that: *"I my own community I have never been part of a public participation, but I have always heard government claiming to have held public participation".* Findings of this study are in line with literature, which states that while public participation is entrenched in the Constitution of South Africa, the spate of service delivery protests in recent years would appear to indicate that the government is out of touch with the opinions of South African citizens, and mobilisation of communities to participate in government programme is not always done well (Luke & Hyns, 2013).

That said, some literature does not support the findings of this study. For example, Cornelissen (2014:41) states that contemporary organisations are increasingly harnessing public participation to communicate with their stakeholders to develop and protect their reputations. Furthermore, this aligns with Cotterre in Fairbanks *et al.*'s (2007) view that generally, organisations enhance public participation through the strategic promotion of transparency by making available information on matters of public concern; affording citizens the opportunity to participate in political decisions; and making government accountable to public opinion or legal processes. Generally, public participation provides a communication platform for both the Provincial Government and citizens, and it is an opportunity for government to espouse community ideas in their programmes or policy frameworks.

However, the empirical data show that in the Eastern Cape there is limited public participation in government programmes. For example, some participants raised concerns about the inaccessibility of ward councillors, who ideally should provide a strategic link between government and citizens. All the participants interviewed during the study attributed the escalation of service delivery protests in the Province to paucity of public participation in the Provincial Government decision-making processes. Service delivery protest was mentioned consistently as the only recourse available to citizens to coerce Provincial Government into attending to their service delivery. One participant asserted that government is only visible during the election period when they make myriad promises to citizens, which are rarely fulfilled. This signals poor stakeholder relationships between the Provincial Government and citizens, thus poor government reputation.

These empirical findings support the SPIRIT Model, which measures corporate reputation in terms of three areas, namely, the experience, feelings and intentions of stakeholders towards a business (Hillenbrand & Money, 2007). Further, the SPIRIT Model measures how an organisation communicates with stakeholders, the benefits stakeholders receive from organisations, the integrity with which stakeholders are treated and how stakeholders feel towards the business. Quite clearly, the empirical findings indicate that the relationship between the Provincial Government and citizens is declining due to a lack of communication on service delivery issues, in particular.

Literature indicates that the key role of good *corporate governance* has to be the improvement and protection of corporate reputation (Ljubojevic & Ljubovjevic, 2008). A positive corporate reputation is only possible with ethical behaviour and the trust that builds relationships with a firm's stakeholders (Wang & Smith, 2010) and is also revealed to be a logical outcome of the quality of corporate governance operated in an organisation (Iwu-Egwuonwu, 2011). The findings of this study show that all the participants interviewed expressed disenchantment with the Eastern Cape Provincial Government governance structures. The findings indicate that the Provincial Government is fraught with unethical conduct, ineptitude, inefficiencies and corruption. In relation to poor governance systems, a participant expressed an opinion that:

> *"Eastern Cape Government is experiencing a lot of corruption related cases. In fact the reason why development is moving so slowly in the Eastern Cape is due to the inefficiencies and corruption of the government officials. This government is very unethical. For example, for us as young people it is concerning to hear that before you can be employed in some of the government departments and municipalities you must first pay or give sexual favours, if you are woman. In fact it is common knowledge that if you are not connected to anyone within a particular department you will never be considered for a job, you must know and be known by someone for you to be considered".*

These findings are consistent with Yimer's (2015) view, who states that there is still much work to be done to address bad practice, including corruption and political interference in decision-making, and the main problem which troubles Africans most is the failure of political leadership and these are traceable in the consciousness to political leadership deficiencies. Similarly, Masegare and Ngoepe (2018) assert that challenges that municipalities face in implementing corporate governance are a lack of skills by councillors and ineffective municipal governance structures. The above literature perspective may be attributed to salient lack of leadership within the Provincial Government. In relation to challenges of leadership within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, one participant interviewed expressed an opinion that:

> *"My view is that many leaders in the Eastern Cape are more focused on looting resources than doing the work of making this Province a better to live in.*

What also affects good leadership in the Eastern Cape is that often you have very old people in leadership and very few young people. Old people I must say have gone out of ideas and will not make the necessary changes that are in line with the rapid changes that take place in the environment. I think the entire ruling party (ANC) has a problem of leadership because many of its leaders are often associated with bad leadership, such as inefficiency, corruption and incompetency".

The findings of this study indicate that *corruption and fraud* are endemic within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, and a lot of money and resources are lost through corruption tendencies. One participant accentuated that tender systems are manipulated to a greater extent to benefit those that are connected to politicians; municipalities are in a mess because of political interference; and services in many areas have collapsed. All the participants indicated that leaders do not prioritise communities, but they only advance their selfish needs. They often appoint service providers who do not have requisite skills to do the job, and in some instances accept bribes from service providers, who end up not delivering on the project or produce inferior work. All these findings reflect on the failure of the Provincial Government to engender good corporate reputation. One participant interviewed stated that:

"There is so much fraud, corruption and stealing within government. For example, look at what is happening at Lukhanji Municipality where there is a lot of infighting over access to resources and there is no time for service delivery. Municipality is in a mess because of political interference, in fact the same can be said about many municipalities in the Province. Services in many areas in the Eastern Cape have collapsed because there is no clear government role or intervention in ensuring that service delivery is expedited. There is also culture of non-payment for services by the communities. Our civil servants are extremely inefficient and corrupt."

The extant literature corroborates the findings of this study and state that corruption is seen as being pervasive, even systemic in South Africa. This makes it more difficult to single out particular sectors, and there is no empirical evidence to support the selection of certain sectors as high-risk (Transparency International, 2017). Similarly, Manyaka and Nkuna (2014) add that while the South African public sector has a sound legislative framework and strategies for combating corruption, challenges such as the weaker application of the legislation and oversight mechanisms; insufficient political will; political deployments, and an absence of meritocratic systems provide opportunities for unethical, fraudulent and/or corrupt activities to thrive.

The *workplace environment* is a vital part of strengthening the Eastern Cape Provincial Government's corporate reputation. This viewpoint supports the reputation theory, which accentuates that good corporate reputation is enhanced by intangible things that it does, such as delivering better products and services, being seen as a good place to work, and the building of trust with internal stakeholders (Burke, 2011). Further, literature corroborates the above theoretical perspective and states that how employees are treated and the quality of their workplace behaviours will seep out into the public domain and thus affect the reputation or otherwise, which an organisation will be associated with (Iwu-Egwuonwu, 2011; Zhang & Schwaiger, 2009). Similarly, Da Silva and Batista (2007) accentuate that what employees feel about their organisations may affect the way they deal with customers and, therefore, the way the customers feel about the organisation.

The findings of this study indicate that the workplace environment of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is not an ideal one. This is validated by the extent to which people from the Eastern Cape Province emigrate to other provinces such as Gauteng, the Western Cape and Kwazulu-Natal. All the participants interviewed expressed the fact that a large number of people leave government employment for greener pastures to provinces such as Gauteng, Western Cape and Kwazulu-Natal. One participant mentioned that some government employees resign to go to other countries such as Australia and Canada.

When the researcher pursued this idea with other participants, all of them believed that Gauteng, Kwazulu-Natal and the Western Cape are the main provinces where the majority of government employees emigrate. The findings indicate that the exodus of employees to other provinces is stimulated by the untenable working conditions within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. One participant expressed an opinion that:

> *"Eastern Cape Provincial Government is not a good employer at all. My view is that the reason why many people leave for other provinces is because working for this Province is a nightmare. Its employees are so disgruntled, the majority are leaving on a daily basis, which is an illustration of the level of frustration which they are going through. Working conditions within the Eastern Cape Government are terrible, for example workers are not well treated and well looked after, especially those that are at the lower levels in the departments. As a result they leave in numbers for provinces such as Gauteng and Western Cape".*

The findings of this study are in line with Pietersen and Oni's (2014) assertion that there is rampant job dissatisfaction within the government departments, which is attributed to poor compensation and better job offers elsewhere, inferior working conditions, and a lack of promotional opportunities. Similarly, the findings are consistent with Uitzinger, Chrysler-Fox and Thomas' (2018) study findings, which indicate that the challenge to retain a workforce exists if there is a disregard for employee wellbeing within the organisation, and often a poor work environment translates into reduced motivational levels, employee disengagement and a resultant decline in employee performance. In this regard, Mafini and Pooe (2013) are of the view that employee satisfaction is influenced by the interaction of a family of factors such as recognition, communication, co-workers, fringe benefits, working conditions, the nature of the work itself, the nature of the organisation itself, organisational systems, policies and procedures, compensation, personal development, promotion, appreciation, security, and supervision.

8.2.2. Research question 2

What is the impact of media coverage on the Eastern Cape Provincial Government?

Scholars such as Lu and Wang (2016) and Fan, Geddes and Flory (2011) identify media as the main channel for stakeholders to build perceptions. Similarly, Andrews and Caren (2010) report in their study that the news media can shape the public agenda by influencing public opinion, authorities, and elites. With the proliferation of news media and online media, members of the public are presented with a multitude of sources on what occurs in each organisation, which could potentially shape their perceptions. Shamma and Hassan's (2009) research findings corroborate the above view and report that the mass media is the main source by which the general public forms perceptions about corporate reputation. Di Tella and Franceschelli (2011) posit that the media plays an important role in modern democracies. For example, it provides a large proportion of the information with which policymakers and voters make decisions, as well as analysis and editorial content that may influence the conclusions reached by potential voters. In reference to the critical role of media, Hannington (2004:25) is also of the view that the attention of the media has a profound impact on reputation.

The empirical findings of this study show that *media coverage* of the Provincial Government is relatively negative. All the participants interviewed pointed out that media generally reports negatively about the Provincial Government. One participant stated that:

> *"There is very negative reporting of government on by various media houses. This is unfortunate especially that media portrays whatever is happening in the Province to the outside world. This may impact on how the world views the Eastern Cape, which may further impact on tourism and investment opportunities in the Province".*

Findings clearly demonstrate that the media perceives the Eastern Cape Provincial Government in a negative light, and some participants have attributed this negativity to the perpetual socio-economic challenges that confront the Province. For the past 25 years of democracy, the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has essentially done very little to transform the lives of the people, and this is notwithstanding huge amounts of budgets that have been allocated over the years. In this regard, one participant had this to say:

"Right now if you open the newspapers, you always come across very negative publicity about Eastern Cape Provincial Government. Again this shows that our government is not doing enough to deliver on its mandate".

The extant literature supports these findings and indicate that public sector organisations have in recent years been subjected to negative media publicity involving corporate scandals and unprecedented levels of corruption (Pahach & Warr, 2009). Such allegations and the negative media publicity surrounding it, whether based on real or perceived issues, ultimately damage an organisation's reputation and consequently affect its performance. Similarly, Lloyd (2013) supports the findings and contends that the relationship between the ANC government and the print media in particular, has been tense for many, many years, with distrust from the ruling party and its allies perhaps rooted in the complicity of much of the mainstream press in covering up the brutality of apartheid.

Significantly, many stakeholders depend on news reports about corporations, because the media are considered credible and trustworthy sources of corporations' performance (Meadows & Meadows III, 2016). Media coverage sets the agenda for public discourse (Rindova *et al*. 2007) and the media exposure is likely to contribute to reputation building by focusing attention on the organisation, in this case a provincial government (Kotha *et al.* 2001). This is consistent with the findings of this study, which further indicate that most perceptions about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government are largely based on what is reported on by various media houses. This empirical data perspective supports the agenda setting theory, which emphasises that the frequency with which the media report on a public or political issue determines that issue's salience in the minds of the general public (Cornellisen, 2014:148). The findings of this study also validates the Ray's hierarchy of ffects theory, which emphasises the power of the media influence and that "news media are considered particularly influential" (Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Kiousis *et al.*, 2007; Sternthal *et al*, 1978).

In line with the findings, Norris (2000) identifies three conditions under which the news media could influence aggregate public opinion, which are:

iv. If there is extensive media coverage of an issue;

v.   if the coverage displays a consistent directional bias; and

vi.   if the public is willing to take its cues for the new media.

The ineffective communication machinery of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has given a loophole to the media to become the main source of information on Provincial Government related matters. However, unlike other provinces such as Gauteng and the Western Cape, the Eastern Cape has a limited number (less than four) of mainstream media houses. People of the Province rely on a limited number of media houses as sources of information on government related issues. This essentially implies that they have limited choices to juxtapose perspectives as represented on various media platforms.

The findings of this study indicate that *media relations* are relatively poor. When asked how they viewed the relationship between the government and the media, all participants interviewed during the study expressed an opinion that relations between the Provincial Government and the various media houses were at an all-time low. One participant stated that:

> "*Relations between the two entities are very poor. I must say that the Eastern Cape Government must realise that you don't fight media because media has got a lot of influence and power, and people rely more on what they receive through media. However, in my view many instances where media relations are sound, government reputation stands to benefit handsomely because media will report positively thus enhance the image of government.*"

The present study findings are consistent with the work of Liu *et al*. (2012), who assert that the relationship between the media and government has always been low, both in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. As such, the media is inclined to focus on negative, rather than positive news, and are more likely to cover dramatic events. In the same way, Knudsen's (2015) literature work supports this study's findings, and point out that political news is increasingly focusing on negative, rather than positive, evaluations. The author further contends that negativity and criticism are indeed important news values, and journalists strive to uphold their role as a public watchdog, questioning, challenging and criticizing power structures, elites, governments and organisations.

In reference to the South Africa context, Lloyd (2013) points out that the relationship between the ANC Government and the media has been tense for many years, underpinned by distrust from the ruling party.

One participant blamed poor media-government relations on the failure of government communicators to proactively engage the media. The participant underscored the fact that government communicators are failing to nurture relations with the media by providing timely information to them. They fail to proactively inform the media about programmes of the government, which compromises relations between the two entities. Similarly, another participant attributed poor media relations to a lack of government transparency towards the media, so media houses end up having to dig up on government issues which deteriorates relations further. Further, the participant expressed concern that the Provincial Government does not have the right people to manage media relations and to ensure that the image of government is projected quite well. Communicators are not proactive enough to rebut the negative media coverage of government. This deficiency can be attributed to the lack of professional communicators within the Provincial Government, who often are not necessarily qualified in communication, but have been appointed based on their political alignment. More often, government communicators spend a lot of time protecting their political principals rather than executing communication in a transparent manner.

Literature has identified the *watchdog role* as one of the critical responsibilities of media in a democratic society. Amodu *et al.* (2016) are of the view that to ensure a successful democratic governance and sustainable development, the media have the responsibility to communicate the actions of the government to its citizens and to relay the feedback to the government through opinion pages and public affairs programmes, among others. Amodu *et al.* (2016) further state that the media's responsibility is to monitor governmental activities and report progress or lack of it after candidates have been voted into power for constant evaluation. Hudson and Stuart (2001) point out that the media has assigned itself the role of not only disseminating information, but also of becoming the watchdog of companies' reputations (Hudson & Stuart, 2001).

Coombs (2000) concurs, and states that most of the information stakeholders collect about organisations is derived from the news media, which is why media coverage is an important feature of reputation management.

The findings of this study corroborates the literature perspectives in respect of the watchdog role of the media. All the participants indicated that media invariably plays a pivotal watchdog role in the Eastern Cape. They all emphasised that, as members of the public, they inevitably rely on the media for information that pertains to malfeasance within the Provincial Government. One participant commented that:

> "I think the media plays a significant watchdog role. I say this because I am thinking about the infamous Mandela Funeral Scandal where government officials embezzled funds that were intended to prepare for the funeral of the late former President Nelson Mandela. If it was not for the media, the public would not have known about this scandal. Many government including municipal officials were involved in this unprecedented scandal in the Eastern Cape".

These findings are consistent with Sutter's (2004) view that much media coverage of government involves scandals, and over time such coverage should diminish people's respect for the government. They also align with Daniels' (2010) viewpoint, which points out that by playing the role of watchdog and holding power to account, and by exposing corruption, the media plays a critical role in the social environment, as part of civil society. Similarly, Gumede (2014) corroborates the findings by stating that media have by and large played an extraordinarily crucial oversight role to consolidate the country's democracy, not least by holding elected officials accountable. Di Tella and Franceschelli (2011) concur with the empirical data and state that the media is potentially important in exercising control over abusive government, particularly in countries with high levels of corruption and weak legal systems.

In reiterating the pivotal role of the media as a watchdog, Nkomo and Wafula's (2016) study further supports the findings of this study and shows that Africans are much clearer about the specific mandate of the media vis-à-vis government, and generally support for the media's "watchdog" role is strong and widespread and the majority of Africans agree that the news media should "constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption.

The forgoing literature perspectives illustrate that society increasingly relies on the media to unravel government issues that would otherwise be concealed from them. Eastern Cape Provincial Government departments and municipalities are engulfed in massive scandals that compromise service delivery in many ways, and it is through the media that the public can hold them accountable. Citizens rely on the media to uncover wrongdoings that impact their development. In this regard, one participant said that:

> "Yes media play a major watchdog role in my view. For instance they report about many service delivery related challenges, which otherwise people would not have had an opportunity to communicate to government. For example, there is an SABC programme called 'Cutting Edge', which exposes so much wrongdoing that occur within the Eastern Cape government departments, especially Departments of Health and Education. Poor service delivery cases get exposed through this media platform and government is often obliged to take an action due to the media expose".

The findings of this study supports Ray's hierarchy of effects theory which shows that media has a strong influence on people's perception of which issues are important and which problems they want their government to do something about (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002). This theory further emphasises the power of the media influence, and posit that the third-party sources like the news media are considered particularly influential (Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Kiousis *et al*., 2007).

One participant interviewed expressed confidence in how media has exposed a lot of wrongdoing by the provincial government. The participant cited the SABC programme 'Cutting Edge' as an example of how media try its level best to expose government wrongdoings. However, in the Eastern Cape Province there are few media houses with adequate capacity to investigate and expose government wrongdoings. Instead, the Eastern Cape Province has seen the mushrooming of community media, which do not have the relevant capacity to exercise a watchdog role.

Literature identifies *social media* as emerging, ubiquitous platforms that inevitably provide additional communication mechanisms to government, but simultaneously pose massive risks to reputation. In reference to the proliferation of social media platforms, Arya *et al.* (2018) are of the view that technology (especially social media) is playing a vital role by enabling organisations to come up with innovative ways to better express their brands, particularly the emotions, feelings and values that are associated with them. Cornelissen (2014:257) points out that advances in media and web technology provide new challenges and opportunities for organisations to communicate and engage with their stakeholders, including their own employees, local communities, customers and the news media.

Literature further highlights that the use of the Internet and other digital media to deliver government information and services to citizens can be an influential factor in the restoration of trust in government because it has the potential to improve government performance (e.g., productivity gains, improved decision processes) and transparency (Song & Lee, 2016). The advantages of embracing the new media notwithstanding, the empirical findings of this study show that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has not adequately espoused the new media platforms. All the participants interviewed expressed their appreciation of the new media platforms, however, the Provincial Government has not grabbed the opportunity afforded by the new platforms. A participant interviewed during the study expressed an opinion that:

> *"My view is that social media is a very good platform for Provincial Government, however, the government has not used it to its full potential. And unfortunately people nowadays use media to attack government in a big way. If you look at what people say about Eastern Cape Government on social media, it is all very negative and I believe it is high time that Government did something about this, otherwise its reputation is at stake because people can write whatever they want about government on social media".*

Lee and Kwak's (2012) work is consistent with the findings of this study, and they argue that social media-based public engagement is an uncharted territory and government agencies generally lack experience and knowledge about implementing social media.

The literature further suggests that the level of education is key in expediting the introduction of social media as an element of government communication machinery. For example, Davidson *et al*.'s (2005) study shows that indeed, there is also evidence that e-government is for the educated minority in developing countries. The authors contend that this would be a truly unfortunate situation, since it is often the less educated that have most to gain from online initiatives that empower them to make decisions based on what is in their best interests, and this would stand in stark contrast to the presumably universal principle of government: serving all citizens.

This is unfortunately the case in South Africa where, according to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2013) report, illiteracy remains prevalent among women, the elderly, in rural communities and among members of poor households, which are the groups of the society that specifically need to engage with the government on socio-economic issues. The situation is worse in the Eastern Cape, where Stats SA (2017) reports that it has the lowest youth literacy rate, which stands at 86% of illiteracy. The report further unequivocally states that these low levels of literacy and education in general, can impede the economic development of a country in the current rapidly changing, technology-driven world.

The findings of this study further indicate that social media poses a *reputational risk* to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. About 40% of participants interviewed during the study mentioned social media as a reputational risk. A participant interviewed during the study stated that: "*Government reputation is at risk in terms of the social platforms. Social media is a very open and transparent platform through which people can address urgent and sensitive issues. Some issues may expose the weaknesses of government*".

The study findings are consistent with Meadows and Meadows's (2016) caveat that public relations practitioners should be cautious when implementing social media strategies, because social media are often seen as a two-edged sword; on the one hand, social media allow the company to engage with every customer and stakeholder on an individual basis, the ease and freedom to engage is unparalleled throughout history, however, on the other hand, social media are also seen as a risk.

Zufall (2012) adds that while social media has shifted organisational communication from one-way communication to free conversation, organisations have lost power to control what is being said about them in the world, which can lead to threats for an organisation in many cases and in many ways.

8.2.3. Addressing research question 3

> What is the public's emotional attachment to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government?

According to Levy and Hino (2015), emotional attachment reflects a mental state or feeling connected or attached to the brand – a holistic feeling toward the brand. Luoma-aho (2015) contends that organisations have entered into a time of strong emotions and organisations have become targets of emotion, both love and hate. Further, emotional attachment is the outcome of long-term relationships between service providers and customers; it occurs during the service experience (Carroll & Aluvia, 2006) and is a result of the company's holistic marketing efforts (Levy & Hino, 2015). The study conducted by Levy and Hino (2015) shows that one of the things that motivate customers to choose and connect to a certain product or service is emotions, and the emotional connection between a company and its customers is formed gradually.

The findings of this study show that there is limited or no public attachment to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. When asked about their *overall impression (esteem)* of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, 80% of the participants interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with government. A participant stated that:

> *"It saddens me how our government has consistently failed our people in meeting their expectations in delivering quality services. It is now more than 25 years since they came to power but the Province is still struggling to provide the very basic services to our people and you still have a huge number of people that live on social grants due to high levels of poverty. This state of affairs is notwithstanding the fact that Eastern Cape is endowed with massive resources which the majority remain untapped.*
> *This is the government that is least committed to development, but is characterised by rampant corruption, inefficiencies and incompetent workforce".*

The findings largely show that people are extremely unhappy with the Provincial Government's failure to deliver services. These findings are consistent with Fourie and Poggenpoel's (2017) view that citizens' impression about government is that various aspects impeding service delivery include incompetent public servants, a lack of accountability, poor human resources practices, inadequate procurement practices and a lack of leadership. Cahill, Batista and Kawalek's study (2004) further corroborate the findings of this study and show that wider society continually discusses, analyses and debates the problems of government; the majority perceiving it with distaste i.e. negatively, or without any concern (neutral).

Similarly, Managa (2012) points out that many South Africans have little confidence in the efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness of government, as demonstrated by their protests. The author further contends that municipalities' underperformance and mismanagement, coupled with corruption, have led communities to have little confidence in the local government. Moreover, this is aggravated by unfulfilled political promises, abuse of power and a lack of accountability to the public by councillors and government officials.

The foregoing literature perspectives clearly demonstrate a lack of public attachment to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, which is exacerbated by the slow pace in the provision of services in the Eastern Cape. The Eastern Cape remains the poorest province with myriad people living in poverty and unemployment, and invariably this alienates people from the Provincial Government that has an exclusive mandate to provide public goods/ basic services. The findings of this study do not support the principles of the attachment theory, which stipulate that a perceived higher level of service quality, which strives to go beyond the customer's expectations, can create a positive emotion of pleasant surprise and delight among customers, leading to higher satisfaction levels (Levy & Hino, 2016). This theory further stresses that great brands always make an emotional connection with the intended audience and they reach beyond the purely rational and purely economic level to spark feelings of closeness, affection, and trust (Men & Robinson, 2018).

About 20 percent of research participants were positive about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. For example, one participant interviewed for the study had this to say: "*I love Eastern Cape Government, and I am happy to remain in the Eastern Cape. It is relatively doing well, and there are many successes that one can point to*". These findings are consistent with the attachment theory which states that consumers who are emotionally attached to an organisation are also likely to have a favourable attitude toward it (MacInnis & Park, 2005).

The participants interviewed for the study mentioned lack of *Batho Pele* principles as one of the reasons why they are generally unhappy with the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. One participant stated that:

> "*I see government that has officials who have a very bad attitude, people who have no interest to serve our people. It's people that are only concerned with their own selfish interest. Public servants are not approachable to our people at all and in some instances citizens are event afraid to visit these places due to attitude*".

These research findings are in line with Ngidi and Dorasam's (2013) work, which shows that while initiatives are in place to ensure the application of the Batho Pele principles, challenges still exist, and the South African government is still grappling with corruption, and inept public servants, among other things.

The authors further point out that the losses that accrue from a culture of permissiveness with respect to corruption include a loss of revenue, loss of trust, loss of values, loss of credibility and legitimacy and a loss of the democratic ethos and impulse within institutions and organisations. The Eastern Cape is predominantly rural and people have limited access to the new technological innovations, which compel them to rely more on public servants for services. However, the findings of this study show that the performance of the South African public service has not lived up to the expectations of its citizens, henceforth the plethora of service delivery protects which are a manifestation of disgruntled citizenry, and poor stakeholder emotional attachment.

The findings of this study show that citizens do not have a good *feeling* about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. When asked what was their feeling about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government about 90 percent of the participants indicated that they had a very poor feeling about the Government. Many participants expressed a great sense of dissatisfaction with the Provincial Government. One participant expressed an opinion that:

> *"I feel that the EC Government has not done enough to improve lives of the people, especially the young people of our province. I am generally unhappy with this government. My view is that we need committed leadership and public servants that put people first. Right now the current quality of public servants will not take this government to the next level instead they are destroying it in my view. Eastern Cape is notorious for poor customer service because its employees are not committed to what they do at all".*

Participants expressed a great deal of disillusionment with the Provincial Government's service delivery failures and the ineptitude of public servants. Some participants spontaneously mentioned phrases such as unreliable, unapproachable, lazy, wasteful, inefficient and 'ineffective' public servants when asked how they felt about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The participants' feelings about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is largely influenced by their interaction with services that it provides. One participant stated that:

> *"Our overall feeling is that the Eastern Cape government is failing in its responsibility of providing services to the people. They need to work hard to change attitude of the public servants who provide extremely poor service to the people".*

The findings of this study are in line with MacMillan *et al.*'s (2002) views, who state that the general public's feeling about an organisation may be influenced largely by the direct experience of their interactions with companies, for example, as customers. Similarly, Lanin and Hermanto (2019) are of the view that in order to increase public satisfaction on the basic needs, such as education and health services, government should improve delivery, timeliness of service, availability of information, staff professionalism, staff attitude, external and internal roles of managers and at the same time minimise organisational politics within the local government.

Literature highlights *trust* as one of the key determinants of the public sector corporate reputation. Watson (2007) points out that in any organisation the serious breach of stakeholder trust can destroy reputation virtually overnight. Edwards (2015) is of the view that trust in government is one of the most important foundations upon which the legitimacy and sustainability of political systems are built. In the African context, Bratton and Gyimah-Boadi's (2016) study findings indicate that Africans express more trust in informal institutions such as religious and traditional leaders than in the formal executive agencies of the state, and further trust in the state is associated with positive popular assessments of government performance. Blind (2007) refers to trust as the judgment of the citizenry that the system and the political incumbents are responsive, and will do what is right even in the absence of constant scrutiny. This literature perspective supports the legitimacy theory, which states that a company operates in society where it agrees to perform various socially desired actions in return for approval of its objectives, other rewards, and its ultimate survival (Mousa & Hassan, 2015).

The findings of this study show that trust in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is low. All the participants that were interviewed for the study expressed their diminishing trust in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. A participant interviewed during the study said:

> *"I honestly do not trust this government because it doesn't care for the needs of the people. In fact people have lost hope in this government, I think very few if any believe that this government will ever salvage people of the Eastern Cape from the doldrums of unemployment and poverty. I am also convinced that many communities do not trust this government and they believe that leaders are more distracted by internal fighting, and are focusing less in developing and serving our society. I am saying this because recently many communities have embarked on service delivery protests, and this shows that the lack of trust has pushed them to resort to such tactics in order demand government attention."*

The extant literature corroborate these study findings. Edwards (2015) concurs with the research findings and asserts that citizen trust is lower than governments would like and that there is, therefore, a need for them to confront their trust deficit and attempt to build up a trust culture with their citizens. In line with Edwards's view, Fakir (2009) is of the view that in South Africa trust and confidence in public institutions have ebbed and flowed.

Further, Fakir asserts that there is a marked decline of trust and public institutions are perceived not to deliver on the mandate that they have, or at least there is a mismatch between the mandates of institutions and the mismatched and/or (un)realistic expectations of citizens.

Motion *et al*.'s (2013) work further supports the research findings and point out that the low levels of trust result from actual poor performance caused by bad management or lack of communication. Fakir's (2009) work is also consistent with the study findings and note that there are eroding levels of trust and confidence in institutions and amongst people, and therefore, potentially decreasing levels of legitimacy and credibility for institutions and the policies they promote, imperilling in the long run the project of mutuality and a diverse but united society. Scholars concur with the study findings and stress that trust in government organisations is globally low, with citizens reporting problems of transparency and bureaucracy (Motion *et al*. 2013), inefficiency, wastefulness, and unreliability (Waeraas & Brykjeflot, 2012), inept public policies and corrupt public officials who take advantage of citizens (Da Silva & Batista, 2007).

Other research participants have associated the declining public trust in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government to poor communication systems. When asked what influences the decline of trust in the Provincial Government, all participants mentioned poor government communication. For example, one participant stated that*: "The lack of communication between government and citizens erodes trust in a big way. Government does not have effective communication machinery to keep citizens abreast with its programmes, and this creates a vacuum in information".*

These findings are aligned to Vivier *et al*.'s (2015) viewpoint, which asserts that citizens and communities often lack knowledge about government policies, budgets and operations, mechanisms for engagement, or even their own rights and responsibilities. Furthermore, the work of Guru (2013) Mousa and Hassan (2015) supports the empirical data and shows that communication is one of the most important links between an organisation and various publics, and it is the key factor in the creation, implementation, monitoring and reporting on all corporate activities.

Rapporteurs' Report (2009) refutes the findings of this study, and states that government communicate effectively about the work they do on behalf of their constituents, and it benefits from developing and maintaining effective communication capacity with citizens, to better take stock of their needs and preferences.

Effective communication potentially grants an organisation a license to operate, and this is in line with the legitimacy theory. Cornelissen (2004) contends that companies need to be judged as 'legitimate' by most, if not all, of their stakeholders in order to survive and prosper, and corporate communications is the management function that works the hardest to achieve that. One research participant indicated that citizens seem to have lost trust in the Provincial Government and as a result they channel their complaints to the media instead of their government representatives or councillors. Citizens would prefer to raise their issues through the media than with their political representatives (councillors), and this amply demonstrates declining trust in government. Often councillors are accused of being inaccessible to citizens, especially in the Eastern Cape that increasingly faces high levels of poor service delivery.

According to the empirical findings, all participants interviewed do not *admire* the Provincial Government. All the participants indicated that they would not recommend the Eastern Cape Government to any other person due to its failure to meet the needs of the people. The empirical data show that participants are not satisfied with the manner in which the Provincial Government conducts itself, especially as it pertains to the fulfilment of promises to citizens. The empirical data further show that the escalation of service delivery protests is regarded as an illustration of lack of admiration of the Provincial Government.

The Eastern Cape has experienced a high number of service delivery protests both in urban and rural areas, and this is largely a manifestation of public detachment to the Provincial Government. One participant indicated that as sign of non-acceptance of government; some areas in the Eastern Cape do not allow government representatives. The study findings are consistent with Luoma-aho's (2015) literature perspective, which states that stakeholders that feel strong distrust or even hate toward an organisation can be described as hate holders.

In view of the research findings, people of the Eastern Cape can be characterised as hate holders because all the participants expressed their disgruntlement with the Provincial Government. The stakeholders within this category would seldom recommend the organisation, instead their hate may be spilled over to other stakeholders. The disenchantment with the Provincial Government is further attributed to service delivery that is still much disintegrated and public servants who are not committed to their work.

8.3. ADDRESSING THE PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION

> How can the reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government be managed strategically?

The present study sought to investigate the reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The purpose of this study has been achieved through the findings as outlined in section 7.2 above. Due to increased scholarly interest in reputation management, reputation has suffered from a plethora of conceptualisations, however, Fombrun and Van Riel (1997) have sought to provide an integrative definition to the concept, and they define reputation as:

> *"A collective representation of a firm's past actions and results that describe the firm's ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders. It gauges a firms relative standing both internally with employees and externally with its stakeholders, in both its competitive and institutional environments".*

Reputation plays a pivotal role in building and strengthening an organisation's legitimacy within its stakeholder loop. It is a strategic platform for sustaining relationships with diverse stakeholders. Reputation management is inherently crucial because according to Lü *et al*. (2014), stakeholders may hold different expectations towards a company - as a response, many firms have to use different strategic tools to meet various stakeholders' expectations in order to establish a favourable corporate image in turn, to establish a good corporate reputation. Similarly, Brønn and Brønn (2015) argue that the reputation of a firm is its most valuable asset, and thus an asset worth protecting.

Reputation guarantees an organisation societal support, and in this regard, Mousa and Hassan (2015) assert that a company operates in society where it agrees to perform to various socially desired actions in return for approval of its objectives, other rewards, and its ultimate survival.

The findings of this study show that the reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is poorly managed, and all the participants interviewed in the study showed that they do not have a good perception of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government reputation management. The empirical data show that relationships between citizens and the Provincial Government have considerably declined, and as a result, the legitimacy of the Provincial Government is hugely compromised. Findings show that people of the Eastern Cape are generally unhappy with the Provincial Government due to its perceived failure to fulfil its promises and to meet the expectations of the citizens. People generally have negative perceptions about the Provincial Government, and this increasingly has adversely impacted its reputation. The findings further show that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is fraught with failures and inefficiencies that compromise its mandate of providing public goods to the citizens, and it therefore projects a poor reputation.

In this regard, Valentine (2013) corroborates these findings and posit that public sector organisations have more difficulties than do corporations in managing their reputations because they have trouble in connecting with their publics emotionally; in presenting themselves as unique; and in communicating as coherent organisations. However, Waeraas and Byrkjeflot (2012) argue that for many public organisations that struggle with a negative image related to rule-orientation, bureaucracy, and inefficiency, reputation management is a promising tool. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government needs to undertake a concerted effort to manage its reputation in order to enjoy the support of the community and to strengthen its legitimacy.

8.3.1 The publics' views about the corporate reputation of the Eastern Provincial Cape Government

In order to gain an insight into how the Eastern Cape Provincial Government manages its reputation, the study first had to examine the views of the public about the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The empirical data show that members of the community are frustrated with the lack of service delivery in the Eastern Cape. The Provincial Government, it would seem, has consistently failed to fulfil its promises in relation to the delivery of services. Through the empirical data, we learnt that performance is a crucial driver of public's perceptions of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government corporate reputation.

There is great concern about the poor customer service of the public servants in the Eastern Cape, which invariably casts a bad light on the corporate reputation of the Provincial Government. The Department of Health is consistently mentioned as the worst performing department, with the worst customer service in the Eastern Cape. It seems that the majority of citizens would prefer to utilise private sector health facilities to the public facilities, however, due to ill-affordability they are obliged to use the inhuman government health facilities. The findings of the study suggest that performance can drive or hinder corporate reputation of the Provincial Government depending on how government manages its performance endeavours.

The empirical data of this study show that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is characterised by poor leadership, which invariably impacts its performance. The data attribute the Provincial Government's poor leadership to cadre deployment, old people in leadership and lack of relevant education. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government is fraught with practices of political interference, which inevitably compromises effective administration in more than one way.

The empirical data identify corporate communication as a significant catalyst of the Provincial Government corporate reputation. Through this study, we have learnt that due to salient lack of communication, citizens are experiencing high levels of uncertainty about the programmes of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. It would appear from empirical data that the majority of communities – especially rural and less educated – have limited access to government information and that government is inherently incapable of designing communication systems that incorporate the broad spectrum of society. Many sectors of the society, especially the rural communities and less educated, are left out of the government communication system.

Through the empirical data, it was determined that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is embracing innovation, albeit at a relatively slow pace. The lack of political will and neglect of other sectors of society in development have also been identified as the main contributors to the slow pace of innovation. The empirical data further highlights innovation as a crucial catalyst for development and improved communication in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

Public participation also came up as an important programme that can potentially benefit the Provincial Government's corporate reputation. The empirical data show that there are concerns about the inaccessibility of ward councillors, who ideally should provide a strategic link between the government and citizens. Furthermore, the spate of service delivery protests in the Eastern Cape are ascribed to dearth of public participation in the Provincial Government decision-making processes.

Poor governance structures came up as an important aspect that can potentially impact the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The findings of this study show that citizens are disenchanted with the Eastern Cape Provincial Government governance structures. The Eastern Cape increasingly experiences high levels of corruption and fraud, especially on the local municipality level, where service delivery programmes are driven. It also transpired from the empirical findings that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is not an ideal workplace.

The findings further revealed that there is an exodus of people from the Eastern Cape Province to other provinces such as Gauteng, the Western Cape and Kwazulu-Natal. A huge number of people leave the Provincial Government employment for better working conditions in other provinces.

Corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government

In view of the findings as outlined above, it can be deduced that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government does not have a strategic approach to effectively manage its corporate reputation. The findings clearly demonstrate that people of the Eastern Cape have negative views about the reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. Citizens form perceptions and attitudes about the Provincial Government based on the extent to which their needs are fulfilled through the provision of quality basic services, which is a manifestation of the effective performance of government. The Eastern Cape increasingly experiences high levels of poverty and unemployment that are a reflection of government failures. The ineptitude of public servants, who are ordinarily the face of government, and poor communication systems extremely compromise the Provincial Government corporate reputation. That said, the Eastern Cape Provincial Government should engage in processes that seek to improve its corporate reputation, which include meeting the expectations of its employees and its citizens as per its mandate, further consolidating its legitimacy.

8.3.2   The effects of media coverage on the Eastern Cape Provincial Government

The second segment of the study set out to investigate the media coverage of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government in order to determine its effects on corporate reputation management. According to Shamma and Hassan (2009), mass media is the main source by which the general public forms perceptions about corporate reputation. Hannington (2004:25) further adds that the attention of the media has a profound impact on reputation. With the explosion of news media and online media, members of the public are presented with plethora of sources of information on what occurs in each organisation, which can potentially shape their perceptions.

Media are the main channels for stakeholders to build perceptions, and can shape the public agenda by influencing public opinion, authorities, and elites. The empirical findings of this study show that media coverage of the Provincial Government is relatively negative. The media generally report negatively about the Provincial Government. Findings clearly demonstrate that the media perceive the Eastern Cape Provincial Government in a negative light, and this negativity has largely been attributed to the perpetual socio-economic challenges that have plagued the citizens. Secondly, the empirical findings identify poor communication machinery of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, which has left an information vacuum that the media has filled by becoming the main source of information on Provincial Government related matters. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government information is not forthcoming, and often citizens rely on the media for crucial information that impact their well-being. The empirical data have also pointed out that unlike other provinces such as Gauteng and the Western Cape, the Eastern Cape has a limited number (less than four) of mainstream media houses.

The empirical data show that the media can play a pivotal watchdog role in uncovering the government wrongdoings in the Eastern Cape. Members of the public rely on the media for information that pertains to malfeasance within the Provincial Government. Further, society looks up to the media to expose government misdemeanours that would otherwise be concealed from them. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government departments and municipalities are engulfed in massive scandals that compromise service delivery in many ways, and it is through the media that the public can hold them accountable. The data show that there are media organisations that have assiduously worked to give voice to the voiceless by consistently investigating and exposing massive inefficiencies and neglect of citizens in some of the Provincial Government facilities.

The empirical data make reference to social media as emerging, ubiquitous media platforms that inevitably provide additional communication platforms to government, but simultaneously pose massive risks to reputation.

The findings of the study, however, show that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has not adequately grabbed the opportunity afforded by the new social media platforms, especially in its endeavour to expedite service delivery in the Eastern Cape. This inadequacy is notwithstanding Cornelissen's (2014:257) view, who states that advances in media and web technology provide new challenges and opportunities for organisations to communicate and engage with their stakeholders, including their own employees, local communities, customers and the news media.

Lee and Kwak (2012) add that social media-based public engagement is an uncharted territory and government agencies generally lack experience and knowledge about implementing social media. The data show that one of the crucial impediments in expediting the introduction of social media use within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government are the low levels of education, which invariably hinder efforts to fact-track social media.

More importantly, the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is predominantly rural and the majority of citizens have limited access to social media platforms. While social media is rapidly evolving as a formidable force, the data show that if not managed, social media can pose a serious risk to the Provincial Government reputation. Henceforth, there is a caveat from Meadows and Meadows III (2016) that public relations practitioners should be cautious when implementing social media strategies, because social media are often seen as a two-edged sword; on the one hand, social media allow the company to engage with every customer and stakeholder on an individual basis, the ease and freedom to engage is unparalleled throughout history, however, on the other hand, social media are also seen as a risk.

8.3.3   The public's emotional attachment to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government

To further determine how the Provincial Government strategically manages its reputation, the research set out to investigate the publics' emotional attachment to the Government. The empirical data show that people of the Eastern Cape are generally unhappy with the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, which is a reflection of poor emotional attachment.

According to Fourie and Poggenpoel (2017) citizens' impression about government is generally poor and is often characterised by the notion that there are a myriad aspects that impede service delivery, which include incompetent public servants, a lack of accountability, poor human resources practices, inadequate procurement practices and a lack of leadership. Consistent with the above literature perspective, the findings show that people are extremely dissatisfied with the Provincial Government's performance, especially as it pertains to delivery of basic services.

It can also be deduced from the empirical data that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is experiencing enormous underperformance and mismanagement, coupled with corruption, and consequently citizen confidence in the Provincial Government has diminished substantially. Furthermore, the data show that emotional detachment to the Provincial Government has been exacerbated by the unfulfilled political promises, abuse of power and lack of accountability to the public by councillors and government officials. The data show that what alienates citizens from the Provincial Government includes perceived poor customer service. While the Eastern Cape Government has adopted the Batho Pele principles as a cardinal service delivery blueprint, it can be inferred from the empirical data that there is disproportionate adherence to the principles of the concept.

The findings of this study show that citizens do not have a good feeling about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. There is great sense of dissatisfaction with the Provincial Government. The key elements that underpin the citizens' sense of disillusionment comprise Provincial Government's service delivery failures and the ineptitude of public servants. What also came out strongly from study results is the perception that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government's public servants are unreliable, unapproachable, lazy, wasteful, inefficient and ineffective.

The disequilibrium between the government and citizens manifests public's poor emotional attachment to the Provincial Government. In this regard, Lanin and Hermanto (2019) assert that in order to increase public satisfaction about the basic needs, such as education and health services, the government should improve delivery, timeliness of service, availability of information, staff professionalism, staff attitude, and the external and internal roles of managers, while at the same time minimising organisational politics within the government.

To further demonstrate poor public emotional attachment to the Provincial Government, the empirical data show that public trust in government has diminished considerably. Motion *et al.* (2013) are of the view that the low levels of trust in government result from actual poor performance caused by bad management or lack of communication. The empirical data show that there is a correlation between the declining trust and poor government communication. The data further show that citizens seem to have lost trust in the Provincial Government, and as a result they channel their service delivery complaints to the media instead of their government representatives or councillors.

Citizens would prefer to raise their issues through the media than with their political representatives (councillors), and this amply demonstrates declining trust in government. Often councillors are accused of being inaccessible to citizens, especially in the Eastern Cape that increasingly faces high levels of poor service delivery.

8.4. ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem statement stimulated this research study, and the interview questions in the interview schedule sought to address the research problem. In this section, special attention is paid to the problem statement, elucidating what the study has ascertained.

The problem statement is presented as follows:

Reputation is an important phenomenon for government organisations. The inadequate management of reputation manifests in cynical attitudes, which involve prevalent beliefs that government policies and public officials are inept and corrupt, and the consequences of this disillusionment are public alienation and disengagement (Whelan in Silva & Batista, 2007). Mohamad and Abu Bakar (2008) are of the view that corporate reputation is still neglected in many government organisations. This is notwithstanding the increasing attention and public views about the operations of government as the sole provider of public goods.

For example, generally, media reports show that there are widespread views that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is the worst performing government in South Africa in many respects. The general public has negative views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government and is of the opinion that it lacks capacity to meet the expectations of the Eastern Cape citizens. The negative public views manifest in various forms, for example, the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has experienced high levels of service delivery protests in relation to other provinces (Matebese & Botes, 2017). Protesters often cite the lack of accountability of government officials, along with the absence of public participation, as factors that further aggravate their service delivery complaints (Nkomo, 2017). Matebese and Botes' (2017) study further shows that protest activity in the Eastern Cape has increased where communities hold views that there is poor quality of basic services such as water, electricity provision and the shortage of housing.

The negative public views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government are further heightened by increasing negative media coverage. According to Malila (2018), media are the main source of information and are an indispensable precondition for government accountability. That said, *the Eastern Cape Provincial Government operates under increasing scrutiny by the media, among others. It suffers from an immense image deficit due to negative media publicity, which invariably impacts its corporate reputation. As noted in the Eastern Cape Socio Economic Consultative Council (ECSECC) Report (2015) the constant negative media publicity of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government amply demonstrates the positioning of the Government in the minds of various stakeholders and the deteriorating corporate reputation.* Lui, Horsley and Young (2012) are of the opinion that coverage of negative issues is especially prominent in media coverage of governments, with some arguing that media publicity of governments has changed from healthy scepticism to automatic negativity. More importantly, Einwiller, Carroll and Korn (2010) posit that stakeholders depend more on the news media to learn about reputation dimensions that are difficult to directly experience or observe and for which the news media is the main source of information.

Negative media coverage furthermore has the propensity to influence citizen's emotional attachment to government. For example, as noted by Lui *et al*. (2012), negative media

coverage, such as scandal stories, erodes confidence in the government and increases cynicism. It can cause citizens to avoid participating in government and create the overall impression that all public sector organisations and their employees behave badly. Einwiller, Carroll and Korn (2016) argue that publics today do not only want to participate, they also show and express emotion for better and worse. The above authors further argue that we have moved into a time of emotional publics, where feelings toward organisations range from love to hate, and the different stakeholders have several ways of showing their emotions and recruiting others to join in and comment on their feelings, for example through social media and different hate-sites and fan groups. Emotional attachment is reflected in the levels of trust that citizens have in government. From this perspective, citizens' trust in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has plunged dramatically (Chingwete, 2016). The number of service delivery protests in the Eastern Cape is manifested in the declining trust in Government, which further reflects in citizens' poor emotional attachment to the Provincial Government.

In seeking to emphasise the indispensable role of corporate reputation in the public sector context, Masum and Tovey (2011) argue that, given that we currently find ourselves in a "reputation society" where decision-making is characterized by increasing emphasis on track records, scholarly attention to the corporate reputation of public sector organisations is warranted. A need, therefore, exists to investigate the corporate reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government to determine, among other things, how it is effectively harnessed to improve the performance of this Government.

The purpose of this study is, therefore, to explore and describe perceptions of the Eastern Cape public about the corporate reputation of the Provincial Government as it endeavours to enhance and sustain efforts to fulfil its constitutional mandate of meeting the expectations of the citizens through the provision of public goods.

In relation to the first section of the problem statement, "*there are widespread views that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is the worst performing government in South Africa in many respects. The general public has negative views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government and is of the opinion that it lacks capacity to meet the expectations of the Eastern Cape citizens.*

The negative public views manifest in various forms, for example, the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has experienced high levels of service delivery protests in relation to other provinces", this study seeks to provide answers. This study answers this section of the research problem by examining the views of people about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government corporate reputation management.

The study found that people of the Eastern Cape generally have negative views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The negative views are largely influenced by the Provincial Government's perceived failure to meet the expectations of the citizens by effectively providing basic services, among other things. The empirical data further show that people vent their frustrations with the Provincial Government's failure to fulfil its promises through service delivery protests. The research participants indicated that the Provincial Government is constantly failing to provide quality services to the people.

There is a great sense of disillusionment with the Provincial Government due to perceived failure to fulfil the expectations of the citizens. Poor service delivery is further displayed through the increasing poverty and unemployment levels in the Eastern Cape. The research data show that people are of the view that the performance of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is extremely poor. This is attributed to inefficient public servants and poor customer care.

The majority of people in the Eastern Cape entirely depend on government services, such as health, education, social welfare and security, among others. Poor performance of the Provincial Government simply implies that people do not have access to these services. The data show that people experience the worst customer service at the Provincial health facilities. That said, the results of this study show that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government does not look well after its employees, as a result there is huge employee turnover. Many employees leave for provinces such as Gauteng and the Western Cape. The government does not have effective strategies to retain its workforce.

The data show that the Provincial Government has not adequately harnessed innovation as a strategic pillar to enhance service delivery and its performance. However, data show that there are steps that the Provincial Government is taking to espouse innovation, albeit at a very slow pace. Both lack of service delivery and poor performance are symptomatic of poor leadership in the Eastern Cape. The Provincial Government is fraught with poor leadership due to cadre deployment and poor or irrelevant education. Politics influences every sphere of the Provincial Government, and this adversely impacts the work of government.

Invariably, poor leadership is reflective of poor governance structures within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The findings show that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has poor governance structures, and research participants cite corruption and fraud as some of the social ills that characterise the government governance structures. Many municipalities in the Eastern Cape are associated with massive mismanagement of government resources, which is a depiction of poor governance.

The findings of this study indicate that the Provincial Government does not have clear communication strategies in its endeavours to engage people in the decision-making processes. Negative views about service delivery and performance are largely predicated on the perceived lack of communication on matters of development that affect people. Participants reported that there is limited communication from the Provincial Government, and as a result they rely more on the media as a source of information. Poor government communication is attributed to political interference and the politicisation of the public administration. Many government communicators – both at local and provincial level – do not have the requisite communication expertise, thus lack strategic competence to manage communication.

Poor communication is closely linked to the reported lack of public participation within the Provincial Government. The data show that there are limited avenues of engagement with citizens on service delivery issues that specifically affect them. This is a communication platform that Provincial Government underutilises, which has created a social gap with the citizens, and this has ostensible resulted in service delivery protests. This is how people witting or unwittingly force the Provincial Government to communicate.

With regard to the second section of the research problem, *the Eastern Cape Provincial Government operates under increasing scrutiny by the media. It suffers from an immense image deficit due to negative media coverage, which invariably impacts its corporate reputation. As noted in the ECSECC Report (2015) the constant negative media coverage of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government amply demonstrates the positioning of the Government in the minds of various stakeholders and the deteriorating corporate reputation,* the study provides answers to this statement. In order to answer this particular statement, it is essential to get the views of the participants on the quality of relations between government and the media in the Eastern Cape, including how the Provincial Government manages the nascent social media platforms.

The findings of the study show that the media perceives the Eastern Cape Provincial Government in a negative light, and largely this negativity is equated to increasing poor performance and service delivery. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government is portrayed in the media as the worst performing government in many respects. Henceforth, people form perceptions about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, chiefly based on what is reported on by various media houses.

The empirical data furthermore show that relations between the Eastern Cape Provincial Government and the various media houses are declining drastically. This decline is mostly blamed on the incapacity of government communicators, who fail to proactively engage with the media. The participant underscored the fact that government communicators are failing to nurture relations with the media by providing timely information to them. The media are concerned about the lack of information and transparency within the Provincial Government communication departments, and often where the information is not provided timeously the media undertake their own investigation to access the information for public consumption.

The empirical data further show that the media play a significant watchdog role in the Eastern Cape. The media often take the initiative to uncover issues that expose wrongdoing within the Provincial Government. Members of the public rely on the media for information that pertains to malfeasance within the Provincial Government.

The data show that the public has confidence in the ability of the media to expose a lot of unlawful activities within the provincial government. Media have been able to capture moments where citizens have been done a disservice in various government centres and where instances of corruption have occurred. The Eastern Cape is notoriously one of the most corrupt provinces in the country, and media have played a noteworthy role of divulging cases where government has lost millions of rands through embezzlement of its resources and rigging of procurement processes.

The research findings also show that the Provincial Government has not embraced the opportunity provided by the new media platforms. New social media platforms are evolving at a much faster pace, and the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is dragging behind in terms of harnessing these new communication platforms. However, the empirical data identify low levels of literacy and education in general as the main impediments to the economic development of a country in the current rapidly changing, technology-driven world. It is critical that the Provincial Government prioritises the management of these new media platforms and strengthen their utilisation to enhance the provision of information to the people of the Eastern Cape. The findings further show that if not effectively managed, the social media platforms may pose a potential risk to the provincial government.

In reference to the third section of the problem statement, *feelings toward organisations range from love to hate, and the different stakeholders have several ways of showing their emotions and recruiting others to join in and comment on their feelings, for example through social media and different hate-sites and fan groups. Emotional attachment is reflected in the levels of trust that citizens have in government. From this perspective, citizens' trust in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has plunged dramatically. The number of service delivery protests in the Eastern Cape is manifested in the declining trust in Government, which further reflects in citizens' poor emotional attachment to the Provincial Government,* the study provides answers to this statement. Emotional attachment is an important indicator of the extent to which citizens are connected to their government based on their experiences of services and communication. To be able to answer this research statement, it is essential to examine the emotional attachment of people to their government.

The findings of this study show that there is poor public emotional attachment to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The data show that the overall impression of the people about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is that they are emotionally disconnected to government. Poor customer service is cited as one of the key reasons why people are emotionally detached from the Provincial Government. This is due to the public servants' neglect of the principles of Batho Pele, which advocates for "People First". There is a great sense of disillusionment with the Provincial Government's service delivery failures and the ineptitude of public servants. Public servants are labelled as unreliable, unapproachable, lazy, wasteful, inefficient and ineffective. The Eastern Cape remains the poorest province with scores of people living in poverty and unemployment, and invariably this alienates people from the Provincial Government.

It can also be deduced from this study that people of the Eastern Cape have bad feelings about the Provincial Government. Poor feelings are influenced by the perceived failure of the Provincial Government to fulfil its promises. During elections people of the Eastern Cape receive numerous promises from the ruling party, however, subsequent to elections very little is done to change lives of the people.

An important indication of poor emotional attachment is the diminishing public trust in the Provincial Government. The findings of this study show that trust in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is low. All the participants that were interviewed for the study expressed their diminishing trust in this Government. The data draw parallels between the declining public trust and poor government communication systems. Due to the lack of government communication, citizens direct their complaints to the media instead of their government representatives or councillors. The conduit between government and grassroots communities is councillors, however, the empirical data amply reveal that citizens have lost confidence in councillors as sources of government information.

Poor emotional attachment and deteriorating corporate reputation are further demonstrated through the citizens' non-admiration of the Provincial Government. The findings of this study show that citizens would not recommend the Eastern Cape Provincial Government to any other person due to its failure to meet the needs of the people.

8.5. CONCLUSION

This Chapter set out to discuss findings of the research supported by the literature. The first section discussed findings from three secondary research questions. Next, the findings from the primary research question were addressed. Lastly, the Chapter addressed the problem statement. The primary question to answer the research problem was, "*How is the reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government strategically managed?*" In order to answer the primary research question, three secondary research questions were developed. The first question primarily focused on the public views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government; the second question focused on the role of media in determining government reputation; and the last question addressed the public's emotional attachment to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

People generally hold negative views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. Their views are predominantly influenced by the perceived lack of service delivery, poor performance, lack of innovation, unconducive workplace environment, poor leadership, and poor governance. Poor customer service tremendously compromises the Eastern Cape Provincial Government service delivery endeavours, and this adversely impacts its reputation. Batho Pele principles have furthermore been abandoned in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

The study also revealed that corporate communication is poorly managed due to political interference, and this impacts on stakeholder relationships that are strategically key to building a sustainable reputation. Poor government communication further restrains transparency of the Provincial Government. Various government communicators lack requisite capacity due to the politicisation of the profession. Public participation is also neglected in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, which creates a gap between the government and citizens. The media often reports negatively about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government due to the intransigency of government communicators. The reluctance to reveal government information has increasingly empowered the media in its watchdog role, as it often reports sensitive government information.

Over and above negative media coverage, the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is also exposed to social media reputation risks. Against this background, the Provincial Government does not have a clear strategy to manage new social media platforms so as to enhance its reputation. The study further shows that, generally, the public hold negative overall impressions about the Provincial Government. There is a low level of trust and bad feelings about the Provincial Government. This finding is a reflection of poor public emotional attachment to the Provincial Government. This is a novel discovery considering that Eastern Cape citizens have consistently voted the same government in power since the dawn of democracy in 1994, despite these bad feelings.

The study has realised the objectives that it has set to achieve and the results will help government to improve the management of its reputation. The strategic management of reputation in government is essential because it guarantees legitimacy or acceptance by the citizens as a legitimate partner. It also ensures that the government enjoys maximum support of citizens in its service delivery programme, and is assured of support in the next elections. The next section is the study's conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1. INTRODUCTION

This is the final chapter that contains conclusions and recommendations of the study. The previous chapters sought to describe the methodological design of this study as reflecting the interpretive qualitative worldview, drawing from relational and impressional paradigms. Furthermore, the study intensely reviewed literature pertaining to the public sector reputation, media and public emotional attachment to an organisation. Various theoretical frameworks and models were explored in relation to the primary research question: "How can the reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government be managed strategically?"

The three research questions of the study succinctly suggest that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government does not have effective systems to manage its reputation. As reflected in Chapter 8, various reputation management variables determine how the Provincial Government manages its reputation. This chapter, therefore, mainly focuses on conclusions that have emerged from the rigorous synthesis and synchronisation of literature and empirical data. The conclusions primarily pertain to the research questions, managerial implications of the study and future research opportunities.

9.2. CONCLUSIONS

The order in which the research questions are presented largely dictates the order of the conclusions – in a similar approach to the structure of Chapter 8.

9.2.1. Research question one

What are the views of the public about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government?

It can be inferred from the empirical data that citizens have negative views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government's reputation. The findings show that citizens assess and form perceptions of an organisation's offerings based on whether they are thought to be high in quality, in value and service, and in their ability to meet customers' needs. All the participants interviewed for the study expressed a great deal of disillusionment with the Eastern Cape Provincial Government's inability to provide quality services. The findings indicate that the performance of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is poor, and has consistently failed to fulfil its promises.

The findings of the study further attribute the Eastern Cape Provincial Government's poor performance to inefficient public servants. The findings consistently show that citizens are dissatisfied with the calibre of leadership within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. Furthermore, communication within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is disturbingly poor. Citizens are generally dissatisfied with the quality of government communication. Innovation within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is thwarted – to a greater degree – by the low level of education, especially in the rural areas.

The empirical findings have revealed that there is currently limited public participation in the decision-making processes of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. The Provincial Government is fraught with unethical conduct, ineptitude, inefficiencies and corruption. Corruption and fraud are identified as social demeanours that are endemic within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, and a lot of money and resources are lost through corruption tendencies.

9.2.2. Research question two

> What is the impact of media coverage on the Eastern Cape Provincial Government?

The findings of this study show that there is poor media coverage of the Provincial Government, and this is a manifestation of deteriorating relations between the media and the government. Relations between the Eastern Cape Provincial Government and the various media houses are at an all-time low. The empirical data equate poor relations between media and government to the blatant failure of government communicators to proactively engage with the media. The findings further show that government communicators are failing to nurture relations with the media by providing timely information to them. They fail to proactively inform the media about programmes of government, and this compromises relations between the two entities. Poor media relations are further attributed to lack of government transparency, and in many instances media have to dig up on government information and expose sensitive issues that may compromise the credibility, integrity and reputation of the Provincial Government. This inevitably creates animosity between the government and the media. The study results also reveal that the Provincial Government does not have right people to manage media relations and to ensure that the image of government is projected positively.

9.2.3. Research question 3

> What is the public's emotional attachment to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government?

The findings of the study show that citizens do not admire the Provincial Government, and this is largely due to the Provincial Government's failure to meet needs of the people. Citizens are not satisfied with the manner in which the Provincial Government conducts itself, especially as it pertains to the fulfilment of promises to citizens. Empirical data furthermore attribute high number of service delivery protests both in urban and rural areas to citizens' detachment to the Provincial Government.

It can be inferred from the empirical data that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government has significantly lost support and legitimacy in the community due to growing emotional detachment of the public from their government. This has resulted in generally poor impressions of the Eastern Cape public about the Provincial Government. The reported poor feelings and salient lack of trust in government clearly demonstrate the extent of public emotional detachment to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. Perceived poor service delivery and poor government communication are cited as the main factors that contribute to poor public emotional attachment.

9.2.4. The Primary research question

How the Eastern Cape Provincial Government reputation is strategically managed?

The findings of this study show that the reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government is poorly managed, and all the participants interviewed in the study showed that they do not have a good perception of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government reputation management. The empirical data show that relationships between citizens and the Provincial Government have considerably declined, and as a result, the legitimacy of the Provincial Government is immensely compromised.

In view of the findings as outlined above, it can be deduced that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government does not have a strategic approach to effectively manage its corporate reputation. The findings clearly demonstrate that people of the Eastern Cape have negative views about the reputation of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. Citizens form perceptions and attitudes about the Provincial Government based on the extent to which their needs are fulfilled through the provision of quality basic services, which is a manifestation of the effective performance of government.

The Eastern Cape increasingly experiences high levels of poverty and unemployment that are a reflection of government failures. The maladroitness of public servants, who are ordinarily the face of government, and poor communication systems extremely compromise the Provincial Government corporate reputation. That said, the Eastern Cape Provincial

Government should engage in processes that seek to improve its corporate reputation, which include meeting the expectations citizens as per its mandate, further consolidating its legitimacy.

9.3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

The most significant original contribution of the study is the proposed conceptual framework, which outlines how the Eastern Cape Provincial Government and similar organisations can strategically managet their reputations, thus consolidating the *social contract* and enhancing their *legitimacy*. It illustrates how the public sector organisations can effectively improve their reputations by focusing on positive public views, balanced media coverage and positive public emotional attachment. Once again, this framework can be empirically tested in future research.

The thesis has shown that *public sector reputation* is a product of meaningful relationships between government and its constituencies and a positive reputation can have a positive influence on citizen confidence and trust in government. It is, therefore, imperative that public sector organisations strategically manage their reputations in order to ensure that they remain relevant in their endeavour to fulfil the needs of the citizens. Furthermore, a good reputation will ensure that they receive the necessary by-in from citizens when they implement a programme of action.

The original contribution of this study lies in the framework as depicted in Figure 9.1. This framework provides the first step in enriching the academic scholarship on public sector reputation management. The extant literature has consistently posited that public sector reputation is understudied compared to the private sector, and this conceptual framework will seek to reduce the knowledge gap. Therefore, this framework is the result of a combination of both the theoretical chapters and the empirical findings of the study.

Figure 4.1: Public sector reputation management conceptual framework
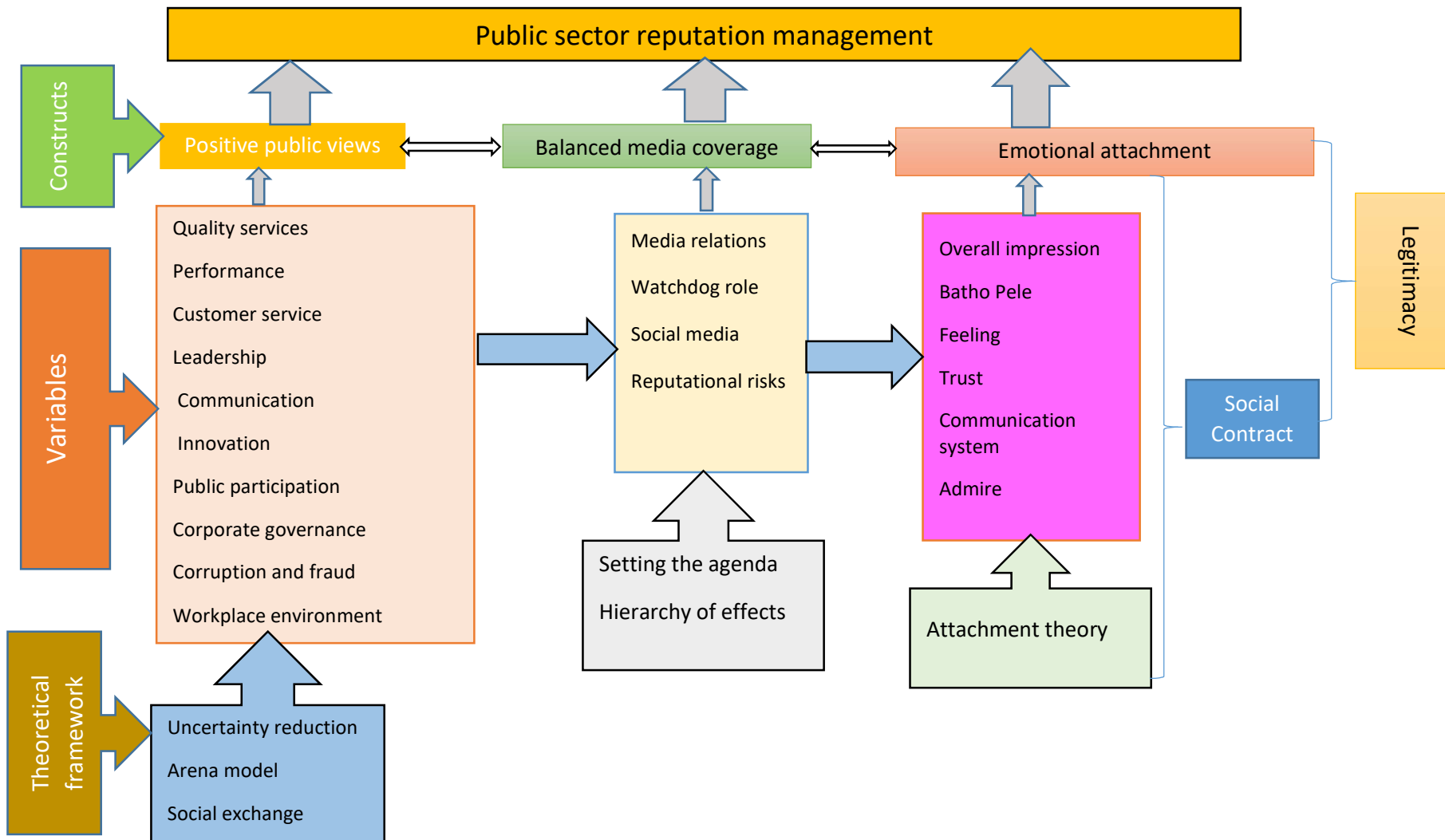
Source: Researcher's conceptualisation based on empirical data and literature

In view of the increasing challenges that confront governments the world over, this conceptual framework is crucial to aid them in strategically managing their reputations. Many public sector organisations are under immense pressure to deliver quality services to communities they serve. For example, Maleho, Conradie and Dondolo (2017) are of the view that the heightened problems in South Africa which are associated with unemployment, crime and poverty, are often what citizens complain about. As a result government faces unprecedented levels of riots from communities, which is characteristic of diminishing legitimacy. In this regard, Luama-aho (2007) posits that the public sector is beginning to understand the role of building a good reputation. According to Van de Walle (2007) fundamentally, in the public sector, stakeholders' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with service delivery impacts on how they assess the reputation of this sector.

Reputation is a valuable resource for orgasaitions and their meaningful survival is incumbent upon how they strategically manage it. In this regard, Berislava; Ant and Ana (2019) argue that if reputation is properly used, integrated, and coordinated through organisation and its processes, reputation as a resource can become a significant organizational capability. It is, therefore, imperative that public sector organisations design effective mechanisms to strategically coordinate their reputations in order to strengthen their *legitimacy* in communities they serve. As such, the conceptual framework provides a basic framework for government institutions to improve their reputation management processes in order to gain acceptance and legitimacy. The proposed conceptual framework seeks to ensure that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government attends to the basic elements of its constitutional mandate in order to build a formidable reputation.

Central to the proposed conceptual framework for the strategic management of the public sector reputations is the application of three constructs that are aimed at strengthening reputation management of the public sector organisations. The conceptual framework provides a new strategic approach on how management of reputations can heighten the organisation's legitimacy and receive pertinent support in the implementation of its public policy framework.

Furthermore, the goal of this conceptual framework is to contribute to scholarly work on how to effectively manage public sector reputation and in practice empower public sector with requisite ability to build a *social contract* with communities it serves. To this end, three constructs are discussed below and are further linked to various variables from the empirical data and related theoretical framework, including propositions that illustrate relationship between constructs. They are, therefore, outlined as follows:

9.3.1. Construct 1: Positive public views

At the centre of the conceptual framework is positive public views that people hold about their government in its endeavour to fulfil its mandate of providing quality services. The views about government are generally informed by the extent to which it can meet the needs and expectations of the community it serves. Government is financed by the taxpayers and is always under scrutiny on how it utilises public resources, including fulfilling diverse interests of citizens. In this regard, Berdushi and Dushi (2015) point out that as a democratic government, chosen by the people, it is its duty to act in accordance with the society's will, and not against it. Once the government starts acting contrary to the civil society's will, people have the right to change it. Managa (2012) adds that often once these promises are not delivered, communities begin to panic and resort to protestation. This construct forms an important part of the conceptual framework as views of the public will determine the establishment of a *social contract* – which is a license to operate – with the communities it serves and further consolidate its *legitimacy*.

Variables: *Quality services, performance, customer service, leadership, communication, innovation, public participation, corporate governance, corruption and fraud, workplace environment*

Literature shows that good reputation results from all perceptions and assessments that employees and public form about an organisation with regard to the quality of services, performance, customer service, leadership, communication, public participation, innovation, workplace, and governance. Research findings show that people have negative views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government.

They are of the view that the Provincial Government has dismally failed to deliver quality services. In this regard, Maleho, Conradie and Dondolo (2017) postulate that services are fundamental components of corporate reputation, and company's commitment to providing high quality services should remain high as this could enhance relationship with stakeholders. In addition, providing high quality services increases competitiveness through the establishment of a good reputation, which helps to attract and retain customers (Engizek & Yasin, 2017).

Linked to the provision of services is the Eastern Cape Provincial Government's performance. For example, the data show that delivery of quality services is negatively impacted by the perceived poor performance of government. Poor performance reflects on reported poor customer service that is rendered to the people of the Eastern Cape. Public servants are reported to be lazy, inefficient and lack customer care. Various participants pointed our poor leadership within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. Poor leadership is also associated with lack of effective communication of government programmes, which creates an information gap. The data indicate that the ineffective government communication in the Eastern Cape can also be attributed to slow pace of innovation. The Provincial Government has not meaningfully embraced the emerging technological systems in order to enhance its communication machinery. Furthermore, the Eastern Cape still lacks the basic infrastructure such as electricity, roads and good schools, which impedes efforts to expedite innovation.

The empirical data further show that there are limited platforms for public participation in government programmes /planning processes. However, public participation is a significant democratic platform that government provides through which citizens can participate in the decision-making processes so they can own and support government programmes. Vivier *et al.* (2015) accentuate that in South Africa, public participation is a widely recognised aspect of democracy and governance. It enhances citizen involvement in actual decision-making, the co-production of services, or oversight of service delivery and government performance. Almost all participants were of the view that the Eastern Cape Provincial Government lacks adequate platforms that enhance public participation, and generally citizens do not feel part of the Provincial Government's decision-making processes.

Managa (2012) opined that as a result citizens resort to protests expressing their dissatisfaction and frustration because of their exclusion from decision making processes and lack of accountability by government officials. *Uncertainty reduction* and *exchange theories* provide an important basis for how the Provicial Government can ensure that it reduces information gaps and ensure that relationships with citizens are established through effective communication systems. More effective communication can be heightened through provision of more communication arenas (*Arena Model*) to potentially augment interaction platforms between government and citizens.

Corporte governance is an important variable that emerged from scientific data, which manifests in the proliferation of cases of malpractices and unethical conduct within government institutions. This further reflects poor performance and a lack of effective leadership. The data show that the Eastern Cape Provincial does not have leadership with requsite skills, and leadership failure is attributed to cadre deployment that induces unnecessary political interference in administration processes. Eastern Cape is also losing huge amounts of skills to other provinces due to unconducive *work environment*.

However, in order to build a strong reputation, the Eastern Cape Provincial Government must regularly assess the views of the citizens, and ensure that their basic needs are addressed. In addition to theoretical contributions, this study has revealed that with the increasing demand for improved public services, the Eastern Cape Provincial Government must prioritise good performance to be responsive to the needs of the general public. Based on this construct's findings, the following propositions are proposed in relation to other constructs as they reflect on the conceptual framework:

> **Proposition 1**
>
> *If the public has positive views about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, it is likely that the media will give balanced coverage of government programmes (based on public views and media coverage constructs).*

> **Proposition 2**
>
> *If the Eastern Cape public perceives Provincial Government positively, it is most likely that the media will play less of a watchdog role and give more balanced media coverage (based on public views and balanced media coverage constructs).*

> **Proposition 3**
>
> *Should the public have positive views about the Provincial Government, it is most likely that they will be emotionally attached to it (based on positive public views and emotional attachment constructs).*

9.3.2. Construct 2: Balanced media coverage

The second construct is media coverage, which is closely linked to the first construct as discussed above. Herein, views of the public about how government conducts itself will to a greater degree determine how the media reports on the Eatern Cape Provincial Government. In line with *agenda setting theory*, media determines to a greater degree what is at the centre stage of the public discourse. In instances where citizens are unhappy with government – thus have negative views – media will act as a mouthpiece of the people. Media provides citizens with contextual knowledge to hold public office-bearers accountable for service delivery failures. In this regard, Einwiller (2010) opined that stakeholders depend more on the news media to learn about reputation dimensions that are difficult to directly experience or observe and for which the news media are the main source of information. Media are the main source of information and crucial link between government and its citizens, and are indispensable force for government accountability. As such government can strategically build its *legitimacy* and often this will require that it justifies its actions to citizens through communication that involves the media.

Variables: *Media relations, watchdog role, social media, reputational risks*

The study shows that relations between the media and the Eastern Cape Provincial Government are generally poor, and this is largely reflected on the persistent negative media coverage of the Eastern Cape Provincial government.

Poor communication is identified as the main trigger of the media's negative reporting. Government communicators increasingly fail to provide timely information to the media, which reflects lack of appreciation of the pivotal role of communication within government operations. Government information is extremely curtailed compelling media to undertake investigations of government related issues, and to predominantly play a watchdog role. In reference to the significant role of media watchdog role, Agbo and Chukwuma (2017) point out that one role of media in a democracy is that of watchdog over government, and the idea is that the press must dig up facts and warn the public when officials are doing something wrong. In this regard, citizens can hold government accountable for setting things right only if they know about errors and wrongdoing

Invariably, media has become a strategic source of information for citizens. The study shows that the role of the media is indispensable in building the Eastern Cape Provincial Government's reputation. This study enlightens literature by highlighting that effective management of media relations through consistent communication and transparency strengthens the public sector reputation. The empirical data further show that social media is an important element of government communication system. However, the new media platforms have not been effectively harnessed within the Eastern Cape Provincial Government communication system. This is in spite of the rapidity and ubiquity of new media platforms as elements of communication. Agbo and Chukwuma (2017) postulate that the new media are now massively used to oppose and criticize government policies and programmes as well as expose government misdeeds such as bribery and corruption with a view to engendering improved government performance. However, the data show that the new media platforms are inherently associated with some reputational risks that government communicators must proactively manage. In view of this construct, the following propositions are highlighted:

> **Proposition 4**
>
> *In cases where the public holds positive views about how government is executing its mandate of providing basic services, it is likely that the media will give a balanced coverage (based on positive public views and balanced media coverage constructs).*

Proposition 5

A balanced media coverage of the government may result in an improved emotional attachment of the public to it (based on media coverage and emotional attachment constructs).

9.3.3. Construct 3: Emotional attachment

This is the third construct on the conceptual framework, and is a crucial construct that describes the bond that prevails between the customers and an organisation. The customer connection with an organisation generally provides happiness and security, which generate positive views. Emotional attachment can be a strong determinant of long-term relationship between an organisation and its clients, which is characterised by the fulfilment of promises and expectations. This construct further highlights the fact that customers who are emotionally connected to an organisation will more likely have positive attitudes towards it. More importantly, emotional attachment may lead to the satisfaction with services that an organisation provides to its people, and further strengthen its *legitimacy*. Furthermore, strong emotional attachment will guarantee a *social contract* between an organisation and the community it serves. Social contract is an important basis for the creation of the society and it frames the government *legitimacy*. In consequence, government will be legitimate only when it has been accepted by the people it governs, because it is the people who – through the socia*l contract* – give power and authority to government.

Variables: *Overall impression, Batho Pele, feeling, trust, communication system, admire*

The empirical data have revealed that there is poor public emotional attachment to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government. Due to perceived poor performance and lack of services, people generally hold a negative view of the Provincial Government. The study shows that people do not hold positive feelings about the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, and trust in government has significantly diminished. Edwards (2015) argues that the available evidence points strongly to a less than desirable proportion of the population expressing trust in governments.

In the same vein, the empirical data show that deterioration of trust can be attributed to poor customer service by public servants, who consistently fail to implement the Batho Pele priniples.

The data further show that the Provincial Government's communication system is weak, and creates relatively substantial information gaps between citizens and government. Vivier's *et al.* (2015) study corroborates the above finding and notes that the types of platforms used by the South African government to communicate and engage with communities were also perceived to be largely inadequate. As a results, many communities are exluded from the government communication and decision making processes. As a result the empirical data show that people of the Eastern Cape do not admire the Provincial Government, and would less likely recommend it to the next person. In relation to this construct, the following propositions are advanced:

Proposition 6

The public is likely to experience strong emotional attachment to the government if they have positive views about how it conducts itself in fulfilling its mandate (based on emotional attachment and positive views constructs).

Proposition 7

The public's emotional attachment to the Eastern Cape Provincial Government will encourage more positive media coverage of government and its programmes (based on emotional attachment and media coverage constructs)

9.4. MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The management implications of this study underscore its findings that will practically aid the Eastern Cape Provincial Government managers to promote effective management of reputation with all its institutions. The findings' implications are listed as follows:

- For managers, an important insight gained from this study is that they must proactively seek ways to enhance the reputation of their various government institutions. Building and sustaining strong reputations should not be seen as only a tool that protects government institutions during crisis times, but as a strategic approach for sustaining them as they seek to fulfil their constitutional mandates. Invariably, this would help government to regain citizen support and strengthen long-term stakeholder relationships. In this regard, a carefully crafted reputation strategy is critical in enhancing the reputation management of government.

- The findings of this study will empower government management to focus on rebuilding and maintaining corporate reputation by offering sustainable and quality services, and by fulfilling its role within society that is expected from the general public in order to gain a license to operate. In doing this, government should identify needs and expectations, and base its service delivery strategies and actions on these assessments, in order to rebuild the trust of the general public.

- This research has also shown that citizens need to feel that the government represents what they are and what they need to do for citizens; this will help to develop a sense of belonging. It is important that citizens identify with government practices so it can strengthen its legitimacy within the communities it serves. It is also crucial for managers to recognise the significance of close proximity between the government and the citizens. Managers should plan personalised communication and maintain a close relationship with the citizens through communication platforms, such as public participation sessions.

- Government managers who want to maintain a good government reputation should emphasise the importance of ensuring citizen satisfaction in order to accomplish that goal. Citizens who are satisfied with government services provide requisite support to government initiatives. This means that government should make sure that its employees are empowered to act in the way citizens want, which will lead to a satisfaction with services.

Methods to ensure high levels of satisfaction include provision of quality services, improved government performance, innovative strategies, conducive workplace environment, effective leadership and government with good ethical conduct. However, with a poorly managed reputation, the government institutions must expend efforts on increasing citizens' satisfaction with the services and focusing more on improving services that it provides to the citizens.

- From the findings of this study, Government can learn the importance of identifying and understanding factors that impact public sector reputation, and that may help managers to better address the causes that impact their success. Knowing the influence of these factors can help them conceptualise strategies to offset them. For example, if the influence is mainly the provision of services, it would give them an opportunity to expend their efforts in ensuring that services are expeditiously provided.

- Managers will learn that in order to achieve transparency, communicators must adopt practices that promote open information sharing. These include working to enhance stakeholder relationships with citizens they serve through responding to their needs, seeking and incorporating feedback and getting information out to the public through various channels of communication. In order to achieve this objective, government must also focus on the professional development of corporate communications managers in the reputation management area. Furthermore, communication professionals must be depoliticised, and political interference must be curtailed in order to ensure that communication is not curtailed.

- From this research, government management will learn about the importance of building public trust through consistent communication, among other things. Trust will enhance positive feelings about government, which will potentially strengthen the public's emotional attachment to government.

- Government management will learn from this study that in order to protect the reputation of the government, public servants must treat the public with dignity because the public wants to feel accepted and appreciated when they come to public institutions for service. The findings of this study have shown that customer care is a strong pillar of government reputation management, and it further recommends that public servants must entrench the 'Batho Pele' principles in order to enhance customer service, which will also insulate government reputation.

- Results of this study will give government management insight into the pivotal role that media plays in influencing the public discourse, which has a bearing on its reputation. Government communicators must not conceal information from the media as this may potentially affect relations between the two entities. Consistent provision of information to the media will restrict the media's watchdog role, as all the government information will be readily available.

- Government managers can learn from these findings that regardless of the organisation and whether it is actively engaged in online businesses or not, government is part of the evolving social media world that is fraught with unprecedented reputational risks that can arise in the social media environment if not properly managed. Managers should have a social media policy and a clear plan for any potential crisis or threatening situation. The study recommends that managers must undoubtedly embrace social media platforms in order to enhance their communication with citizens.

9.5. SUGGESTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The researcher acknowledges that there are limitations to this study that provide future research opportunities. These are specific areas that the research could not cover and are recommended for future research endeavours. This research would provide a baseline for such future research. The recommended research suggestions are as follows:

- Propositions listed in section 9.3 could be used as source of research to empirically test them in the public sector context. In view of the current dearth of research studies on public sector reputation, such research would substantially contribute to scholarship.

- This qualitative research investigated public sector reputation management as an exploratory study, which limited the generalisation of the research findings. Future research in this area should focus on quantitative approaches to further validate the findings of this study and to allow the generalisation of the findings to the entire population of the Eastern Cape.

- This study is a cross-sectional study and future research should over time (longitudinal) investigate how public sector reputation can be managed.

- It will also be vital for future research to look at how each specific driver included in the strategic framework affects the public sector reputation.

- Researching media influence on public sector reputation and how media relations can be effectively managed in order to enhance the public sector reputation can be embarked upon.

- Future research should also look into the relationship between corporate communication and corporate reputation within the public sector context.

- Social media is increasingly becoming a strong force within the public sector communication system, and future research can investigate the impact and potential risks of this new media platform on the reputation of government and how it can be appropriately managed.

9.6. CONCLUSION

The study has realised the objectives that it has set to achieve and the results will help government to improve the management of its reputation. The strategic management of reputation in government is essential because it guarantees legitimacy or acceptance by the citizens as a legitimate partner. It also ensures that the government enjoys maximum support of citizens in its service delivery programme, and is assured of support in the next elections.

The study has also introduced a conceptual framework, which will add value to the public sector reputation management and empower government institutions with capacity to build strong reputations and strengthen their legitimacy. This study extends reputation literature by showing that public feelings and trust can enhance emotional attachment to government, thus guaranteeing a formidable public sector reputation. Importantly, this study has proved that, although there is dearth of literature and research on public sector reputation, particularly within the South African context, literature from the private sector could be entwined with that of the public sector to develop a literature applicable to both the public and the private sectors. However, this approach was taken with Agolla and Lill's (2013) caveat in mind that because the two types of organisations differ in many ways, the transfer of concepts from one sector to another must be undertaken with caution. Despite these salient differences, this study has enriched the reputation literature by demonstrating that some concepts and constructs from the private sector may be applied to the public sector, which has yielded good results for this study.

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