

University of Pretoria etd – Netshitomboni, L R (2007)

**MANAGING PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION: THE
CASE FOR THE GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION
SYSTEM (GCIS)**

By

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

PhD (COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT)

in the

FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

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FEBRUARY 2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The birth of my son, Mufunwa, in 2001 changed my life in many ways and the way I look at life in general. My dream since then has been to complete my studies before my son starts Grade 1 because I wanted to give him all the support that he needs in his journey through life. He has just started Grade 1 and I have just completed my studies.

At some point this dream looked like just that; a dream. I thank God that my dream has now become a reality. I also thank God for teaching me the value of patience throughout my studies.

It is therefore with gratitude that I express my sincere appreciation to the following people and institutions for helping me to achieve my dream:

- My supervisor, Prof. Ronel Rensburg, for her support and guidance throughout my studies. You have taught me what being an independent researcher is all about. For that I am grateful.
- Many thanks to my dear wife Lufuno Netshitomboni. I am grateful for your support and patience throughout my studies. Most importantly, I am thankful for your unwavering belief in my abilities. *A ni ntshileli!*
- I would also like to thank my son Mufunwa “Tshipupi” Netshitomboni. You have been an inspiration by just being your cute self.
- Many thanks to my colleague, Max Mpuzana, for being the sounding board in shaping some of the ideas developed in my research.
- Financial support from the WKKF Kellogg Foundation that made this study possible is greatly appreciated.
- I am also thankful to my employer, the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), for the bursary to register for my studies.

ABSTRACT

The political changes in South Africa since 2004 had an impact on all government operations. Amongst other things, the manner in which government communicates with the people had to change to reflect the new political dispensation. Prior to 1994, the South African Communication Service (SACS) was required to communicate with South Africans on behalf of other government departments about their activities and to coordinate pronouncements coming out of various state agencies. After the 1994 democratic elections, the SACS was however found to be incompatible with the new democratic set up. This led to the formation of the Communications Task Group (Comtask) whose mandate was to review government communication and to make recommendations on possible improvements.

The Comtask found that most government functions, structures and personnel were largely uncoordinated and inefficient. The inquiry also found that government functions were characterised by a lack of strategic planning and co-ordination at all levels of government. As a result, it recommended that a new structure to be called the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) should be established. Amongst other things, the role of the GCIS is to manage government's campaigns which are meant to ensure that there is interaction between government and the people.

Against this background the main objective of the study is therefore to analyse the role of the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) in the strategic management of government communication, with specific reference to Imbizo as a strategy for participatory development communication. The focus will be on the communication strategy framework for Imbizo, its implementation and the extent to which it encourages and/or inhibits participation by the people.

Literature on the theoretical approaches to participatory development communication, strategic management, with emphasis on communication has been reviewed. The purpose of this review was to provide a framework within which the role of the GCIS in strategic management of government communication with reference to Imbizo.

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, this study has adopted a qualitative approach with field research and content analysis as the main research methodologies. The choice of two research methodologies was necessitated by the fact that using more than one methodology helps to ensure that the validity of the study is achieved.

This study has concluded that the adaptation of the traditional Imbizo for use in government's interaction with the people is a good initiative. However, it has become evident that for it to become even more effective and useful, there is a need to involve the people during the planning, implementation and evaluation of the interaction. The other challenge is that of the need for the development of community-specific communication strategies which are in line with the broader Imbizo communication strategy. Further research need to be conducted on the use of existing traditional communication channels.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR

THE STUDY	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 NEED FOR THE STUDY	4
1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM	11
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	13
1.5 UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY	14
1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	14
1.6.1 Purpose of the study	14
1.6.2 Delimitations of the study	15
1.6.3 Research Methodology	16
1.7 CONCEPTUALISATION	16
1.7.1 Strategy	17
1.7.2 Strategic management	18
1.7.3 Communication strategy	20
1.7.4 Development	21
1.7.5 Development communication	21
1.7.6 Participation	21
1.7.7 Imbizo	22
1.8 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS	23

2.4.3.10	Beneficiaries should also take responsibility for the project	66
2.4.3.11	Participation should encourage self-reliance	67
2.5	FACTORS THAT AFFECT PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION	68
2.5.1	People's participation and power relations	68
2.5.2	Participation and vested interests	70
2.5.3	Self-depreciation and participation	72
2.6	WHAT IS NEEDED FOR PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION TO SUCCEED	73
2.6.1	Research	73
2.6.2	Language usage and community participation	75
2.7	CONCLUSION	75

CHAPTER 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION: THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEM (GCIS) 80

3.1	INTRODUCTION	80
3.2	STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PROCESS	81
3.2.1	Definition of strategic management	81
3.2.2	Stages in strategic management	84
3.2.2.1	Strategy formulation	84
3.2.2.2	Strategy implementation	85

3. 2.2.3	Strategy monitoring and evaluation	87
3.2.3	Importance of strategic management	89
3.2.3.1	Proactive abilities	89
3.2.3.2	Informed workforce	90
3.2.3.3	Allocation of resources	90
3.3	GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEM (GCIS)	91
3.3.1	South African Communication Services (SACS)	92
3.3.2	Communication Task Group (Comtask)	94
3.3.2.1	Background of the Comtask	94
3.3.2.2	Mandate of the COMTASK Group	95
3.3.2.3	Findings of the COMTASK Group	95
3.3.3	Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) (1994-2004)	98
3.3.3.1	Mandate of the GCIS	98
3.3.3.2	The GCIS approach to strategic management of government communication	100
3.3.3.2.1	GCIS corporate strategy	100
3.3.3.2.2	Project management at the GCIS	102
3.4	CONCLUSION	105
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF THE IMBIZO COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FRAMEWORK		106
4.1	INTRODUCTION	106

4.2	THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY	107
4.3	IMPORTANCE OF A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY	109
4.4	COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FRAMEWORKS: EXAMPLES	111
4.4.1	Steyn and Nunes framework	112
4.4.2	Economic and social research council framework	117
4.5	IMBIZO AS A STRATEGY FOR PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION	122
4.5.1	Evolution of Imbizo	122
4.5.2	Analysis of the communication strategy framework for Imbizo	127
4.6	CONCLUSION	131
	CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	133
5.1	INTRODUCTION	133
5.2	PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	133
5.3	MOTIVATION FOR THE CHOICE OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	134
5.4	CONTENT ANALYSIS	137
	5.4.1 What is content analysis?	
137	5.4.2 Why was content analysis chosen?	
		139

5.4.2.1	Research question	140
5.4.2.2	Population	140
5.4.2.3	Sample	141
5.4.2.4	Unit of analysis	141
5.4.2.5	Categories	141
5.4.2.5.1	Press coverage	142
5.4.2.5.2	Videotapes	143
5.4.2.5.3	Communication strategy framework	143
5.4.2.5.4	Imbizo toll-free register	144
5.4.2.5.5	GCIS corporate strategy	144
5.4.2.6	Coding and quantification of the data	145
5.4.2.7	Data analysis	146
5.4.2.8	Reliability of content analysis	147
5.5	FIELD RESEARCH	148
5.5.1	What is field research?	148
5.5.2	Selecting a site	149
5.5.3	Accessing the research site	149
5.5.4	Field observation	151
5.5.4.1	Total observation	151
5.5.4.2	Filed research interviews	153
5.5.4.3	Data collection tools in field observation	154
5.5.5	Data analysis in field observation	155
5.6	CONCLUSION	157
	CHAPTER 6: RESULTS OF THE STUDY	158
6.1	INTRODUCTION	158

6.2	PROJECT MANAGEMENT	158
6.3	COMMUNICATION STRATEGY	160
6.3.1	The development of the Imbizo communication strategy	160
6.3.2	Key messages	164
6.4	LANGUAGE USAGE	166
6.4.1	Constitutional language provisions	166
6.4.2	Language usage in Imbizo brochures and the press	168
6.4.3	Language used in the electronic media	170
6.5	SUMMARY OF IMBIZO VIDEOTAPES	171
6.5.1	North West Presidential Imbizo	171
6.5.2	Gauteng Presidential Imbizo	172
6.5.3	Analysis of Imbizo meetings	173
6.6	NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS	176
6.6.1	An overview of the press coverage of the Presidential Imbizos	176
6.6.2	People's participation as reflected in the newspaper coverage of Imbizo	180
6.6.3	Analysis of press coverage of Imbizo	183
6.7	COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	185
6.7.1	Nature of community participation	185
6.7.2	Participation through the Imbizo toll-free number	187
6.8	CONCLUSION	192

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	193
7.1 INTRODUCTION	193
7.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM	193
7.3 AIMS OF THE STUDY	195
7.4 RESEARCH METHODS USED IN THE STUDY	196
7.5 SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY	196
7.5.1 Understanding of the concept participation	196
7.5.2 Generation of extensive media coverage	198
7.5.3 Implementation of government promises	198
7.5.4 Key messages	199
7.5.5 Role of the partners in the planning of Imbizo activities	200
7.5.6 Imbizo as an ideological approach to governance	201
7.5.7 Language usage	202
7.5.8 Branding of Imbizo	202
7.5.9 Accessibility of Imbizo meeting venues	203
7.5.10 Venue constraints	203
7.6 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY	204
7.7 RECOMMENDATIONS	209
7.8 CONCLUSION	218
REFERENCES	219
APPENDIX A: GCIS CORPORATE STRATEGY-APRIL 2004 – MARCH 2007	233
APPENDIX B: MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL	

IMBIZOS	242
APPENDIX C: IMBIZO TOLL-FREE LINE REGISTER	255
APPENDIX D: IMBIZO BROCHURE	313
APPENDIX E: QUESTIONS USED FOR QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS	314

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 3

Figure 3.1 Organogram of the GCIS	99
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CHAPTER 4

Figure 4.1 Figure 4.1 Guidelines for the development of a corporate communication Strategy (Steyn and Puth, 2000:63)	112
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Figure 4.2 Guidelines for the development of a development communication strategy (Steyn and Nunes, 2001:46)	113
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CHAPTER 7

Figure 7.1: Proposed communication strategy framework for government's participatory development communication initiative

213