

**The Use of Social Media as a Public Participation Strategy
in the Public Service of Namibia**

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Declaration

By submitting this study electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (safe to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Abstract

This exploratory study attempts to establish the readiness of the Namibian government in using social media as a strategy for public participation. The subject of public participation as a strategy to improve the process of policymaking has been researched extensively. Similarly, the use of social media to promote public participation which in turn influences service delivery is gaining popularity in many scholarly works. However, there is still a paucity of research investigating the use of social media as a public participation strategy to improve policymaking.

Given the speed at which people worldwide have embraced the use of social media, the current study provides an opportunity to establish how the Namibian government can utilise social media as a strategy to facilitate public participation. This two-way engagement is necessary to improve the government's efforts in the development of policies and programmes and ultimately improved service delivery. Theoretically, the analysis in this study centred on theories of public participation and emergent theories of the use of social media for good governance. The current study utilised a multi-case study approach and a combination of research techniques in collecting data. These included document analysis – in both paper and digital formats – and unstructured interviews with key respondents from the main government institutions and their strategic role in the implementation of e-government in Namibia.

The study employed a systematic approach in answering all five research questions to meet the research objectives. It concludes that, although the Namibian context and legislative framework support public participation broadly, there are still a number of challenges which impact on the readiness to use social media as a strategy for public participation in the Public Service of Namibia. Following this, a set of recommendations for both policy and further research is presented.

Opsomming

Hierdie ondersoekende studie poog om die gereedheid van die Namibiese regering om sosiale media as werktuig vir publieke deelname te vestig. Die onderwerp van publieke deelname as 'n werktuig om die beleidsmakingsproses te verbeter, is reeds omvattend nagevors. Die gebruik van sosiale media om publieke deelname te bevorder wat om die beurt dienslewering beïnvloed, neem in verskeie akademiese bronne toe in populariteit. Navorsing wat die gebruik van sosiale media as werktuig vir publieke deelname om beleidsmaking te verbeter is skaars.

Gegewe die spoed waarteen mense wêreldwyd die gebruik van sosiale media aanneem, bied hierdie studie die geleentheid om vas te stel hoe die Namibiese regering sosiale media as werktuig om publieke deelname te fasiliteer, kan gebruik. Hierdie tweerigtingbetrokkenheid is noodsaaklik om die regering se pogings in die ontwikkeling van beleide en programme en uiteindelik dienslewering te verbeter. Teoreties is die analise in hierdie studie gesentreer om teorieë oor publieke deelname en opkomende teorieë oor die gebruik van sosiale media vir goeie regeringsgedrag. Die huidige studie het 'n veelvoudige gevallestudie en 'n kombinasie van navorsingstegnieke ingespan om data in te samel. Dit het dokumentanalise – beide papier- en digitale formate – en ongestruktureerde onderhoude met sleutelrespondente van die hoofregeringsinstansies en hul strategiese rol in die implementering van e-regering in Namibië ingesluit.

Die studie het van 'n sistematiese benadering gebruik gemaak om al vyf navorsingsvrae te beantwoord om sodoende aan die navorsingsdoelstellings te voldoen. Die studie bevind dat alhoewel die Namibiese konteks en wetgewende raamwerk publieke deelname breedweg ondersteun daar steeds 'n aantal uitdagings is wat 'n impak het op die gereedheid van sosiale media as 'n werktuig vir publieke deelname in die Openbare Diens van Namibië. Vervolgens word 'n stel voorstelle vir beide beleid en verdere navorsing aangebied.

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Abbreviations

ACC	Anti Corruption Commission
PSC	Public Service Commission
SSC	Social Security Commission
NAMPOL	Namibian Police Force
NDF	Namibian Defence Force
UNDESA	United Nations
ITU	United Nations Telecommunications Union
ANC	African National Congress
ICT	Information Communication Technology
CD	Compact disc
DVD	Digital video disc
GRN	Government of the Republic of Namibia
HRD	Human Resource Development
LA	Local Authority
MDI	Management Development Institute
NDP4	Fourth National Development Plan
NIPAM	Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management
NPC	National Planning Commission
OMA	Offices/Ministries/Agencies
RC	Regional Council
SMS	Short Message Services
SOE	State Owned Enterprise
UNAM	University of Namibia

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“The even greater risk to governments is not being involved in social media. And unless government understands the possibilities of social media, educates and allows their officials to use social media in their working environments, opportunities for real engagement, innovation, change and transparency may be lost”

-Jude Hanan, Social Media & emerging strategies Strategist for the World Bank,
2013.

Chapter 1 – Introduction and setting the context

This chapter introduces the study by presenting the rationale, problem statement and the research questions. The aim, objectives, potential significance and assumptions of the study follow. An explanation of the design, demarcation and analytical framework is provided in the next section. The chapter concludes with a brief outline of the chapters of the study and a chapter summary.

1.1. Aim of the Study

The aim of this exploratory study is to investigate the use of social media in the Namibian government by examining the current forms of public participation. The subject of public participation as a strategy to improve the process of policymaking has been researched extensively. Similarly, the use of social media to promote public participation in influencing service delivery is gaining popularity in many scholarly works. However, there is still a paucity of research investigating the use of social media as a strategy of public participation to improve policymaking.

1.2. Background

On 11 February 2014 a gruesome crime scene photograph which featured a Namibian woman who was brutally murdered was circulated on various social media networks. The image was not only shocking and regarded as socially irresponsible, but it also captured people's attention and triggered the debate regarding the use of social media in Namibia. Less than three months later, local newspapers featured headlines such as "Engage, Don't Rage!" and "MPs want Law to Control Social Media". These followed on various popular social media posts from the public demanding public sector accountability from politicians. The growing interest in social media is largely a result of increased discontent from the public with regard to service delivery and the new digital channels which have created new platforms for views to be shared widely. This growing interest may mean that the use of social media also implies that no one, from ordinary citizens to politicians, is immune to its mobilisation power and its power to expose.

From the previous section it follows that supporters in favour of controlling the use of social media base their claims on the premise that these new digital forms of expression are misused to tarnish the images of certain political personalities and the liberal manner in which information which was deemed to be confidential is made public. Christensen (2011: 233) in his paper on the use of Twitter indicated that the use of “social media and political communication” with reference to Barack Obama and the Arab Spring is a developing phenomenon.

In contrast, very few Namibian politicians that include the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister are in favour of the use of social media. As a case in point, the Prime Minister, Right Honourable Hage Geingob, recently launched his personal Facebook page and has a Twitter account. The key argument used by the few followers in the political arena maintain that these new digital forms of self-expression may be used to engage citizens, strengthen stakeholder relationships, promote dialogue and be seen as a strategy to enhance the development of better public policies and programmes.

Despite these developments, the current use of social media as a strategy to empower citizens and to give them voice with regard to the delivery of government services, policies and programmes in Namibia has not yet been studied extensively. Most related studies about service delivery improvement and public participation focus on systemic challenges in the E-government and E-governance context (Van Staden & Mbale, 2012; Van Staden, 2011), confirm poor and ineffective public participation at community level (Nampila, 2005) and conclude that there are low democratic participation levels in the formulation of policies (Marthinussen, 2013).

Other Namibian studies focused on the advent of information and communication technology as milestone in changing the manner in which society communicates. In particular, Haipinge’ s 2013 study on the use of the mobile phone to access Facebook as a communications and social strategy provides an indication as to the growth and popularity of the medium. This is confirmed by Stork and Calandro’s (2014) recent study in Namibia on the use of mobile devices to access social

networking applications. Their study on the use of mobile phone to access the internet and social media applications illustrates that the growth in the use of these devices may be attributed to its ease of use, affordability and less reliance on electricity.

Given the speed at which people have embraced the use of social media worldwide, the current study provides a suitable opportunity to ask how social media may be used as a strategy to facilitate public participation in government service delivery and in particular in the public service of Namibia. This broad aim supports the formulation of the research objectives which are outlined in the next section.

1.3. Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To describe the current status of the use of social media in public participation in the international and regional context of good governance.
- To conduct a literature and comparative analysis on the utilisation and the effective use of social media in public participation.
- To examine legislation and policies, which relate to social media in Namibia and the extent to which they address public participation.
- To examine the readiness of the Namibian government to use social media as a means of public participation.
- To make recommendations on how public participation can be strengthened by the use of social media to support policymaking.

These objectives provide structure in terms of the manner in which the study is documented. The next section highlights the researcher's personal motivation for embarking on the study before stating the research problem and research question.

1.4. Motivation

The researcher's motivation to embark on this research is based on recent trends according to which Namibians and people all over the world use social media to join networks of commonality and interests and to connect with people – friends and acquaintances, colleagues as well as total strangers, locally and internationally. Social media is becoming the preferred channel of communication in sharing varying categories of information, from personal opinions, interests and news to other media with a much broader audience than usually possible in day-to-day interactions. The ability and potential to associate with various audience groups has given public institutions the option of using social media to communicate with the public.

The researcher utilises social media not only as a strategy of networking in the workplace, but also to stay up to date with news and current events, both internationally and in Namibian society. Bearing in mind the potential advantages for improved interaction in using social media, the researcher's background and orientation as a staff member of Africa's youngest management development institute (MDI) perceives these developments as instrumental in effecting change in the existing paradigms of public administration and management. This MDI exists and has been established under the Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management (NIPAM) Act, Act number 10 of 2010 (Republic of Namibia, 2010), as Namibia's key initiative to provide capacity development, to inform research and to serve as a think tank for the public service of Namibia.

These emerging developments in social media similarly require new ways of thinking about bureaucracy, openness, access to information, engaging the public and challenging the current modes of communication and policymaking. These issues, related to good governance and democracy, form the framework for the current schools of thought and existing curricula of the training programmes delivered by NIPAM. Given this personal motivation to embark on the study, the next section highlights the research problem, underpinned by a number of research questions and corresponding objectives.

1.5. Problem Statement and Research Question

The research question which the study seeks to answer is:

How ready is the Namibian government to use social media as a strategy of public participation?

In order to answer this question, the research objectives listed in section 1.3 that correspond to the research questions are depicted in table one, which is used to guide the study.

Research Objectives	Research Sub-questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To conduct a literature and comparative analysis on the utilisation and the effective use of social media in public participation. 	What is the current status of the use of social media in public participation within the international and regional context of good governance?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To analyse and describe the context of public participation in the public service of Namibia. 	To what extent does the political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental milieu allow for public participation in Namibia?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To examine legislation and policies, which relate to social media in Namibia and the extent to which they address public participation. 	What are the legislative, regulatory and policy mechanisms in place to enhance the current modes of public participation?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To examine the readiness of the Namibian government to use social media as a means of public participation. 	To what extent is the public service of Namibia ready to use social media as a means of improving current public participation efforts?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make recommendations on how public participation can be strengthened by the use of social media to support policymaking. 	In what ways can social media be introduced in the public service of Namibia to support current efforts in promoting public participation?

Table 1: Research objectives and sub-questions.

These five key research objectives as also highlighted by Babbie and Mouton (2001:79) are related to the design and methodology of the current study and are

used to outline its purpose and has implications for the type of design which will be explained in the next section.

1.6. Research Methodology

Drawn from the five research questions, one of the objectives of this study was to compare best practices in the use of social media from other countries to inform how this would enhance current forms of public participation in Namibia. The use of the multi-case study, essentially a qualitative design which focuses on organisations and institutions as described by Babbie and Mouton (2001:281), was used. This type of case study has been adopted largely in business and management studies, where the focus of the research is a particular institution. This approach aims to study social processes and phenomena within their natural environment. Thus, the phenomenological perspective enables the researcher to adopt an 'insider' or 'emic' perspective (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271). Despite the cultural and ethical challenges which are associated with this approach, the researcher additionally uses a multi-case method which enables a researcher to observe best practices, policy, management and organisational aspects which involves the study of documents.

These documents, which are available in both digital and paper format are then used as a basis to confirm the reality of the local context through the use of qualitative interviews with public service officials responsible for the policy management and implementation of the ICT initiatives across the Namibian government. The use of multiple methods in conducting an intensive study of the situation in Namibia is supplemented with other international cases in order to speculate on the distinctiveness or generalisability of the Namibian context. These methods employ a specific study population and sampling strategy which are explained next.

1.6.1. Study Population and Sampling Strategy

The population of the study was the Public Service of Namibia. Babbie and Mouton (2001:174) refer to a study population as a collection of elements from which a sample has been taken. For this study, the elements of the study as well as the units of analysis comprised of the government offices, ministries and agencies O/M/As, the managers and individuals. In particular, staff working as public liaison officers or in the information communication and technology (ICT) directorates were interviewed. Babbie and Mouton (2001:174) further argue that the elements of a study can also be considered the same as the units of analysis.

In order to arrive at describing the units of analysis, a purposive sampling approach was used to select participants. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:69) describe this approach as one in which a researcher relies on their own experience, knowledge of the environment or past research. Similarly, given the researcher's background, the researcher used a participatory observation approach, where the researcher became a member of the group and phenomenon studied. Hoyle, Harris and Judd (2002:187) argue that the use of purposive sampling requires sound judgment to utilise participants who will not only be readily available, but also meet the requirements of the study.

While all 27 O/M/As made up the sampling frame and would have been included initially, only O/M/As found to accommodate and to illustrate a readiness to implement social media were purposefully selected for inclusion in the study. These were the Office of the Prime Minister as taking the lead in implementing the e-governance strategy, and the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, as the driver and custodian of the e-governance policy. Respondents were chosen from these government institutions because both institutions have been at the forefront of digital and information communication technology progress in government. The manner in which data was collected is explained in the next part.

1.6.2. Data collection Instruments and Approach

With regard to the data collection approach employed in this study, namely the use of multiple methods or triangulation which guides the current study is highlighted by Babbie and Mouton (2001:282-283). The authors emphasise the need for triangulation or the use of multiple sources of evidence in order to achieve replication and convergence for the findings to be reliable. In using the emic or insider approach of studying a phenomenon, the use of multiple systems, perspectives and sources of evidence achieves replication as it increases the chances that a finding is reliable.

Guion, Diehl & McDonald (2011:1) concur by maintaining that the purpose of triangulation is to determine validity by subjecting a research question to a multi-perspective analysis. While relying on different approaches of analysis and reporting, the multi-perspective blend introduced a new dimension to how the social media may be shaping the service delivery agenda. The study comprised two data collection approaches: an analysis of documents (which included website reviews) and the use of interviews which is explained in the next section.

1.6.3. Document Analysis

The first method of data collection, which is essentially the analysis of documents, includes the analysis of websites. Furthermore, Guion et al. (2011:2) refer to the use of methodological triangulation which entails the use of multiple methods to study a research phenomenon. The document analysis assisted the researcher after visiting the websites and sourcing documents and materials on best practices about the current use of social media internationally and regionally. In this study the results from the document analysis and the interviews were compared to establish whether the conclusions from each of the methods were the same for a level of objectivity to be established. As a first step, the analysis of the documents and websites provided opportunity to conduct the interviews and is explained in the section which follows.

1.6.4. Interviews

In-depth interviews are described by Babbie and Mouton (2001:291) to be a data gathering technique in which a researcher is not so much interested in the content but on the process of obtaining information. The researcher thus used in-depth interviews to explore the views of key senior government officials on the role of the social media in enhancing public participation efforts within the institutions that were consulted. In addition to the in-depth interviews, information and documentation about the structure, e-government concept note, proposed legislation and strategy provided the researcher with a deeper understanding of the current challenges and technical issues pertaining to the use of social media. Hence, the primary aim of the study was to arrive at what Guba and Lincoln (1984) cited in Babbie and Mouton (2001:277) refer to as 'thick descriptions' of specific phenomena within a given or unique context. Babbie and Mouton (2001:309) in explaining this 'idiographic motive' of collecting data, maintain that this process of understanding social phenomena is inductive and results in the generation of qualitative or emerging hypothesis.

Six senior government officials provided their consent and agreed to take part in the study. The format for data collection (Appendix 3) and initial interview guide, (Appendix 5) was tested and piloted prior to its general application and was cross-validated by two independent researchers. This process ensured that the questions and the use of the instrument were commonly understood by both the respondents and the researcher without losing meaning or lending itself to misinterpretation. As part of the process employed to construct the interview guide, the prospects of using social media as well as the key challenges regarding its use for public participation were explored in the interview. Thus, determining these as part of the objective and rationale provided information to ascertain the extent to which the public service of Namibia is ready to use social media as a means to improve current public participation efforts.

The in-depth interviews were comprised of broad questions which related to the overall aims of the e-governance strategy and its link to public participation. In turn,

the objectives of the e-governance strategy, the likelihood of using social media applications, management practices, challenges and critical success factors and also the additional insights into the readiness of government in using social media were explored. Specific questions on the current manner in which government conducts activities to promote public participation efforts were included in the interviews.

The interviews which lasted approximately 40 minutes each were captured as what Guba and Lincoln (1989) in Babbie and Mouton (2001:275) refer to as 'extensive field notes'. According to the authors, these are characteristic of strengthening aspects of reliability and validity within the interpretive research paradigm. Hence, notes, observations and memoranda were captured to develop the rest of the study in an emergent manner. In the tradition of constructivism, and to support the design process, each interview and the responses generated formed the basis for the following interview. Babbie and Mouton (2001:275) contend that this process lends itself to a refinement of the design so that it unfolds. Additionally, information from the respondents with regard to managing the website provided better and holistic insights into how social media could be introduced to support current efforts to promote public participation. Finally, the overall key findings of all six interviews were incorporated in the case study section of this study.

Furthermore, ethical conventions that govern research were followed where permission was solicited by the Secretary to the Cabinet, the head of the Namibian public service and the individuals participating in the study. This endorsement was very important in that the study was supported by the highest authority in the public service which contributed to the validity and reliability of the study outlined in the next section. The permission letter from the Secretary to the Cabinet which endorsed the study and the letter by the researcher which requested permission to conduct the study are attached as Appendix 1, while the informed consent form which was signed by all the respondents is attached as Appendix 2.

1.6.5. Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are constructs almost exclusively synonymous with quantitative studies, but have recently been gaining momentum in qualitative studies (Silverman, 2012:8).

Reliability, as defined by Silverman (2012:9) is the degree of consistency in which a study proves to be replicable when assigned to different observers. In other words, a study is reliable when the same methods and instruments yield the same results each time it is conducted under the same circumstances with the same participants. In this regard, for the purposes of consistency, and to comply with issues of reliability in qualitative research, a general format for data collection was developed and used as a precursor to each interview and is attached as Appendix 3.

Validity refers to the extent to which a researcher's findings are valid to the extent that the findings represent the phenomenon which it purports to measure (Babbie & Mouton, 2012:125).

The study accordingly considered the use of triangulation in order to ensure reliability and validity for the qualitative study. Triangulation is defined by Silverman (2012:449) as the use of different methods such as observation and interviews to confirm that the results are consistent and corroborated. Guion et al. (2011:2) suggest that, in order for a study to have methodological validity in qualitative research, the use of different methods added a dimension to the findings which would not have been possible by only using one method. Given that the study follows a phenomenological, constructivist, approach unique to a qualitative research design, the use of the terms 'reliability' and 'validity' (which are associated with a positivistic and quantitative research approach) may be subject to misinterpretation. Guba and Lincoln (1989) in Babbie and Mouton (2001:276) refer to aspects of objectivity, trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability to describe the extent of the validity and reliability of a study within the qualitative context. The

process of analysing the information to arrive at conclusions and recommendations follows and is described in the next part.

1.6.6. Analytical Framework

In explaining the process of analysis, Markham in Silverman (2012:224) argues that the internet is a rich source of data in qualitative research particularly in terms of its flexible nature and ability to present itself as both a strategy and the context of the research phenomenon. The information from academic papers, research findings from the comparative country analysis and interviews as well as materials sourced from the internet and the respondents was subjected to a process of document study though the use of detailed field notes in order to arrive at an emerging qualitative hypothesis. This analytical approach confirms the overall context of the use of social media in the literature and document study and brought together with the interviews held with key informants in government, thereby achieving triangulation. Appendix 6 provides a broad summary of raw data from in-depth Interviews, field notes and emerging findings which would later provide sufficient context, background and information for the exploratory study. The findings were finally documented and presented in the Namibian case study. However, since both public participation and the use of social media are generally broad topics, it is important to demarcate or outline the scope of the study in the subsequent section.

1.6.7. Demarcation of the study

The study was confined to the public service of Namibia and specifically focused on O/M/As that were found to be ready to host and promote the use of social media. This instilled the need to utilise a multi-case study in order to establish trends as well as to establish distinctiveness and comparisons worldwide to Namibia so that the findings would be generalised to the rest of the public service. Although the study makes reference to e-government, m-government and ultimately e-governance, its stage of development in Namibia, albeit desirable, is not necessarily a prerequisite for the use of social media.

It must also be noted that this study focuses on the perspective of the government as a service provider and as custodian of public policies and programmes with an obligation to engage the public. Accordingly, it is also acknowledged that there is a sector of the Namibian public which may not necessarily have access to digital technology. While this is also an interesting aspect which requires further investigation, the emphasis of this study is not on issues of accessibility, nor on the medium or various platforms the public use to participate in social media. Future research may focus on the users as well as the platforms that are currently or historically pertinent to Namibia. The thrust, however and main concern of this study is to establish the readiness of the Namibian government in using social media to supplement other forms of public participation.

The scope, manner in which the study has been designed, the process of data collection and analysis in relation to the soundness and legitimacy of the approach has been explained in the foregoing sections. The next section details the potential significance of the study.

1.7. Potential Significance of the Study

The study is likely to have high practical and applied significance. The results of the study may add to the existing body of knowledge in the field of public policy studies – particularly towards enhancing public participation levels. Future studies may focus on the development of a new model of public participation brought about by the new and fast evolving digital forms of social media. With this in mind, this study is based on the key assumptions discussed below.

1.8. Assumptions

The assumption on which this study is based rests on the adoption of the Namibian Constitution (Republic of Namibia, 1990) which elicits the government's commitment towards fulfilling its requirements. Article 95 of the Constitution illustrates how the Namibian government has embraced the concept of democracy and public participation as a means to provide the public with the opportunity and to allow

participation in the government's endeavours through their policies and programmes (Republic of Namibia, 1990:45–46). Hence, the study is positioned at the centre in the context of a politically stable democracy, which respects the fundamental and universal freedoms of its citizens. Having highlighted this key assumption, the final section of this chapter provides an overview of the study and briefly describes the chapter contents.

1.9. Overview of Study

The previous sections which detailed the reason and purpose of the study as it pertains to the research question paved the way for the manner in which this study has been crafted. The methodology, which includes the type of study this multi-disciplinary research focuses on, considers the issue of public participation, the use of digital media and particularly social media to advance the good governance agenda in the government. This final section highlights how the study is organised.

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Setting the Context

The first chapter provides an overview and background to the study as well as a summary outline of how it is structured. The initial development of ideas, the research problem, the aim, the objectives and the design and methodology are discussed.

Chapter 2 – Public Participation: A Literature Study

The second chapter provides an account of the theoretical framework used in the study. Key terms used are described and explained. The definition of governance and elements of good governance are explained. This explanation reinforces the link with public participation. Finally, the theories and studies on public participation are discussed.

Chapter 3 – Public Participation and Social Media

The focus of the third chapter falls on the definition, evolution and use of digital media. In particular, studies highlighting the use of social media as a new form of media are discussed in terms of social media's use as a strategy of public

participation. Finally, a comparative review of specific countries in terms of their stage of development in the use of social media is conducted.

Chapter 4 – Public Participation in Namibia: Legislation, Policy and Institutionalisation

Chapter four highlights and contextualises the legislative and enabling framework on an international level which deals with privacy issues, the right to information and access to information. In the Namibian context, the chapter will explore the extent to which social media has been utilised in terms of harnessing it as a strategy to enhance public participation.

Chapter 5 – Utilising Social Media for Public Participation: A Namibian Case Study

This chapter covers the empirical work and particularly how the design, methodology and the process have been operationalised. A comparison of what has been sourced in the literature review on public participation will be made to the Namibian context. Similarly, the comparative review of the various countries in terms of their development pertaining to the use of social media as a strategy for public participation is applied to the Namibian context. The analysis provides an empirical assessment of whether the required elements are in place for the introduction of social media as a strategy of public participation in Namibia.

Chapter 6 – Findings, Summary and Recommendations

This chapter is a culmination of ideas and arguments which move towards answering the research questions in this study as well as arriving at those recommendations for future study. The chapter concludes with a set of recommendations for policymakers in government in considering the use of social media as a strategy to enhance existing methods of public participation. In addition to contributing to the body of knowledge, the study seeks to point out recommendations on how to supplement existing efforts of public participation through the use of social media.

1.10. Summary

The first chapter provided the background to the study. The research purpose, objectives and sub-objectives as well as the methods used in the study are explained. To this end, chapter two presents the theoretical framework of public participation which guides the study towards a consideration of the use of digital and social media as an emerging and innovative form.

Chapter 2 – Public Participation: A Literature Review

The goal of this chapter is to provide an overview of the issues, research and literature on public participation. The first section briefly defines the terms as they are used in this study. Following on this, the concept of public participation as a prerequisite for good governance is explained together with the principles of public participation as highlighted by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2). Furthermore, the key theories that guide the forms of public participation are explained next. In conclusion, the chapter considers the role of the media and digital media in advancing public participation.

2.1. Introduction

The objective of the literature review in a research study is to acquaint the researcher with academic work which bears similarity to the phenomenon under investigation. In many ways the literature review links the research to the general themes and issues by providing a more focused, yet holistic overview of the topic as it compares to other empirical work on the same issue (Creswell, 1994:21). In order for the reader to understand the context of this study, it was particularly important to define the terms “social media”, “digital media”, “public participation”, “public service”, “public policy” and “information communication technology” (ICT).

2.2. Clarification of key concepts

It is necessary to conceptualise the terminology in the following section:

Social media is defined in terms of a collaborative means of people engaging one another to achieve common goals and agendas through interactive web and social processes such as wikis and Google docs (Bertot, Jaeger & Grimes, 2010:267). Social media can also be used for expressive purposes allowing people to openly share content such as text, images, video and music (Bechmann & Lomborg, 2012: 3). Facebook, Flickr, Foursquare, MySpace, Mxit, Twitter, Tumblr, Youtube, and fall into the category of social media. The term social media is thus used broadly to

include both expressive and collaborative definitions (Hansen, Schneiderman & Smith, 2011:10)

Digital media is defined by using Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010: 61) definition and includes digital forms of audio, video or image which may be used or accessed through information communication technology (ICT). Similarly, the use of mobile devices, such as iPods and smartphones, compact discs (CD), digital video discs (DVD) and the internet are referred to as digital media.

Public participation in this study refers to a collaborative and consultative process between individuals, groups, organisations and institutions and the government in order to be afforded the opportunity to take part in the policymaking and decision-making process regarding issues which impact on them and/or which they have an interest in (Aragonès & Sánchez-Pagés, 2008:56). While acknowledging that various authors differentiate between participation, involvement and engagement, for the purposes of this study the term "participation" will be used to refer to all forms of participation.

Public Service refers to all government offices, ministries and agencies as defined by the Public Service Act, 1995 (Act 13 of 1995). It has been established to impartially, professionally, effectively and efficiently serve the Namibian people in policy formulation, execution and evaluation of government policies and directives to promote overall welfare and lawful interests (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1995:5-6).

The term Public Policy in this research is utilised in a broad sense to include the government's process of making choices and operationalising them to result in outputs and outcomes in response to a perceived problem (Smith & Larimer, 2013:4).

Information Communication Technology (ICT) refers to all forms of electronic devices, such as mobile phones, fax machines, smart cards, self-service kiosks and the use of email or the internet (Almarabeh & AbuAli, 2010:30).

The concepts listed in the previous section frame the foundation for the current study. Accordingly, the theoretical foundations on which this study is based follow.

2.3. Theoretical foundations

2.3.1. Governance and Public Participation

The rise of governance as a key issue in the international and regional development arena has received growing attention over the past two decades. In particular, the emphasis on good governance dates back as far as the early 1990s as a general international movement towards improving transparency, public participation and accountability in decision-making processes. For instance, Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration acknowledges the importance of governments providing access to information, participation in decision-making processes and access to judicial procedures and remedies (UNESCO, 1992:3).

While the Rio Declaration provides guidelines on public participation internationally, across Europe, the Aarhus Convention (UN, 1998) which was adopted in 1989 focuses on government accountability, transparency and responsiveness through forging new processes for public participation in the negotiation and implementation of international agreements. In addition to these international agreements fuelling a renewed interest in public participation, Philips & Orsini (2002:5) suggest that the emphasis from “government” to “governance” has heralded a number of changes. These include, firstly, a change from centralised and top-down methods of decision-making to a decentralised, all-encompassing, yet varied approach, greater accountability and the rise of a new breed of citizen that is more informed, knowledgeable, connected and requires feedback on policy decisions which affect them.

Public participation is a fundamental process which links people and organisations to government. Greener (2009:130) elaborates on public participation by referring to the approach taken by government to address the collective needs of the public by involving them to participate in service-delivery efforts. Borrowed from the field of behavioural economics, proponents of the public participation approach suggest that involving the public to engage and to take part increases accountability. Furthermore, Warburton (2000:4) argues that public participation encompasses a collective process of political decision-making which impacts on, provides access to resources and provides equitable access to justice and accountability in developing a common outcome.

In the context of public participation and democracy, Abelson and Eyles (2004:279), more than a decade ago, posited that the challenge of defining governance lay in the manner of how broad goals are conceptualised. In this regard, the authors contrast the threefold purpose of public participation as, firstly, a critical component of democracy while emphasising the exclusive role of the State in driving a country's development and policy agenda; secondly, public participation as a means of achieving a decision outcome; and, thirdly, for public participation to provide opportunities to the public to become more engaged, informed and involved in the public policy process and the common good.

With regard to defining governance in terms of public participation, the first purpose corresponds to the World Bank's early definition of governance as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social development" (World Bank, 1992:vii). The second purpose of public participation builds on the work of Kooimans (1993:3), who views governance as a collaborative partnership between both public and private actors in order to address and resolve social problems in advancing socio-economic development. Dye (2002:33) supports this definition by highlighting the role and importance of public opinion in relation to government policy. Dye (2002:33) contends that this collaborative relationship highlights the role and importance of public opinion in relation to government policy.

Furthermore, Dye (2002:33) argues that public participation gives government the opportunity to harness new information on policy-related issues in fostering sound policymaking corresponds to the third purpose of public participation. With these three key purposes outlined, it is necessary to provide a link between public participation, public policy and good governance in the next section.

The link between public participation and public policy is explained by Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:51) in that the two constructs are inextricably linked to democracy and ultimately good governance. In this regard, Theron (2009:112) maintains that the broad justification for public participation is based on the ideal that efforts to include public contribution may result in more sustainable and legitimate development outcomes. Mzimakwe (2010:509) supports these arguments by stating that governments worldwide have acknowledged the role of public opinion in influencing public policy. Furthermore, he argues that public participation is not only one of the cornerstones of a democratic society, but that it also assumes the principles of openness, transparency accountability and improved service delivery.

Despite the conceptual challenges in defining governance, Puppis (2010:139) attempts to provide a broad definition of governance as a multidisciplinary concept aimed at providing guidelines to the State in its mandate of being efficient, effective and legitimate in maintaining order “within the state, by the state, without the state, and beyond the state.” Levi-Faur (2012:1) contributes to the broad definition by extending the understanding of “governance” to include formal and informal decision-making across various levels in government, regionally as well as internationally.

However, the debate regarding the definition of governance has continued with the dawn of innovation and the role of ICT in government service delivery. In a recent paper written for the Center for Global Development, the political scientist and economist Francis Fukuyama describes governance as a concept which has been poorly conceptualised as a result of an inadequately constructed framework (Fukuyama, 2013). He contends that the problem of defining governance lies in the

core challenges of measuring abstract concepts such as innovation and how they relate to the multi-diverse aspects of measuring the outcomes of public participation, innovative efforts and material outcomes.

Hence, an analysis of the literature on good governance and public policy suggests that despite the variations in defining governance and conceptual disagreements regarding public participation, there is still a high emphasis on public participation as being central to the idea of democratic societies worldwide. Public participation therefore forms the basis of any democratic system as well as advancing societal development. Several researchers who work in public policy and administration concur that there is an explicit link between public participation and democracy (Creighton, 2005; Nkuna, 2007 and Booyesen, 2009). Aragonès and Sánchez-Pagés (2008:56) maintain that while public participation is constructed as a collective means of combined decision-making by involving the public, who are in turn instrumental in effecting changes to policies; politicians maintain their role as the implementers of the policy.

Furthermore, in terms of reinforcing the link between public participation and policy, it is argued that the process of effective policymaking cannot materialise without public participation. Creighton (2005:25) contends that "...public participation creates a new direct link between the public and the decision makers in the bureaucracy. Potentially, it sensitizes experts and bureaucrats on the real needs of the communities." Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:6) suggest that governments should operate with the principle of accommodating the views and contributions of the various stakeholders and public they serve. This may effectively require a restructuring of the system and its functions to address and effectively respond to the views and contributions of the public participation process.

Conversely, the World Bank Sourcebook on Participation (1994:3) suggests that there is an absence of an ideal model of public participation. Hence, the collective process is largely influenced by the uniqueness and circumstances of the context.

With this in mind, not only should members of the public be ready and prepared to participate, it is also imperative that both constitutional and legal provisions should exist to foster public participation. The role of the State in equipping the public with resources to enable authentic and empowering participation is thus critical. Given the absence of an appropriate model of public participation, it may be useful to explain the five main considerations for public participation.

2.3.2. Considerations for Public Participation

Meyer and Theron (2000:2) concur that an ideal model for public participation is absent in criticism of the various and existing methods of public participation. The authors maintain that current efforts are inclined towards being conducted in a manner which is ad hoc, unstructured, haphazard and unsystematically managed. Fischer (2000:144), in support of Theron (2009), points out that public participation is not an easy construct or process as it requires prior planning and foresight depending on five key considerations which are outlined hereafter.

Firstly, in understanding public participation, the definition and characteristics are required. Secondly, it is important to establish the overall goals and objectives of public participation. Thirdly, the manner in which participation is facilitated may shed light on the strategies and approaches. Fourthly, the scope and media for public participation are required; and finally, the fifth consideration in understanding public participation focuses on the outcome of participatory processes. In framing the understanding of public participation, Theron (2009: 126-128) furthermore classifies public participation in terms of three key areas depending on the area of interest: information sharing, consultation and empowerment. To further the understanding of public participation, the founding theories are found to be useful as they provide guidance on the relevance of public participation as considered in this study.

2.3.3. Theories of Public Participation

The previous section attempts to conceptualise good governance and the link to public participation for this study. It puts forth the argument that governments should uphold the principles of openness, transparency, accountability and improved service delivery in preserving democratic ideals by enhancing public participation efforts. In the absence of an ideal model of public participation it is argued that a consideration of the key aspects used to frame the understanding of public participation is required and is explained accordingly. With these key considerations, the next section outlines the key theories of public participation which, despite being written almost five decades ago, are still utilised to understand how governments encourage the public to participate in decision-making.

2.3.3.1. Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

One of the key sources on public participation which dates back to 1969 was written by Sherry Arnstein. Although it is a very old article, her work depicting an eight rung ladder to illustrate the various steps of participation continues to be cited extensively in many academic studies. The ladder further conceptualises as a power struggle between the public attempting to progress up the ladder in an attempt to reach the levels of the power bearers. The premise of Arnstein's work is captured below.

In stating that the "critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process" (Arnstein, 1969:216) and at the same time maintaining that "participation is a categorical term for power" (ibid:216), Arnstein argues that participation in the absence of power is a fruitless and unsatisfying exercise for those who are not in a decision-making position. With this in mind, the following paragraphs, taken from the original article (Arnstein, 1969: 216-217) briefly describe each of the eight steps.

Each of the steps on the ladder of participation corresponds to changes in degrees of citizen engagement. The first two rungs of the ladder are labelled "Manipulation" and "Therapy" respectively. Arnstein's intention with including these two rungs was to

indicate that the bearers of power introduced these levels of "non-participation" in order to "educate" or "cure" those who intend to participate.

Arnstein refers to "tokenism" in describing the third and fourth rungs of the ladder as "Informing" and "Consultation" respectively. By describing these two levels, Arnstein contends that those in power offer the public token forms of participation and argues that, although their views may be considered, their efforts at affecting any change are futile and are curtailed by their lack of power.

The fifth rung on the ladder, "Placation", is described by Arnstein as another symbolic form and greater level of tokenism by arguing that despite listening to the views, concerns and feedback from the public, the ultimate power of decision-making still rests with those who bear power.

Arnstein proposes that the further a citizen moves up the ladder, the more decision-making power he will have. In this regard, the sixth rung on the ladder denotes a "Partnership" which allows the public to enter into agreements which enable exchange and negotiation with those in power.

The last two rungs of the ladder are "Delegated Power" and "Citizen Control" respectively. These two rungs, in effect, suggest that the gradual progression up the ladder for those citizens who were previously powerless, but are now given the opportunity to experience power by occupying decision-making roles.

Figure 1 illustrates Arnstein's ladder of citizen engagement.

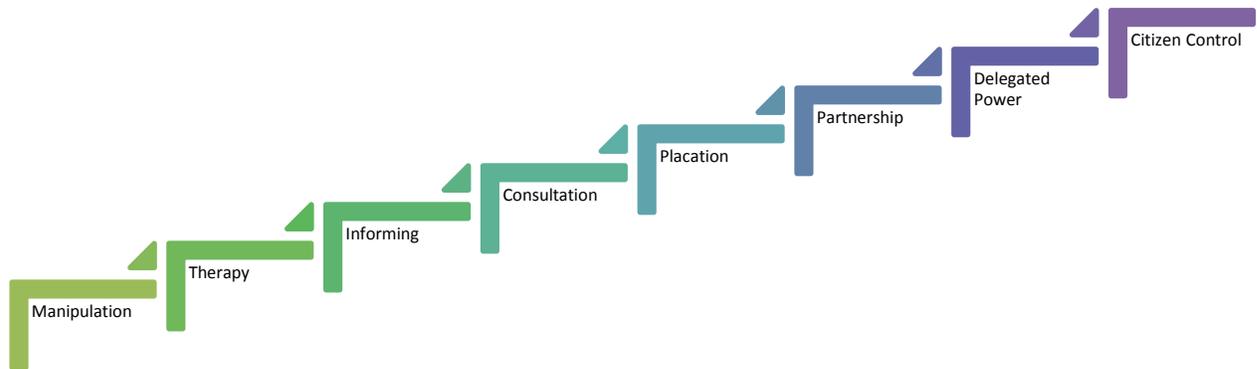


Figure 1: Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Engagement (Arnstein, 1969).

2.3.3.2. A Pragmatic Approach to Public Participation

Approximately three decades later, one of Arnstein's critics, Sanoff (2000), contends that a pragmatic approach to participation had emerged and evolved. Citing Deshler and Sock (1985) Sanoff conceptualises two levels of participation, namely pseudo participation and genuine participation (Sanoff, 2000:8). By giving a simpler conceptualisation of public participation, pseudo participation, on the one hand, refers to a top-down and one-way means of communication on the part of government. Genuine participation, on the other hand, encompasses more genuine forms of engagement and participation by entering into a partnership with the public and incorporating their views in policy decisions. By presenting this simplified perspective, Sanoff (2000:8) reasoned that the practicality and importance of this approach were based on the outcomes discussed below.

Firstly, Sanoff (2000:8) maintained that the more people are involved in the decision-making processes the deeper their trust and higher their confidence in the government. By having buy-in, this basic principle enables people to be more accepting and open to implementing the policy decision. Secondly, the genuine participation of people in the policy design, development and implementation process improves service delivery (Sanoff, 2000:8). Finally, Sanoff (2000:8) maintains that participation brings about a sense of purpose and community by focusing on

common objectives (Sanoff, 2000:9-10). The simplicity of this model is echoed in the Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development's (OECD) model of public participation which is discussed next.

2.3.3.3. The OECD Model of Public Participation

Apart from Sanoff, the OECD has utilised the principles of Sanoff's model by arguing that there are three distinct layers with regard to the classification of the relationship between governments and the public they serve (OECD, 2001:3). The first layer is comprised of information provision, the second layer emphasises government as initiating a two-way process of consultation, while the third and final layer points to a more collaborative, interactive and dual process of decision-making between government and the public.

Despite Sanoff's and the OECD's pragmatic and simple approaches to public participation, it is interesting that Arnstein's ladder of public participation remains to be the most popular and continues to feature in several academic works. In this regard, almost three decades after her original article, the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) adapted Arnstein's ladder by developing a universal and internationally accepted Spectrum of Public Participation which is widely used today (IAP2:2013).

2.4. Levels of Public Participation

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) which was founded in 1990 was established as an international association to promote the ethical practice and principles of public participation worldwide (IAP:2013). IAP2 espouses seven core values from which five key forms of public participation have been derived.

The IAP2's core values, as described on the IAP2 website (<http://www.iap2.org/>) can be summarised as follows:

1. The principle of public participation rests on the premise that the rights of individuals affected by a decision are protected by being involved in the consultation process.
2. A distinct promise that the decision will be influenced by the consultative process and discussions.
3. Sustainable decisions are realised by considering both the needs and interests of the participants as well as involving those in a position to make the decisions.
4. People who are affected by a decision are brought on board through the interactive process.
5. The input of participants is instrumental in designing how they will be involved in the process.
6. The provision of information is critical regarding the meaningful manner in which the public will participate.
7. Their input and how their contributions have influenced the decision are communicated.

These values, as indicated in the previous paragraph, form the basis of the five key forms or levels of public participation and their corresponding strategies which are explained in the next five paragraphs and depicted in figure two.

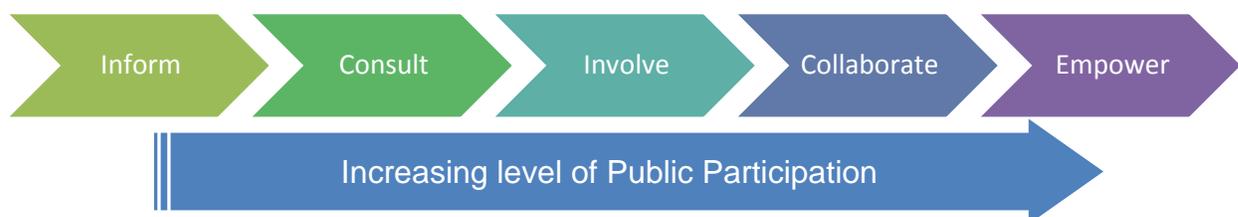


Figure 2: IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation (IAP2, 2013).

2.4.1. Public Participation as Information Sharing

At this very basic and first level, public participation as the sharing of information aims to avail the public with information which is balanced and objective. This is to equip them with data in order for them to understand the policy and enable them to understand the policy problem, options and proposed answers. Theron (2009:117) maintains that this phase concentrates not so much on the process of participation, which limits the activity to a one-way communication mode which seeks to ensure that the facts are adequately communicated. Some examples given of participation as information sharing are the dissemination and display of fact sheets, websites, exhibitions, field trips, press conferences, radio/television talk shows and expert panels and educational meetings which Theron (2009:126) refers to forms of communication strategies which are short-term in nature and are formulated in such a way that participation becomes “a means to an end”.

2.4.2. Public Participation as Consultation

The objective of the second level of participation is to gather feedback on the analysis, alternatives and/or policy decisions which have been made. Craythorne (1997:99) maintains that consultation encompasses a two-way dialogue about societal issues or problems between the government and the public. In the context of the dialogue, information, feedback and advice are requested from the public. Examples of participatory consultative strategies include, requesting public comments through the use of focus group discussions, public meetings, briefings, surveys, telephone hotlines or through complaint registers (Theron, 2009:127).

2.4.3. Public Participation as Involvement

In framing public participation as involvement, change effected by the community or at grassroots level is required. Accordingly, this third form and level of public participation involves a consistent process of interaction between government and the public to safeguard public interests. Kok and Gelderbloem (1994:69) argue that despite the fact that this process is conceptualised as a two-way dialogue, the public

do not necessarily partake in the decisionmaking process. Examples of participation strategies to involve the public are workshops and deliberate polling. Additionally, Hanekom (1991:80) includes interest groups as part of the forms of public participation. Interest groups involve government engaging a group of up to ten community representatives to deliberate a certain issue based on common interests.

2.4.4. Public Participation as Collaboration

The manner in which government forms partnerships with the public in terms of the decisionmaking process is seen as the fourth level and also a collaborative means of public participation. The difference between this approach towards participation and the aforementioned efforts rests on the interactive manner in which the public is proactively involved in each step of the decisionmaking process. This interactive and two-way process is inclusive of the generation of alternatives and solutions to address the policy issue or problem. Theron (2009:115) stresses the need for this process to be managed properly in order for the public to have ownership of both the process and implementation of the programmes and projects that emanate from the public policy. Examples listed under this form of participation are the establishment of citizen advisory committees and participatory and consensus-building decisionmaking fora.

2.4.5. Public Participation as Empowerment

This final level of public participation places the final decisionmaking process in the hands of the recipients or beneficiaries for who the public policy has been intended. Theron (2009:117) defines this form of public participation as a process of self-mobilisation and proactive involvement in terms of crafting and sustaining the final outcome of the policy process. Theron (2009:122) contends that the manner in which the public participates in the planning process determines the sustainability of the policy implementation and ultimately developmental process. Citizen juries, the casting of ballots and delegated decisionmaking fora are typical forms of empowering participatory strategies (Theron, 2009:128). The process of voting is typically a

democratic approach in which the electorate selects eligible candidates to represent the interests of the public or those being governed.

In order to consolidate all the foregoing definitions of public participation, the US Government makes provision for public participation in their e-government strategy by articulating that public participation is achieved by providing “increased opportunities to participate in policymaking and to provide their Government with the benefits of their collective expertise and information” (The White House, 2009). Eversole (2012, 30) is, however, critical by indicating that in as much as there are positive aspects, participation may also be utilised by government to window dress the reality of socio-economic and cultural realities to advance a specific agenda. Eversole (2012:32) in his critique, however, agrees with earlier work by Fisher (2000) in pointing out that participation is an “elusive goal”, equating it to a mere illusion due to the manner in which it has been conceived and depicted which “makes it impracticable”. To this end, Davids (2005:24) points out that it is imperative for a variety of public participation strategies to be adopted to ensure that efforts to enhance public participation are somewhat guaranteed.

Furthermore, Davids (2005:25) argues that for this process to be effective, strategies should be tailor-made by government to the situation by combining the forms of public participation efforts with focused interventions. Gaventa (2005:27) concurs by confirming that the mode of participation should be modified as a process affecting “both sides of the equation: That is, to increase both the participation of civil society, and the responsiveness of government institutions.” It can therefore be argued that governance is likely to improve when the public is a collaborative partner and is involved in the decisionmaking process. Similarly, through the policy cycle, government can access and monitor policy interventions that result in greater efficiency and effectiveness with regard to service delivery.

In this regard, Swanepoel and De Beer (2011:50) suggest that the ultimate approach to improving public participation is to ensure that the public is fully mobilised and

must be able to participate at all levels in the policy cycle. Put in another way, the full participation of the public from policy initialisation, planning, decision-making, implementation, monitoring to evaluation of the policy, project and programme is key to the success of a developmental intervention. Theron (2009:127) cautions against using existing public participation efforts as “blueprints”, and suggests that tailor-made solutions should be utilised, taking into account the context and other extraneous factors, which in turn require “specific, relevant, or a combination of strategies.” Cornwall (2008:269) supports this by adding that it is important “to pay closer attention to who is participating, in what and for whose benefit.”

2.5. Summary

This chapter first outlined the broad concept of governance, its relationship to public participation and public policy. The clarifications of key concepts as they are used in the study followed. Next, the theoretical foundations of public participation provided the argument that although the absence of an ideal model of public participation exists, there were a number of considerations which could be useful. This led to a discussion of the key theories on public participation in order to better understand the concept. With this in mind, universally and internationally held values that are of importance were sourced from the literature.

The core values of public participation based on the IAP2 as well as the continuum of public participation in terms of the level of interaction with government was discussed briefly. After discussing the five levels of public participation in the last section, the next chapter focuses on the role of the media. In exploring the role of the media, it is important to establish the link between the free press and good governance within the context of public participation. It continues with an explanation of emerging forms of digital media and the role of social media in advancing public participation efforts.

Chapter 3 – Public Participation and Social Media

In this chapter, the definition, the role of the media and forms of digital media as a strategy of public participation are explained. The use of digital media and how it informs the understanding of social media to advance public participation subsequently follow. Next, a comparative analysis of various countries supports the argument that the use of social media may be used as a powerful mobilisation strategy by the public. The chapter concludes by providing some information regarding the Namibian context considered in chapter four.

3.1. Introduction

As an opening statement, it is useful to posit the following: while promoting openness, transparency and upholding the democratic rights of the public by inviting them to participate in decision-making, it is furthermore maintained that the opposite may also be true. To validate this train of thought, a description of contexts and situations that arise in countries in which curtailing the use of social media borders on infringing on the public's basic human rights is briefly provided in this chapter. First, however, the chapter begins with an overview of the role of the media in promoting public participation.

3.2. Public Participation and the Media

By establishing that public participation is one of the foundations of democracy in the previous chapter, it is also important to explore whether there is a link between the media and good governance. In exploring this, a related matter is to establish whether the free press furthers the goals of democracy, accountability and development.

It is therefore useful to elaborate on the trajectory of thought with regard to the media and the free press. Carlyle (1905:349) has credited the 18th century political philosopher Edmund Burke as being responsible for referring to the media as “the Fourth Estate” which expands the notion that the media, by being an independent entity, may hold government, among other institutions, accountable. Newman, Dutton and Blank (2012:7) support this by maintaining that the independence of the media allows the

public to scrutinise institutions by exposing them through publicising issues of public interest and ultimately forcing them to remain accountable to the public they serve. In the same vein, while the media may shape public opinion, they are not immune to the biases and political agendas of various societal groups.

Bhagwati (1995:60) argues that in many cases the freedom of the press is equally as important as those whose views they express. He goes on to mention that an impartial and free press should also cover news and the sentiments of the public, pointing out that news has a natural tendency of spreading. However, in order for the message to be conveyed in a powerful manner, information should have the “the incentive and ability to mobilize” the masses and the public to hold “meetings, marches, representations and petitions, [which are] surely difficult, if not impossible, in dictatorships” (Bhagwati, 1995:61). While Bhagwati’s work was largely informed by anecdotal information and the Indian context, other academics based their findings on empirical data to support his claims.

In this regard, Norris (2008) posits that countries classified as having a free press strengthens democracy and ultimately good governance. Using a variety of strategies to gauge press freedom, democracy and good governance, her research found that there was a “moderately strong correlation between countries with well-developed economies and a free press” (Norris, 2008:72). Using the Freedom House model, Norris concludes that “countries where much of the public has access to the free press usually have greater political stability, rule of law, government efficiency [...], regulatory quality, and the least corruption” (Norris, 2008:74).

From an African perspective, Nyamnjoh (2005:79) criticises the media for adopting a Western, yet partisan, highly politicised and militant role in Africa; thus, calling for a more appropriate, African definition of democracy. By contrasting the Western ideals of democracy which focuses on the universal human rights of people with the African conceptualisation of democracy which embraces “interdependence and competing cultural solidarities” (Nyamnjoh, 2011:28), he argues that the media is not necessarily

free from covering and supporting the interests of the various political groups and actors (Nyamnjoh, 2011:28). In as much as the media may convey the voice of democracy, it has the potential to play the opposite role in promoting an antidemocratic agenda in spreading propaganda, inciting fear, hatred and promoting disunity.

Nyamnjoh (2011:29) proposes an alternative approach to best respond to the African media dilemma by introducing and promoting the new forms of media such as the use of mobile technology, the internet, community radio, poster placards and advocates for “citizen journalism”. In his own words,

“The future for democracy and the relevance of journalism therein would have much to learn from the creative ways in which Africans are currently relating to innovations in ICTs. The same popular creativity that has been largely ignored by conventional journalism in the past is remarkable today all over Africa and amongst Africans in the diaspora” (Nyamnjoh, 2011:29).

Generally, and in support of Nyamnjoh, public participation efforts and strategies have evolved with regard to the use of ICT. Similarly, strategies to harness public participation are utilised and adapted to work related to enhancing participatory strategies. The most recent global developments in the ICT sector that are transforming communication and participation efforts have prioritised the dual role of ICT in enabling public participation (World Summit on the Information Society [WSIS], 2003). Dutton (2009:2) has argued that with the advent of ICT, the use of digital and social media, in enhancing accountability, is giving rise to a Fifth Estate. While possessing similar features to the Fourth Estate in that the information is free from state controls, the use of social media is uniquely grounded in the collaborative interests of individuals and opinion leaders as opposed to the press.

Hood (1991:6) argues that due to the increased use of ICT for service delivery, a greater emphasis is placed on service accountability and performance measurement as evidenced by increasing user responsiveness. Similarly, opportunities for wider public

participation have now become commonplace in an environment where the norm previously relied on top-down policy implementation. Given these developments, it may be argued that the traditional analytic PEST (political, economic, social and technological) framework has not yet evolved to respond to the manner in which government should be held accountable and to change through social media channels (CIPD, 2013). This information era also compels governments to adapt to these changes in deciphering the information found in the social domain in order to respond to public outcries of poor service delivery and unresponsiveness while simultaneously holding them to account. With these key works exploring and at the same time arguing that a link between the media and good governance exists in this section, the next part furthers the argument that the use of social media is not only necessary, but vital in terms of furthering the goals of public participation. Before expanding on the use of social media, a preliminary discussion of digital media and public participation is required.

3.3. Public Participation and Digital Media

The International Communications Union maintains that the growth of digital technology has bridged the digital divide between developed and traditionally developing countries where access to communication has often been cited as one of the key challenges to economic growth (2010, *The World in 2010*). The report cites the setup of at least 100000 annual phone masts providing more than 90 percent of the global population an opportunity to be reached and to be given access.

Stork and Calandro's (2014) study on internet access utilising mobile telephones in Namibia established that 81 percent of the sample had a social media account. In comparing the percentage of rural against urban users, the study also found that 85 percent of people in the rural areas were more likely to have social media account compared to 50 percent of their urban counterparts. Peters, Oren, & Bidwell (2012:2604) in their comparative study of Americans, Namibians, and expatriate Namibians found that there were 5 key areas of differences on the key motivation for joining Facebook. These were; the attitude toward Facebook friends, the manner in

which photos and people presented themselves, the content shared and finally, privacy issues.

On the use of applications and social media in South Africa, Mthembu (2014), an African National Congress (ANC) spokesperson issued a press release following the success of the ANC Western Cape Mxit application, which gained more than 400 000 subscribers comprising largely of 17 to 25 year olds. The press release, which introduces the `My ANC` app aims at providing young South Africans with the opportunity to actively engage with the political party, obtain information on service delivery and ANC events, voting and registering for the 2014 elections and details of their local authority councillors. This case illustrates that the use of a social media application as a strategy of participation for political means is fast gaining ground.

Farrell (2012:47) argues that in future, the study of digital media and its relationship with politics will be paradoxical in that there will be less scholarly research in each of the areas while technology and politics are fast becoming an integrated and unique field. It is therefore useful to define the term “digital media” and how it is used in the context of social media in the next section.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:61) defines digital media as any audio, video or graphic image which may be used or accessed through ICT and may be available as a compact disc (CD), digital video disc (DVD) or on the internet. Similarly, the use of mobile devices such as iPods and smartphones allow for digital media to be downloaded and experienced anywhere and anytime. The authors argue that in the context of social media, it is difficult to refer to digital media in isolation from defining Web 2.0 as the collaborative and participatory manner in which both on-line content and applications are constantly adapted, changed and altered by anyone. Chun, Shulman, Sandoval & Hovy (2010:2) build on this definition by relating it to how it is relevant to government by defining social media as a group of internet-based strategies that give government institutions the opportunity to nurture and connect with other role-players by utilising the approach and foundations of Web 2.0. The importance of Web 2.0 as central to how social media functions in government is explained next.

Scott (2006:345) maintains that although Web 2.0 has no bearing on the manner in which the internet operates technically, some key requirements are necessary in order for it to function. Firstly, in order to maintain page consistency and form, the use of a technique known as Asynchronous Java Script (AJAX) allows users to make comments and changes to the existing content of a web page without altering the main structure and layout of the page. Secondly, according to Scott (2006:346), the use of Adobe Flash allows users to include animated content, video and audio clips to the existing web content. Finally, the use of Really Simple Syndication (RSS) gives users the opportunity to submit the most recent content via blogs or online journals using a standardised format. Thus, Web 2.0 as it is used in this study refers to the platform utilised for the advancement of social media. How Web 2.0 is central to advancing public participation efforts is explained in the next section.

The manner in which Web 2.0 has been conceptualised and discussed in the preceding section makes clear reference to what Chun et al. (2010:2) denote as “a collection of social media through which individuals are active participants in creating, organising, editing, combining, sharing, commenting and rating Web content as well as forming a social network through interacting and linking to each other.” From this definition, the terms collaboration, sharing, engaging, interaction and transparency may be derived to correspond to the core features in terms of enhancing current public participation efforts through the use of social media across government. With social media becoming a popular term, its use and meaning have become quite difficult to define. The next section defines social media and how it may be used as a strategy of public participation.

3.4. Public Participation and Social Media

Sadeghi, (2012:126) concurs with Chun et al. (2010:2) on the conceptualisation of Web 2.0 by defining social media as a communication medium which connects users to each other by sharing ideas, opinions and information thereby providing meaningful dialogic and interactive opportunities. Similarly, Hansen et al. (2011:10), use “social media” as a term associated with the use of online services (such as MySpace, Facebook,

YouTube, Twitter and Tumblr) or more or less established categories of web services such as blogs or microblogs. The definition of social media has also been documented with the user in mind.

From the user's perspective, Bechmann and Lomborg (2012) identify three attributes in defining the concept. Firstly, the user is conceptualised to play a dual role – that of a participant and a producer. Secondly, by focusing on the user's ability to create, provide, censor or share information, the concept of “de-institutionalizing communication” defines social media use. Thirdly, the manner in which the user and that of the participants communicate are typically “interactive and are networked” (Bechmann & Lomborg, 2012:3). The description of these three features provide an interesting angle to the debate on public participation, given that the user may be either empowered or exploited, depending on the perspective one elects to use.

In this regard, Bechmann and Lomborg's (2012) work on the use of social media for participation resonates with the work of Harvard Professor Barbara Kellerman on followership. By distinguishing four typologies of followers, Kellerman (2007:87) argues that not only should followers be classified and treated differently from one another, the relationship with their leaders is a reciprocal one. In the same vein, by contending that while followers do not necessarily possess the ascribed authority, their collective power and ability to influence one another, particularly through social media and networks, should not be taken for granted (Kellerman, 2007:91). Hence, effective engagement generally takes place on all levels when people are given the freedom, support, knowledge and ability to influence decision-making while harnessing the power to produce desired effects through collective action.

Moving away from the user perspective, other definitions such as the one proposed by Scott (2006:345) classify social media to include social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Orkut and QQ, multimedia sharing sites such as YouTube, Flickr and SlideShare, microblogging services such as Twitter, Jaiku and Tumblr and Wikis, of which the most commonly used is Wikipedia. Boyd (2008:92) defines social media as

“an umbrella term that refers to the set of strategies, services and applications that allow people to interact with others using network technologies.” Put differently, the existence of social media not only precedes the era and strategies of social networking, it also includes other electronic communication systems such as email, the internet and voicemail.

While the emphasis of these broad definitions are on the categorisation of web services, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:61) refer to social media as a collection of internet-based applications which utilises the conceptual ideals of user-generated content (UGC) or Web 2.0. Hence, Magro, Ryan & Sharp (2009:4) suggest that social media falls within the category of the Web 2.0 phenomenon, which typifies content generated by the users themselves, the creation of online personas or identities and the building of social networks and relationships. Social media therefore carries great potential for participation. According to Bertot, Jaeger & Grimes (2010:267),

“Social media has four major potential strengths: collaboration, participation, empowerment and time. Social media is collaborative and participatory by its very nature as it is defined by social interaction. It provides the ability for users to connect with [one another] and form communities to socialise, share information, or to achieve a common goal or interest. Social media can be empowering to its users as it gives them a platform to speak. It allows anyone with access to the Internet the ability to inexpensively publish or broadcast information, effectively democratizing media. In terms of time, social media technologies allow users to immediately publish information in near-real time”.

Broom (2009:35) has emphasised the need for government to enhance its efforts in terms of fostering trust and developing its obligation to the public in accounting for the activities undertaken. The heightened use of both ICT and social media in recent years is increasingly redesigning the manner in which people communicate with the introduction of Web 2.0 or Government 2.0. (Gov 2.0) when used in the context of

government (O'Reilly, 2005). It is therefore useful to explain the importance of Web 2.0 in the next section.

The advent of Gov 2.0 allows for the corresponding use of social media as it expands possibilities for information sharing, interaction and participation across various role-players. Social media and the manner in which it has profoundly changed communication and engagement with the public they serve are aspects governments cannot afford to ignore. Broom's (2009) study highlighted the importance of the use of social media in public participation as a means of monitoring government performance. Lee, (2012:12) underscores the need for government to connect to the public by responding to their needs in providing feedback and information.

Eggers (2013:15), bearing the recipients of public services in mind, emphasised the need for government websites and social media platforms to focus on the public. This is supported by Warkentin et al. (2002:158) who found that e-government efforts are strongly encouraged when there is evidence of increased participation, transparency, openness and trust. Taylor-Smith and Lindner (2010) developed a framework for e-participation based on data gathered from a series of workshops. Their framework proposes that the use of social media should focus on the individual, have high entertainment and personal value, be both accessible and useable and at the same time allow for the engagement through the use of multimedia and communication channels. Bertot et al.'s (2010:266) findings resonate well with these recommendations which revealed that, in addition to creating a culture of transparency, their study on the use of ICTs and the use of social media illustrated cost reduction benefits.

Bretschneider & Mergel (2010:187) argue that social media is merely an extension of the digitalisation drive as these applications are now seen to feature frequently on the web portals of government organisations. Lindgren & Jansson (2013:164) draw distinctions between the manner in which previous e-government initiatives have been structured to reflect the mission and service priorities of the institution while social media is largely utilised as a means to interact with the public they serve. In addition to

this key difference, social media applications are usually hosted by third party providers and contain a more dynamic means of producing content which usually is not within the immediate control of government. Given this caveat, it is useful to determine to what extent governments have been using social media in terms of the levels of public participation.

3.5. The use of Social Media to Inform, Consult, Involve, Engage or Empower

According to the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), the very basic level of public participation focuses on the sending and receiving of information. Although this is the most basic level of public participation, it is also considered to be the most essential. Given that most of the early research on e-government was conducted in 2000, Gant and Gant (2002) in their report of e-governance found that governments worldwide were at the time investing in the use of ICTs in both internal operations and the provision of public services.

The report also found that quite a number of governments had launched online portals, which in many cases contained only information. However, the authors pointed out that there were even fewer sites that offered interaction opportunities with the institution. Similarly, the recent literature reviewed still reveals that the utilisation of social media by government institutions worldwide only focuses on the provision of information. Thomas and Streib (2003:101) found that among those countries fully implementing e-government strategies, the level of interaction was still very low, as the focus largely fell on merely providing information or creating awareness.

A decade later, with the evolution of ICT, Bechmann and Lomborg (2012:2) argue that the introduction of social media and its digital forms continue to predate the concept of the social network, the internet and other forms of one-to-one communication. This supports Boyd's (2008:92) earlier findings that suggest that social media is merely an extension of traditional media and electronic communication systems such as email, the internet and voicemail. Although this may appear superficial and almost insignificant, it

is useful to mention the impact and potential of the use of social media for public participation.

According to a report on the use of social technologies by the McKinsey Global Institute, Facebook has an estimated 1.1 billion active users worldwide with 56% indicating that they visit at least once a day followed by Twitter's 200 million and LinkedIn's 175 Million while YouTube has a membership base of 800 million (McKinsey Global Institute, 2012). The report indicated that the most common activities were the sharing of content followed by the commenting and providing feedback or opinions on products. In South Africa, more than 6.1 million belong to the Facebook community, 405 000 South Africans Tweet, 2.2 million are on LinkedIn and 6 million use Youtube. These statistics provide an indication of the potential of social media to engage the public. Similarly, the 2011 e-government survey by Norris and Reddick (2011) established that 67.5% of local governments in the United States use at least one social medium and among the social media channels Facebook (92.4%), Twitter (69.8%) and YouTube (45.3%) were the most popular communication channels used by governments.

In light of these statistics, governments may be required to enhance current public participation efforts through social media. The use of social media promotes a two-way form of information exchange for increased participation efforts and possibly a decrease in public cynicism or apathy towards government. Thus, the introduction of social media profiles such as that of Facebook may be introduced as virtual meeting places where the public are given the opportunity to comment on the profile post on a policy debate which in turn supplements and enhances a different form of participation to those who may not necessarily attend public gatherings or events. In this regard, Bretschneider & Mergel (2010:189) maintain that the advantage of using social media is that several participants create content which is disseminated freely. In response, the readers interact and respond accordingly by adding their own comments, responses or posts on government websites.

Lindgren & Jansson (2013:165) suggest that the use of social media may be considered as an additional strategy of public participation in order to supplement the other existing forms of interacting with government. Menser (2008:24) posits that the use of social media allows for users to interact in a manner which dissociates individuals from social constructions such as culture, class and other demographic boundaries in order to fully engage in the policymaking process. Against this background, the topic of social media and its potential advantages in promoting public participation are increasingly featured internationally.

Mainka et al. (2013:9), in their research on government and social media, scrutinised 31 informational world cities which are classified as such due to their high internet penetration rates and found that the use of social media was invaluable in reaching a large percentage of the public. Bretschneider & Mergel (2010:189) further found that several governments have embarked on investigations to explore the use of social media in attempt to harness the innovative potential it brings for improved service delivery efforts. Kreis (2013:42) conducted an international study by evaluating the interactions of German, American, Brazilian, Indian and South Korean citizens with their respective governments. His study concluded that over 40 percent of those surveyed indicated a strong preference for using social media to access government with regard to policy debates and decision-making.

Similarly, in a Namibian study on the use of social media, Haiping (2013) found that participants conceptualise social media only as a platform for basic communication, bridging relationships, expanding their social network while at the same time publicly reflecting their ideals and expectations. The findings also showed that social networking websites like Facebook were the dominantly used types of social media which were mainly accessed through mobile phones. The study found that there were concerns with regard to the control, content and privacy issues with regard to sharing digital content on social media.

Consequently, it was very difficult to find many success stories regarding how the use of social media in government is utilised beyond the first two levels of participation, namely to inform and to consult in the IAP2 literature reviewed above. In this regard, Charalabis & Loukis (2011:12) argue that social media cannot be successfully used in the current context, organisational culture and bureaucratic structures of how governments are set up. They propose that the successful implementation and use of any social media strategy will materialise only when structural changes to the organisation will encourage the flow of information via these new means of participation. The findings of this study point out that the creation of new forms of communication channels such as e-participation conduits may give rise to new organisational forms and units required to manage and analyse the emerging data which has been generated through these channels (Charalabis & Loukis, 2011:13). Therefore, in order to monitor, evaluate and make sense of the data, government officials managing these new units are required to have a unique set of analytical and specialised skills to manage the communication and processing of these new data sets which the users themselves have created.

In the same vein, Landsbergen (2010:138) points out that the use of social media increases the continued reliance on social networks and human interactions. These networks depend on instantaneous, immediate and interactive feedback. At the same time there is a fine line between the private and the public domain and subsequently what is exposed and shared by those in the network through various communication and media formats. It is against this that the issue of whether government is ready to introduce this new medium of communication in the current context and bureaucratic manner in which it is structured remains to be seen. Hence, Landsbergen (2010:139) poses a very relevant question: “In what way can the government use social media to do things differently and in more effective ways than before?”

In response to this, it seems plausible that for governments to promote openness, democracy, accessibility and accountability, the very policies that are formulated are required to model these very values. LaPaze (2011:85) concluded that the use of social media in government does not correspond to these new developments and that

governments are lagging behind in terms of their level of responsiveness. Bertot et al. (2010:54) found that, although governments are required to be responsive to the feedback provided by the public on service delivery issues, it is of little (if any) consequence to the various government institutions receiving such feedback.

It may, however, firstly be argued that government and the corresponding legislative framework are habitually sluggish in terms of responding to the speed at which the public provide feedback and information on policies, projects and programme outcomes. It is therefore important for government to keep up the pace and update the manner in which it responds to real issues in real time (Bertot, 2010:53–59).

Secondly, the use of social media requires constant attention with regard to frequent posting, the monitoring and responses to discussions and the removal of old information. Therefore, Hrdinova, Helbig & Peters (2010:19) argue that the key to using social media across all five levels of the participation spectrum is to follow a structured approach comprising eight key components. The authors (Hrdinova, Helbig & Peters, 2010:19) argue that the introduction of a social media policy may be considered to accommodate all five levels of public participation.

These key components entail ensuring that employee accessibility and the responsibility for account management are addressed. The acceptable use issues and the conduct of employees when they engage online should be explained. At the same time, the security issues, the nature and type of content as well as the legal issues require clarification. Finally, Hrdinova et al. (2010:19) maintain that in developing a social media policy to promote authentic and empowering participation, the expected conduct of citizens require explanation. Accordingly, while this section emphasises that the development and implementation of a well-crafted and universal policy has been highlighted as a critical success factor to guide the use of social media for public participation, there is still an evident lack in the literature with regard to the direction and the use of social media in government.

There are, however, various models which propose a series of transitional phases which do not necessarily conceptualise an envisioned outcome or end goal. It appears that additional work on the use of social media, e-government and the relationship to public policy is required with the rapid advancements and developments in the ICT field. Enli and Moe (2013:637) contend that while the use of social media is increasingly taking prominence, particularly with politicians during an election period, it is still unclear as to how the information posted is used, by whom it is used and for what purposes it is used.

Apart from the foregoing challenges in terms of reaping the actual benefits of the use of digital and social media, an equally pressing issue is that of the digital divide which requires attention, particularly in countries with moderately low internet connectivity and high levels of illiteracy and poverty (UNDESA, 2012:11). The “digital divide” is generally defined by the United Nations Telecommunications Union (ITU) as “the difference in levels of ICT access between developed and developing countries” (UNDESA, 2012:12). According to the recent global survey report by the United Nations, there is a growing trend for more privileged members of society to access and use technology. In a sense, as these advantaged groups reap the benefits of technology, they become even more advantaged.

While it has been useful to provide the background on how the use of digital media and social media promotes public participation, it is also necessary to include research on the use of social media and public participation conducted in Australia, Scandinavia, Asia and the United States of America to provide a comparative analysis, including different regions and countries, in this study, thus avoiding an over-accentuation of the most popular examples which are briefly mentioned in the next section. It must be noted, however, that with the proliferation of digital technology, people worldwide access the internet and social media through their mobile phones (Aguilar et al., 2010). Aguilar et al. (2010) contend that the next information revolution will take place in across Africa, Brazil, Russia, India, and China.

Interestingly, Mourtada and Salem's (2011) study on the impact of Facebook and Twitter in the Middle East and North Africa argue that the revolutions known as the "Arab Spring" were the resultant use of Facebook and Twitter. The authors attribute the use of social media in fuelling the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and across North Africa. In their report commissioned by the Dubai School of Government, the authors concluded that "the growth of social media in the Middle East and the shift in usage trends have played a critical role in mobilization, empowerment, shaping opinions, and influencing change" (Mourtada & Salem, 2011:24).

In Russia, the use of social media assisted Russians in their protests against Putin prior to the Russian elections (The Guardian, 2011). It is not surprising that in the past three years, recent legislation constraining the use of social media has been passed after being approved by the Russian parliament in August 2014 (Reuters, 2014). Similarly, the Boston bombing and how it was covered through Twitter are legendary in the sense that they will be repeated and cited as cases to curtail the use of social media. In revealing the views on followership, Kellerman (2007:91) has pointed out that developments in the technological and cultural realm have given rise to a breed of followers who "either challenge or circumvent the leaders" altogether.

In support of Kellerman, Elshout (2012), a Dutch journalist, claims that the digital revolution has catapulted society towards a power shift heading for widespread democratisation. In an online newspaper article, he maintains that social media has provided an equally powerful forum for political activists and the masses to take stances on significant issues. Given the mobilisation power of social media, the next section considers the use of social media across Australia, Scandinavia, Asia, the United States of America (USA) and Africa in the context of public participation and corresponding readiness to embrace the use of social media.

3.6. The use of Social Media for Public Participation: A Comparative Analysis

The following section provides a brief comparison of various countries and significant developments with regard to the use of social media for public participation.

3.6.1. Australia

Hartz-Karp & Carson (2009:30) in their study on public participation in Australia found that the process of ensuring participation is in its infancy and that given this information the best approach would be to involve them in the initial stages of public policymaking and particularly during the agenda-setting phase. According to Hartz-Karp & Carson (2009:31) by creating an environment of deliberative democracy, the public is able to express themselves individually as well as in collective terms. By creating these opportunities to meet and collectively voice their opinions at public meetings organised by the government prior to the elections, the authors found that the Citizens' Parliament was a valuable source of information and provided ideas on how the government would be able to meet its e-government plan. The Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, has maintained a Twitter account which has become a noteworthy strategy during the election period, during which it has been utilised as a medium to disseminate updates on campaign programmes and stances on policy (Crawford, 2009:530).

3.6.2. Scandinavia

Hellman's (2011:8) study conducted in Norway supports the findings and work of Hrdinova et al. (2010:19) who maintain that a social media policy to promote authentic participation requires governments to develop a well-written and well-monitored social media strategy with a clear link to government policy. In Sweden, the Constitution embraces the ideal of democracy and, thus, to increase public participation efforts, the government has embarked on a countrywide mass education campaign to assist in providing a measure of public accountability. In Denmark, the eGovernment programme embraces the belief that the information society should be inclusive (The Danish Government eGovernment Strategy 2011-2015, 2011). To support this, they have invested in research, technology and ICT utilisation, particularly at municipal level, to engage and improve service delivery and grassroots participation (The Danish Government eGovernment Strategy 2011-2015, 2011). Despite the availability and access to social media, only the use of Facebook is widely used in Denmark. Approximately 2 million of the 5.5 million Danish people use Facebook, estimated to be the highest Per capita in the world (Priestley, 2013).

3.6.3. Asia

A recent study in China considered the role of social media in providing information and raising awareness of promoting fiscal transparency in government policy (Zhang & Chan, 2013:71). This is supported by Kash (2011:25) who contends that the use of social media in government is useful in enhances public participation. Moon (2002:34) suggests that the use of more interaction and participation opportunities would assist government in highlighting policy implementation challenges.

The “Singapore ONE” initiative is a world leader in terms of the integrated multimedia manner of information and service delivery which utilises broadband networks and applications. This national e-government programme approaches the rendering of services to the public in an interactive, personalised, animated and multimedia manner throughout the country. Despite this innovative and novel approach, another study considering Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Hong Kong found that with all the technological advancements only 65% of both private and public sector organisations do not have a social media policy and that only 50% of those who do monitor the use of social media at all (McNamara, 2011:5).

3.6.4. USA

Government web portals need not necessarily be just a site devoted to providing information about government and its services, they could be utilised to promote and exchange information and knowledge among the public and government institutions in order to facilitate participation in enhancing service delivery and collective decision-making. A study commissioned by the United States Congress found that the more government institutions used social media, the more apparent it became that their existing legislation on e-government was very limited in terms of the scope of email utilisation and static web content (United States Congress, 2002).

Furthermore, across the USA, there is a directive for government institutions to include the option of interacting with the content in terms of enhancing public participation. In line with this directive, a number of institutions have opted to use social media as a

means of not only providing information, but also increasing the levels of public participation (comScore, Inc., 2009). In 2009, the government conducted an outreach programme to the Spanish-speaking community in the USA by using social media (Skirbunt, Martinez & Meskell, 2009:16). The authors found that not only do the majority of the Hispanic population spend more time on social media, their utilisation of social media exceeds more than 70 percent in comparison to 40 percent of the US population. This outreach programme thus formed the basis of future government strategies to reach a larger segment of the US population.

Another American study found that individuals not only visit government websites, they also utilise social media to keep abreast of government activities (Smith, 2010:8) On the part of public service employees, Hrdinova et al. (2010:17) found that their use of social media was focused on communicating official interests, for professional growth, in addition to their personal use. Crawford (2009:530) in her study on social media found that the new modes of communication and social media platforms provide politicians access to a wider populace by building trust and engaging in policy dialogue. Citing President Obama's use of Twitter during his 2008 presidential campaign, Crawford (2009) found that Obama's campaign did not reply to followers, nor acknowledge receipt. Despite the absence of a two-way dialogue between the US President and the public, Crawford's (2009:531) findings echo Enli and Moe's (2013:637) work regarding the use of social media as increasingly taking prominence. The challenge remains in uncovering and explaining how the information will ultimately benefit the public.

3.6.5. Africa

On the African continent, South Africa is the leader in terms of e-government progress, being dubbed the largest "E economy", by advancing e-commerce and the established gateway to Southern Africa (Commonwealth Working Group on Electronic Commerce, 2000). Van Belle and Cupido (2013) found in their study of the use of mobile telephones to increase public participation in South Africa found that government's efforts in terms of utilising the mobile telephone is largely elementary, remaining at the level of only providing basic information to the public. Similarly, Cloete (2012) found that the

Department of Home Affairs were using short message services (SMS) to communicate with the public. Van Belle and Cupido (2013) concluded that the use of mobile telephones, which is an important medium of communicating with the public is not effectively utilised by government. The authors also found that the sample of respondents in their study perceived the use of mobile telephones created the perception that not only would government's use of mobile telephone devices be useful. Another important insight of Van Belle and Cupido's (2013) research points out that government ignoring the potential of utilising the benefits of using mobile telephones would affect the dual relationship between the government and the public, either positively or negatively with regard to issues of service delivery.

On the use of social media, Tweetminster and Portland analysed the use of Twitter and found that, in 2011, South Africa sent twice as many Tweets (5,030,226) as the next most active African country, namely Kenya (2,476,800). Nigeria (1,646,212), Egypt (1,214,062) and Morocco (745,620) make up the remainder of the top five most active countries in Africa (How Africa Tweets, 2014). The African National Congress (ANC) similarly launched a mobile application strategy "My ANC", utilising Mxit, to communicate across South Africa on matters of the ANC, voting, service delivery and a host of public service issues well before the election (Mtembu, 2014). Commenting on the political party's use of the chat-focused mobile social network, Mtembu (2014) quoted the Mxit Chief Operations Officer, who stressed the importance of the two-way communication opportunities the strategy brings in building social capital and promoting participation efforts.

In East Africa, governments have begun placing restrictions on the use of social media. Closely following South Africa with regard to the utilisation of ICTs, Kenya has joined Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan and Uganda in implementing legislation on internet surveillance and censorship by the government even without valid and applicable legal requests (Maina, 2012).

On the Namibian front, there is public concern that the recent discussions in parliament on the censorship of the use of social media borders on violating the Namibian Constitutional principles of free speech and democracy (Shinovene, 2014:1–2). This introduces a key concern with regard to how governments and in particular authoritarian regimes have and are in the process of introducing control to contain and censor free, available and instantaneous information. With this in mind, the next section argues that despite the advantages of the use of social media, there may be a downside as well.

3.7. The Advantages and Disadvantages of using Social Media for Public Participation

As a point of departure from the previous section, the issue of whether there is indeed a downside to the use of social media remains unanswered. According to Mourtada and Salem (2011:24), the digital revolution has enabled the public to demand greater transparency and accountability from their governments as evidenced by the uprisings in the Middle East. Beginning in Tunisia and spreading to Egypt, the use of social media and digital technology rapidly catapulted the Arab world into political upheaval. Coined “liberation technology” by Diamond (2010:5), the use of digital forms of media through the use of mobile phones, the internet and social media allowed a new generation of young and connected citizens to protest against their governments. In stark contrast to empowering activists under authoritarian rule are those in power who equally possess the ability to harness them. Mourtada and Salem (2011:24) claim that the Egyptian government of Hosni Mubarak deliberately barred and manipulated the country’s communications infrastructure during the uprising.

Similarly, following Iran’s Green Revolution on the 23rd of June 2009, Morozov (2011:10) claims that the Iranian police reportedly tracked the insurgents who contested the officially declared victory of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad through their electronic trails. Two days later, on the 25th of June 2009, Iranians experienced an uprising which continued until the 14th of February 2010.

In advancing the argument that the use of digital media has a negative side, Morozov (2011:7) contends that a public delusion with regard to the 'dark side' of the internet exists. In his recent publication, he challenges the notion that the use of ICT and particularly social media reign victorious in advancing democratic efforts rather than suppressing them. In this regard, his argument is that these new forms of digital access to information have provided opportunities for autocratic and repressive governments to spread propaganda while bordering on the infringement of human rights (Morozov, 2011:10).

In as much as social media may be utilised by oppressive regimes as a vehicle for propaganda, the misuse of social media in furthering the agenda of various interest groups may also be relevant. For example, Namibia was in the international spotlight in January 2014 when it received negative attention for the auctioning of a black rhino hunting permit by the Namibian government. The government's best intentions in channelling the proceeds of the hunt to the Conservation Trust Fund for Namibia's Black Rhino were overshadowed by controversy emanating from the attacks by various international conservationists and activists groups over social media. According to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) News, the event resulted in the submission of an online petition with over 80 000 signatures against the auction (BBC, 2014).

Given these examples, it may be concluded that the use of digital and social media may be utilised both for the public good or to plot and curtail all forms of democratic efforts, depending on whose perspective is adopted.

In conclusion, the use of ICT and the proliferated use of digital and social media arguably comprise a social and technological revolution which, if appropriately harnessed by government, has the potential to support the design, development and implementation of sound public policies. Cloete (2012) suggests that the cost implications of using ICT strategies and in particular, mobile devices would increase the demand for improved service delivery and a reduction of costs against the benefits derived from the services. To underscore the importance of this two-way approach, the

author also indicated the constraints which "...include a lack of political will and support; a lack of strong and consistent leadership; a weak and contradictory IT governance framework; and continuous political and bureaucratic infighting." (Cloete, 2012:138). It is further argued that the manner in which governments are structured, organised and how they communicate with the public they serve, have not yet evolved to respond to this new social and technological revolution. Henceforth, the typical response to these new forms of participation focuses on censoring, directing or avoiding the use of social media.

3.8. Summary

The chapter introduced public participation in the context of the debates regarding the free media and its relevance for democracy and the advancement of good governance. By arguing that a link exists between the use of media for public participation and good governance, an introduction and overview of the use of social media followed. A comparative analysis of various countries across the globe regarding how social media is utilised is outlined and paves the way for a critical analysis of whether the use of social media has a downside. By introducing this debate, the key arguments used to introduce the case study in the next chapter prove to be relevant. The following chapter will deal with the Namibian political, economic, social, technological context, legislative and environmental issues and readiness to utilise social media as a strategy for public participation.

Chapter 4 – Public Participation in Namibia: Legislation, Policy and Institutionalisation

This chapter highlights the legislative and enabling framework on an international level, dealing with privacy issues, the right to information and access to information. In the Namibian context, the e-government environment and in particular the e-government policy and state of evolution with regard to progress will be discussed as it relates to the challenges of promoting equitable access to information. Considering the Namibian context, this chapter explores the extent to which social media has been utilised in terms of harnessing it as a strategy to enhance public participation. The goal is to examine the political, socio-economic, technological and legal and environmental context within which this study falls. Existing legislative, regulatory and policy mechanisms are examined to assess how they either enhance or inhibit the current modes of public participation and its institutionalisation in Namibia's public service.

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapters have provided the framework for public participation and have introduced the use of digital and social media and their importance for policymaking. With the abundance and use of ICT and digital devices, access to information and communication is rapid and instantaneous not only internationally, but also to many Namibians. This may be seen as a serious challenge to government and public institutions. For example, within minutes after the body of a murdered victim was found, gruesome images of both the body and the crime scene were circulated across social media. The outburst of "citizen journalism" (Nyamnjoh, 2011:28) reporting on police inefficiency and poor response time brought the Namibian Police Force into the spotlight, despite official attempts to cover up their blunders. This incident provides an opportunity to examine the Namibian context in which the concept of public participation is analysed in terms of its political, socio-economic and technological dimensions in the following paragraphs.

4.2. Public Participation in Namibia: The Context

Overall, according to the World Bank's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CIPA) Survey, Namibia has been found to be well rated on good governance and ranks highly among the other sub-Saharan countries in Africa scoring a 4 out of 5 on average (World Bank, 2013). Namibia is a Constitutional democracy which subscribes to the ideals of the separation of powers, an independent judiciary executive and the legislature that provide for adequate checks and balances and therefore limit opportunities for corruption.

Yet, there is room for improvement as Transparency International ranks Namibia 57th (out of 177 countries) globally on the perceived levels of public sector corruption as reported by the 2013 Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International, 2014). With the mid-range indicating a score of less than 50 out of 100 as perceived to have a serious corruption problems, Namibia falls short with 5 points with its score of 45. Comparatively, Botswana ranks 30th with a score of 64, followed by Cape Verde which ranks 41st with a score of 58. Rwanda ranks 49th with a score of 53, Mauritius ranks 52nd with a corresponding score of 52 and Lesotho ranks 55th with a score of 49. Namibia is ahead of Ghana which is number 46th and ranks 63rd while South Africa is 72nd with a score of 42.

Accordingly, oversight institutions such as the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), Office of the Ombudsman, the Public Service Commission (PSC), Social Security Commission (SSC), the Namibian Police Force (NAMPOL), Defence Force (NDF), Prison Services, the Auditor and Attorney General are active or being strengthened (Republic of Namibia, 1990). With the drive to quell corruption, Constitutional amendments introduced in 2010 allowed for the establishment and promulgation of the Anti-Corruption Act of 2003, as a constitutionally enshrined institution in 2010.

Hence, there is a normative widespread respect for accountability, transparency and adherence to the rule of law. The government gives emphasis to general political

neutrality and impartiality in the public service. The political dimension in which Namibia finds itself is explained next.

4.2.1. The Namibian Political Context

After celebrating its 24th year of independence from South Africa, Namibia continues to experience peace and political stability. As a multi-party democracy which embraces the ideals of popular participation, it fosters healthy political competition and multi-party presidential and National assembly elections take place every five years.

The dominant South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) won a two-thirds majority vote during the 2009 elections against the official opposition party, the Rally for Democracy and Progress Party (RDP). The current president, Hifikepunye Pohamba, will be preceded by the Prime Minister Hage Geingob who is anticipated to run for president as SWAPO's candidate in the general elections scheduled later in 2014. Given this politically stable and democratic background, the avenues for public participation are available through various means, providing citizens with the opportunity to engage on many levels. This has bearing on the economy, inequality and poverty levels which are briefly explained hereafter.

4.2.2. The Namibian Socio - economic Context

Namibia is a country of contrasts, spreading over a vast 825 615 km² with a population size of only 2 182 852 (Mundi Index, 2014). There are immense areas of underdevelopment which consist of the coastal areas, desert dunes, semi-arid mountainous terrain and unblemished plains. Namibia's diverse population consists of approximately 9 different ethnic groups, namely the Owambos, the Hereros, the Kavangos, the people of the Zambezi, the San, the Namas, the Damaras, the Rehoboth Basters and the Caucasians. Although English is the official language, there are thirteen recognised national languages (Frydman, 2011:181).

Namibia scores a 2 out of 7 in terms of the Freedom in the World 2014 rankings, characterised as “free” which is extremely positive for the country, as 1 represents the highest and ultimate level of freedom. Similarly, in 2014, the Worldwide Press Freedom Index of Reporters without Borders retains Namibia as number 22 out of 180 countries. In addition to these remarkable accolades, the last African Media Barometer (AMB) self-assessment of the media situation in Namibia took place in 2011 and the country scored an overall 2.7 out of 5. This exercise involves obtaining an independent panel of 10–12 media practitioners, experts and people from civil society to assess the country context relating to the media every two to three years. The outcome of the discussions is a country report which indicates the consolidated self-assessment panel ratings according to the freedom of expression, media landscape, broadcasting regulations and media practice.

Namibia is privileged to access a wide variety of media which include five daily newspapers, two television broadcasting stations, a number of periodicals and local magazines while the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation boasts ten local language radio stations (African Media Barometer, 2011:6). Independent “watchdog” bodies and institutions ensure that government activities are well monitored (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1990). In line with these contrasts, the changes brought about by technology, the use of ICT and communication, the discussion which follows regarding the technological dimension is relevant to public participation efforts.

The Namibian economy is intertwined and dependent on its neighbour, South Africa. The Namibian dollar is pegged to the South African rand and as such, developments in the Namibian economy closely mirror its counterpart in terms of trade, investment and fiscal policy. Despite being classified as an upper middle income country by the World Bank, Namibia’s per capita income of \$5,610 (2012, Atlas method) illustrates a massive discrepancy in terms of the reality on the ground.

According to the latest Namibia Labour Force Survey conducted in 2012 (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2013:13), the official unemployment rate of 27.4% in terms of the

broad definition may be misleading as there are huge inequality and income disparities. Namibia's income distribution is among the highest ranges of inequality worldwide with a Gini coefficient of 0.58 as highlighted in the fourth National Development Plan (Republic of Namibia, 2012:9). Namibia is ranked 128th out of 187 countries surveyed in the 2012 Human Development Report (World Bank, 2014). The country is marked by widespread poverty and the stable economic growth has done little in terms of addressing the severe unemployment challenges. These challenges affect Namibian society across various levels and may also impact on participation levels as discussed next.

4.2.3. The Namibian Technological Context

In this regard, Namibia is not bound by restrictions on accessing the Internet. However, the Communications Act of 2009 (Republic of Namibia, 2009) affords government the privilege to monitor internet access and email utilisation with the endorsement of the courts. In 2009, the ICT policy was launched and encompasses broad ICT policy guidelines which also allow for more focused policies on broadcasting, postal services and the use of and access to information technology (IT). Furthermore, as a joint initiative of government, the private sector and state-owned enterprises, the establishment of multi-purpose community centres (MPCCs) aim to provide access and means to information and services (African Media Barometer, 2011:8).

This section provided an analysis of the Namibian context for public participation according to various dimensions. An overview of the policies and legislation to further and accommodate public participation is discussed next.

4.2.4. Public Participation in Namibia: Policies and Legislation

As a starting point, the principles of public participation are enshrined in the Namibian Constitution (Republic of Namibia, 1990). Each section and each part that refer to public participation are mentioned briefly.

4.2.4.1. The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia

Preamble

In the Constitutional preamble, the “Namibian people” makes reference to the public. This is defined in more detail in Chapter 2 in terms of Namibian citizenship (Republic of Namibia, 1990).

Chapter 2, Article 4

The public, as referred to in the Constitution (Republic of Namibia, 1990) defines the Namibian people. It is specified in terms of the various virtues of their various categories of citizenship. This definition suggests that foreigners or people who are not classified as Namibian citizens are not necessarily part of the public. Although this has brought about some debate with regard to the rights of non-Namibian people, other parts of the Constitution uphold the universal rights of people widely in Namibia.

Chapter 3, Article 17: Political Activity

Article 17 of the Namibian Constitution elaborates on the fundamental freedoms and rights of the public while making provision for all citizens of Namibia to participate in the conduct of public affairs directly or through elected representatives. The clause makes reference to the inalienable right to participate in “peaceful political activity intended to influence the composition and policies of the Government” and is explicit about the democratic necessity of the public “...to participate in the conduct of public affairs, whether directly or through freely chosen representatives” (Republic of Namibia, 1990).

Chapter 3, Article 21: Fundamental Freedoms

The Namibian Constitution, as the founding document for the Republic of Namibia, provides the foundational principles of all legislation and policies. The departure point has always been to protect the universal and fundamental freedoms required in a democratic society. In Chapter 3, Article 21(a), the “freedom of speech and

expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media” are protected as fundamental rights (Republic of Namibia, 1990).

Chapter 12, Article 108: Powers of Regional Councils

Although this clause in the Namibian Constitution (Republic of Namibia, 1990) refers to the powers and functions of Regional Councils, it addresses the issues of public participation by allowing them to pass by-laws to govern their respective regions.

Other legislation pertaining to public participation is outlined in accordance with the Acts discussed below.

4.2.4.2. Protection of Information Act of 1982

There is no legislation in place to ensure access to information. As one of the shortcomings, the Protection of Information Act (Republic of Namibia, 1982) restricts public servants from providing information to the public.

4.2.4.3. The Regional Councils Act of 1992

Section 11(c) of the Regional Councils Act (Republic of Namibia, 1992) that restricts regional councils from convening a meeting during any period during which the National Council is in session. In the context of public participation, this provision allows the regional representative in the National Council an opportunity to be part of any regional meetings, thereby creating an opportunity for the constituents, councillors and other interested parties to interact with their representative in the National Council during recess.

4.2.4.4. The Decentralisation Enabling Act of 2000

The Decentralisation Enabling Act (Republic of Namibia, 2000) was promulgated as a mechanism of providing the public with the opportunity to contribute to the decisions which affect their lives. In many ways, it was envisaged to create participatory democracy at grassroots level. Godana and Naimhwaka (2002:3) maintain that the objective of decentralisation is to develop the Namibian people in social, economic

and cultural ways by promoting their rights to participate in National ideals and values.

4.2.4.5. Communications Act 8 of 2009

The Communications Act of 2009 (Republic of Namibia, 2009) was promulgated to regulate the media sector and operates on the ideals of promoting diverse, free and independent media activities. The Act has been controversial as it contains clauses which undermine press freedom. Part 6, in particular, outlines the interception of telecommunications and details the establishment of interception centres and the corresponding duties attached to interception.

The previous sections dealt with an overview of the political, socio-economic, and technological context in Namibia. An overview of the legislative and policy context pertaining to public participation followed. It is, however, not enough to conclude the section without including the Namibian environmental context as it relates to public participation.

4.2.5. The Namibian Environmental Context

As indicated in the previous paragraph, the traditional PEST analysis has evolved to include the legal and environmental perspective to provide a holistic overview of the context. In terms of the environment, Namibia is bordered by Angola in the north, Zambia and Zimbabwe in the north-east, and Botswana and South Africa in the south. Ruppel (2008:101) points out that despite being favourably located along the Atlantic Ocean in the west, the cold Benguela current influences the terrain, making Namibia primarily vulnerable to climate change.

Climate change in Namibia, according to Karuaihe et al. (2007:34) influences the basic needs of the populace in terms of their ability to access key resources. The authors postulate that the effects of climate change have a domino effect, further depriving the rural majority from benefiting from the scarce environmental resources. Thus, the development of integrated mitigation strategies through public participation efforts for the environment is vital for socio-economic development. Ruppel

(2008:103) suggests that additional means of providing the public with information access, raising awareness and enhancing public participation efforts are required.

In underscoring the need for public participation towards advancing democracy and the development agenda, the sections above provided an overview of the Namibian context. The legislative and policy environment supporting public participation in Namibia is discussed next.

4.3. Developmental Policies, Programmes and Projects for Public Participation

4.3.1. Vision 2030

Namibia's Vision 2030 was launched by the Founding President, Dr Sam Nujoma, in June 2004. The vision's rationale is to provide long-term alternative policy scenarios on the future course of development in the country at different points in time up until the target year of 2030. Vision 2030 centres on the attainment of eight themes which centre on Inequality and Social Welfare; Human Resources Development and Institutional Capacity Building; Macro-economic issues; Population, Health and Development; Namibia's Natural Resources Sector; Knowledge, Information and Technology; and other factors of the External Environment.

The National Vision upholds an ideal milieu in which the principles of good governance are critical. Hence, the provision of information and public participation are key to ensuring Namibia's development.

4.3.2. National Development Plans

Vision 2030 regards the sequential five-year National Development Plans (NDPs) as the main vehicles for achieving its long-term objectives. NDP4 embraces 3 predominant goals. The first of these goals prioritises high and sustained economic growth, followed by the second, namely increased income equality, and, finally, employment creation.

In addition to these goals, the logistics, tourism, manufacturing and agriculture sector have been given priority and will rise to the challenge of improving economic growth.

4.3.3. Universal Access and Service Policy for Information and Communications Technologies

The Universal Access and Service Policy for Information and Communications Technologies was launched in 2012 and was developed against the backdrop of the vision and the NDPs to reflect the policy's purpose to provide all Namibians with access to government information, technology and services. This policy is also aligned to the Overarching Information Communications Technology (ICT) Policy for the Republic of Namibia launched in 2009 and other related national policies pertaining to the media, broadcasting and ICT.

The policy aims at boosting public participation and efforts by the government in obtaining information from the public and ensuring representation at all levels of the Namibian society. The ultimate goal of the policy is to ensure effective, efficient and transparent service delivery as well as to enhance accountability (Namibia Press Agency, 2014).

4.4. Public Participation in Namibia: The Scope and Nature of Institutionalisation

The Namibia Vision 2030 and the National Development Plans provide the national planning framework for the decentralisation process and institutionalisation of public participation.

Through the constitutional provisions, the regional government structures, the local government structures and the National Council are well placed to facilitate the discussions between the Namibian public and Namibian Parliament. The Regional Councils have been established to expedite public discussions with a wide audience ranging from local and traditional authorities, faith-based and community-based

organisations and other key stakeholders at regional level on issues of national concern, policies and legislation.

The parliamentary fora provide adequate opportunities and provision for public participation at regional level to give their comments, concerns and ideas around the various government policies. The National Assembly, which is the lower chamber of Parliament, has a total of 78 members while the upper chamber, the National Council consists of 26 members who are-elected and are nominated by each Regional Council based on the system of proportional representation. By virtue of the fact that these are elected representatives, it may be argued that there is a systemic and structural provision for public participation in Namibia (Keulder, 2005:2).

4.5. Public Participation in Namibia: A Social Media Perspective

4.5.1. Current Reality / Practice

This study argues that Namibia, backed by the constitutional provisions of a true democracy, embraces the notion of public participation. Hopwood (2008:98) maintains that current efforts for public participation have afforded the Namibian people the opportunity to elect their leaders. Hopwood (2008:99), however, argues that public participation in Namibia has not progressed to ensure active engagement in policymaking, with the process solely confined to electing leaders. He claims that civic society and organisations are reluctant to participate in policy formulation to “avoid political controversies.”

Hopwood’s conclusions correspond to findings on previous research undertaken by Keulder (2005). Keulder (2005:4) argues that the low levels of public participation in Namibia may be attributed to a number of factors ranging from the organisers’ inefficiency, poor preparation (from both sides), publicity of public meetings and the complexity of the participation process to language barriers.

Tyson (2014), a lecturer at the University of Namibia (UNAM) contends that the rise in the use of social media in Namibia has become an increasingly popular area of research among academics. In 2014 alone, three final year students from the UNAM

investigated the use of social media. In elaborating on the findings of the students' research, Tyson (2014) indicated that one of the research topics which looked at the media habits of Namibians in Windhoek and Rundu revealed that newspapers and social networks were more popular in Rundu than they were in Windhoek. Similarly, the study found that Facebook was the social media network of choice in both Rundu and Windhoek, with fewer respondents indicating a liking for Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp or Google +. Citing another student's research, Tyson mentioned another study which looked at the effects of social media and video games on the academic performance of students at UNAM. The study found that Facebook (90 percent) was not only the most popular social network among students but that more than half of the sample used SMS and social media at least three times a day. On the use of the medium to access social media, the study revealed that 68 percent of the students in her sample used the mobile telephone access social media.

Tyson (2014) includes research by another student, which looked at how students' higher education institutions used social media. The study found that although some lecturers used Facebook as an informal strategy of communicating with students, the majority of students used social media for personal communication. The study also found that most of the sample used the mobile telephone to access social media and that there were concerns about security and privacy in using social media. As one of the key recommendations of the study, the student indicated the need to establish an integration of strategies along with the development of a sound policy framework for the use of social media in the educational environment.

These studies, despite being unpublished academic works at the time of this study, illustrate an emerging growth and need to explore the use of social media and how it is accessed. The findings of the studies and research mentioned in this section not only correlate locally, but also synergise with the findings of Stork and Calandro (2014) and other recent international studies in this field. With the current status of poor public participation efforts, as indicated by Hopwood (2008) and Keulder (2005), it is thus useful to describe the key forms of public participation in the following section.

4.6. Strategies for Public Participation in Namibia

There are various public participation strategies in Namibia which have been practiced as early as 2001. These include, but are not confined to, newspaper notices, public announcements on the radio and television. These are used more as public information dissemination processes and not necessarily public participation processes (Indongo, 2006:10). A report commissioned by the Namibia Institute of Democracy in 2001 highlighted and explained the advantages, challenges and budgetary implications of each of the following types of public participation strategies currently used in Namibia. The use of the focus group as well as the one-on-one interview, meetings, workshops, public hearings/gatherings, parliamentary publications, surveys, opinion polls and emails serve as the key public participation strategies to date (Kandetu et al., 2001:18–22).

Although the current methods which have been highlighted in the previous section are still used widely, a recent investigation on public participation was commissioned by the Namibian Parliament and, in particular, by the National Assembly. According to the report issued by the Hansard Society, Parliament has adopted one of the key recommendations by recently amplifying its public participation efforts. These efforts include new plans to establish thirteen regional Parliamentary Access Centres (PACs) to provide information about legislature, events and to enhance the public's participation with Parliament (Hansard Society, 2012:51–52).

The effectiveness of government's engagement with communities in the regions and how it influences policymaking are well beyond the scope of this study. However, it will be interesting to look at the use of email and other ICT initiatives in the empirical section of this study and how it will inform the use of social media as a strategy of public participation. Socialbakers, a data infometrics site estimates Namibia's Facebook users at over 220 000 in 2014 (Socialbakers, 2014).

Accordingly, recent developments on the use of social media in Namibia illustrate the heated debates driven by parliamentarians for new legislation to restrict and regulate the use of social media. These have been due to current claims that its use,

particularly by the youth, is irresponsible and disparaging towards both government and politicians (Joseph, 2014:1).

4.7. Summary

This chapter provided an overview and context of public participation in Namibia. The political, socio-economic, technological, legal and environmental aspects were briefly discussed. These aspects, which are likely to influence, impede or facilitate the introduction of the use of social media, are discussed in the case study in chapter five of this study. Additionally, the constitutional and legal provisions and policy mechanisms were examined to assess how they either enhance or inhibit the current modes of public participation and its institutionalisation in the public service of Namibia. The chapter concluded by outlining the existing reality in Namibia and a description of the existing forms of public participation that are currently used in Namibia. The next chapter comprises the empirical work which will unpack whether the Namibian government environment is ready for the use of social media in terms of the criteria defined in the current and previous chapters of this study.

Chapter 5 – Utilising Social Media for Public Participation: A Namibian Case Study

The aim of this chapter is to consolidate the empirical findings of the study in terms of the research question. The theoretical implications of this study are outlined, focusing on the role and evolution of social media to inform the public policy context which underpins public participation in Namibia. In particular, the chapter draws attention to an analysis and comparison across countries in the literature review as applied to the Namibian context.

5.1. Introduction

Theoretically, the analysis in this study centres on theories of public participation and emergent theories of social media for good governance. This dictated, firstly, the literature review on public participation as well as the use of social media as public participation strategy regionally and internationally that was conducted. Chapters two and three extracted key theories and research undertaken within the broad principles of good governance. Next, an analysis of the Namibian context was conducted in terms of its political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental context, as covered in chapter four. The following section consolidates the results of the interviews by aligning them and, accordingly, responding to the research questions.

5.2. Methodological Overview

The study utilised a multi-case study approach and a combination of research techniques in collecting data. These included document analysis – on paper and in digital formats and interviews. The main rationale for the use of the multi-case study approach in this study was to obtain a holistic perspective with regard to an incorporation of best practice, policy and systemic issues. Thus, the use of multiple methods in conducting a comprehensive study of public participation and the use of social media in Namibia enabled the researcher to compare it to other countries and

international cases in order to speculate on the distinctiveness or generalisability of the study conducted in the Namibian context.

As a starting point, an analysis of the literature review, Namibian context and the empirical evidence generate the following findings which are structured and presented according to table one in chapter one. Website reviews of all 29 Offices, Ministries and Agencies (O/M/As) that comprise Central Government were visited and were analysed according to the recentness of the content, site statistics, main content, contact information and management of feedback. The researcher accessed all the government websites between June and August 2014. Namibian government Web Portal was the one point of access and systematically followed the list of websites which were structured according to the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary aspects of government. The analysis which was conducted is attached as Appendix 4.

Following this analytical process of identifying O/M/As that were either ready or had the potential to use social media, a purposive sampling procedure of identifying key role players in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) was conducted. The respondents, who are all senior managers, were selected on the basis of their strategic role in developing, implementing and managing the e-governance strategy and the Information Communications Technology (ICT) Policy of Namibia respectively. In-depth interviews which comprised broad questions related to the overall aims of the e-governance strategy and its link to public participation. All interviews were conducted in English, being the official language of the Namibian government.

The interviews which lasted approximately 40 minutes each were captured as what Guba and Lincoln (1989) in Babbie and Mouton (2001:275) refer to as 'extensive field notes'. These field notes, rather than focusing on the content supported an emerging hypothesis on the Namibian government's likelihood of using social media challenges and critical success factors with regard to the readiness of government in using social media to promote public participation.

Table two indicates the sample, highlighting the designations and responsibilities of the key role players in the two government institutions that implement e-government in Namibia.

Designation		Office/Ministry/Agency	Responsibility
Deputy Secretary	Permanent	Office of the Prime Minister	Management of the Private Office of the Prime Minister
Director		Office of the Prime Minister	E-government implementation & policy management for the public sector
Director		Office of the Prime Minister	E-government structure management for the public sector
Acting Secretary	Permanent	Ministry of Information and Communication Technology	Oversee function in National implementation of e-government
Director		Ministry of Information and Communication Technology	National e-government policy implementation
Director		Ministry of Information and Communication Technology	Co-ordination of National Media and Information

Table 2: Key respondents interviewed for the study.

The next section aims to reveal the responses of those interviewed as well as to incorporate elements of the document study, guided by the research questions and objectives. The particulars of the interview guide are attached as Appendix 5.

5.3. Social Media for Public Participation: International, Regional and Local Comparisons

Research Question 1: What is the current status of the use of social media in public participation within the international and regional context of good governance?

This question was partly addressed in chapters two and three, which focused on issues of good governance, democracy, transparency and public participation. The literature sourced indicates that governments worldwide have embarked on introducing the use of ICTs to provide services to the public they serve. In doing so, different countries are in various stages in terms of the creation of government web portals to allow the public to not only access information, but also implicitly include attempts to enhance participation and the conducting of online transactions.

An examination of the official government portal to the Namibian government illustrates that the content is largely information-based. This means that the public is only involved, but do not participate fully. Figure 3 depicts that only two of the 29 government websites visited on the Namibian government's web portal, namely the Electoral Commission of Namibia and the Anti-Corruption Commission, were actively using both Facebook and Twitter. Additionally, only five other government sites that were visited displayed the Facebook logo, but all five required extensive login efforts. These were the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Education, The Namibian Police (NAMPOL), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Planning Commission. Figure 3 also indicates government's efforts to address the issues around public participation. The Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, the Electoral Commission of Namibia and the National Planning Commission have embedded dedicated email message boxes under their respective contacts sections on their websites.

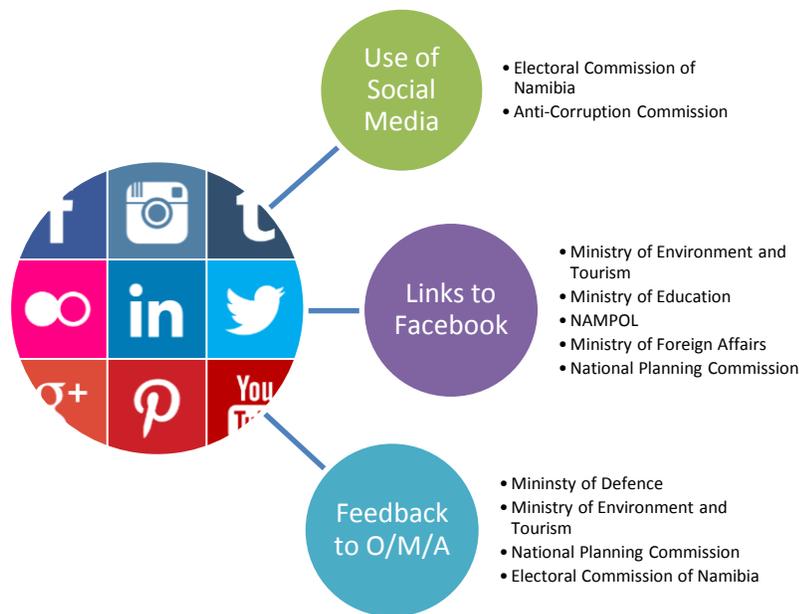


Figure 3: The current use of social media on Namibian government websites.

From the document and website analysis, only 24 percent indicated a readiness to use social media. Of this figure, only 13 percent of the government websites that were visited made provision for feedback to the O/M/A through their respective feedback pages. It must be pointed out that access of government websites is done through the e-government web portal which is a function administered under the Office of the Prime Minister, Department of Public Service Information Technology Management.

It was interesting to find only one Ministry making an explicit reference to a public participation meeting. However, upon clicking on the link a circular from the ministry merely prompted a document download which contained outdated participation dates together with an outdated list of public meeting dates and venues. Therefore, in terms of theory, both Arnstein (1969) and the IAP2 (2013) it is illustrated that the current strategy currently employed by the Namibian government is that of consultation, and not authentic participation.

Despite this finding, all six respondents indicated the importance of engaging the public in the development of government policies. However, one of the respondents from the

Office of the Prime Minister mentioned that although it was important for government to participate with the public, the main emphasis of stakeholder participation in launching key policies was on the internal role players, namely the Chief Regional Councillors, Permanent Secretaries and the Cabinet. In contrast, although the public were also 'consulted' through public meetings and fora, it is unclear to what extent the 'consultation' was an interactive collaboration process as the meetings appeared to take the form of a key government official giving a presentation to passive community members. Once again, with reference to the theory, according to Arnstein (1969) and the IAP2's (2013) spectrum, the current strategy employed remains to be that of consultation.

According to the International Association for Participation (IAP2), it may be argued that the IAP2's seven core values are relevant to both e-governance and the use of social media as a strategy for public participation. In this regard, all respondents who participated were positive about Namibia's progress with regard to its e-government policy, plan and strategy. In the same vein, all the respondents appreciated the demarcation of responsibilities between the two key role players in the implementation and management of the e-government policy. To this end, all the respondents that were interviewed pointed out that there was a clear distinction between the Department Public Service Information Technology and Management in the Office of The Prime Minister (OPM), responsible for managing the e-governance projects in the public sector, and the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT), responsible for managing the implementation of e-governance nationally.

A respondent from the OPM mentioned that there are many technical issues with regard to the Internet and the role of government telecommunication service providers. Another respondent from the MICT confirmed this broad challenge by elaborating on the issue, mentioning that the role of companies like Telecom and the Mobile Telecommunications Company (MTC) has increasingly become more important. In terms of providing access to the broad and diverse Namibian population, the same respondents from both OPM and MICT indicated that the recent development of the West African Cable System

(WACS) which links Namibia to Europe was positive, not only enhancing connectivity to the public, but also reducing communication costs. This progressive development enables Namibian telecommunication companies to address challenges pertaining to the digital divide and to compete internationally. This resonates with Stork and Calandro's (2014) study on the emergence of the use of mobile telephones to access social media.

Despite the positive advancements on a technical level, two respondents from the MICT pointed out that due to the lack of technical knowledge, policymakers in government are advised by specialists who operate from a purely technocratic perspective and who may not necessarily believe in public participation efforts to enhance policy decisions. Issues pertaining to policy formulation and communication are not necessarily aspects which technical experts are well versed in and, as such, may not necessarily see their role as central to providing an enabling communications environment. Another respondent from the MICT indicated that with regard to public participation, technical discussions that require extensive debate with both political and public groups about the provision of non-discriminatory access to the Internet are necessary. Moreover, the respondent indicated that the internet offers the public new and meaningful interaction opportunities and at the same time provides for new ways of thinking about global issues and a move towards homogeneity in terms of universal access to information and services, irrespective of class, status, race, gender or other classifications.

Confirming the challenges highlighted by the respondent from MICT, the issue of access to services and making contact with and following up with a government official are of importance to this study. It is interesting to note that from the website analysis, only two ministries, namely the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Veteran Affairs provided the mobile numbers in addition to the general office telephone and fax numbers of key contact people at the institution. In contrast, 90 percent of websites that were visited and subjected to the analysis prioritised content related to the mission, vision, structure and policies of the institutions. It is clear that in the Namibian context, the manner in which the structure of the website content and lack of direct contact

information provided emphasise the mismatch and discrepancies that need to be addressed. Hence, this finding resonates with the findings of Broom (2009), Lee (2012) and Eggers (2005) who stressed the importance of using social media in public participation by being public-centric, responsive and by providing information and feedback to the recipients of public services, thus authentic and empowering participation at the top of Arnstein's (1969) and the IAP2 (2013) spectrum.

The literature reviewed indicated that in order to safeguard democratic ideals, promote transparency and enhance government accountability, the use of digital and social media to enhance the current forms of public participation spectrum are key. By participating with the public in decision-making, the opportunity of authentic participation in the policy process is enhanced. There was consensus among all the respondents that there are challenges in the use of social media which relate to how the government shares information and collaborates with the public. In the first place, there appears to be partiality on the part of government against authentic participation and ultimately public control. Consequently, social media and other forms of digital expression have implications on fundamental rights like the freedom of expression or freedom of association. Confirming the need that the use of ICT for public participation facilitates some form of public participation activity, even if it is to only access information, the website statistics of the Office of the Prime Minister reached a total of 51 770 visits since 2013.

Finally, by highlighting and providing an overview of the answers provided by the respondents to the first research question, it is established that, although the international developments in the use of social media and access to digital communication through the use of ICT are generally positive, the situation in Namibia is unique. While it has been acknowledged by the majority of respondents that the new platforms of communication through the use of digital and social media have several advantages, the manner in which these platforms are regulated is still contentious. With accessibility no longer being a challenging issue, the use of social and digital media worldwide introduces the concept of the Fifth Estate as coined by Dutton (2009:2). The

Fifth Estate (Dutton, 2009:2) refers to a two-way means of communication and a dual means of interaction between the public and the government. This differs significantly from the manner in which the Fourth Estate has operated in that communication was largely one-way and not necessarily free from political or social influences depending on press ownership (Newman, et. al., 2012:7). As a respondent in the OPM pointed out, “The use of social media provides everyone and anyone with a voice, with the potential of influencing others on an enormous level. However, since no one controls it, there are serious implications on a social and policy level.”

Therefore, this study indicates that although Namibia is on par in terms of its thinking with regard to the implementation and advancement of e-government efforts, the inclusion of social media as a public participation strategy is still in its stage of infancy. This is an interesting finding and in comparative terms, the recommendations in the study commissioned by the United States Congress may provide guidance in the key finding that the more government institutions used social media, the more important it was to improve the existing e-government to include interactive content (United States Congress, 2002). Given this finding, examining whether the Namibian legislative, regulatory and policy framework promotes public participation provides answers to the second research question considered in the next section.

5.4. Legislative and Policy Framework of Public Participation in Namibia

Research Question 2: What are the legislative, regulatory and policy mechanisms in place to promote public participation in Namibia?

Article 17 and 21 articulated in chapter three of the Namibian Constitution gives due recognition to public participation while highlighting the collective and basic rights of a democratic society. In line with the legal framework, the theoretical principle for public participation as indicated in chapter two of this study suggests that the legitimacy of a government relies on the willingness and buy-in of those being governed. Public participation should ideally be an ongoing, participatory process between the public and those placed in a position to govern. A further consideration is that public participation is the strongest link between the government and the public it serves.

All respondents indicated the government's emphasis on public participation and public engagement, as featuring highly on Namibia's development agenda, which are articulated in national policies and legislation as outlined in chapter four of this study. The country's Vision 2030 embraces the key principles of good governance which state explicitly that the provision of information and public participation are key to ensuring Namibia's development.

In terms of providing access to information, respondents underscored the importance of both the Universal Access and Service Policy for Information and Communications Technologies as well as the Overarching Information Communications Technology (ICT) Policy which was developed and aligned to both Vision 2030 and the National Development Plans (NDPs), reflecting the policy purpose of providing all Namibians with access to government information, technology and services. Confirming this, respondents from the MICT indicated that, in addition to the alignment of policies and programmes speaking to public participation, government programmes have provided the impetus to involve a multi-level and stakeholder approach towards the crafting of policies and programmes in advancing the development agenda.

Despite the fact that public participation is the cornerstone of a democratic society, this study echoes the findings of Hopwood (2008:99) who argued that public participation in Namibia is still solely confined to the election process and the election of leaders. Most of the respondents indicated that the process the government follows is still largely superficial. One respondent from the OPM indicated that the government has not "made major strides in really interacting with the public... [and that] by sticking to the tried and tested public meetings, the consultation process leaves much room for improvement." This illustrates that there are no significant efforts at exploring the use of social media to enhance current participation efforts with regard to the development of public policies and the existing government initiatives. This finding resonates well with Theron and McCunn (2014), cited in Davids and Theron's (2014) recommendation that strategies

should consider an appropriate mix of public participation strategies specific to the context in which it is required.

The respondents were all in broad agreement that generally, and to uphold the value of public participation, the government 'informs' and 'consults' the public according to Arnstein's (1969) and the IAP2's (2013)'s spectrum of participation. Additionally, these two aspects of public participation correspond to the IAP2's Spectrum of Participation at the two very basic levels of informing (level one) and consulting (level two). In the Namibian context most of the respondents mentioned that while the intent is there on paper, authentic and empowering participation, as Sanoff (2000:8) as well as Theron and McCunn (2014) in: Davids and Theron, 2014 has conceptualised, does not take place.

Additionally, according to IAP2's values, the principles of public participation give rise to a two-way stream of decision-making, based on the manner in which the interests of all stakeholders are communicated. Again, two respondents from the Office of The Prime Minister mentioned that the communication process is still largely and highly bureaucratic and all attempts at public participation are still conceived as highly prescriptive with the government making predetermined decisions and only sharing the outcomes of these decisions despite arguing that an open participation process had taken place. These dynamics in terms of public participation are confirmed in many previous studies, both internationally (Kok and Gelderbloem, 1994:69; Hanekom, 1991:80; Davids, 2005:25; Gaventa, 2005:27; Theron, 2009:117) as well as in Namibia (Hopwood, 2008:99; Ruppel, 2008:103).

Hence, the responses from respondents in this study illustrate that the Namibian government is not fully engaging the public in terms of policy development and implementation. A respondent from MICT indicated that a possibility for the lack of participation by the public may stem from the fact that the public do not necessarily understand "government business" as the government is often out of touch with local reality. This often gives a widespread impression that there is not enough public

education on and awareness of the importance of public participation for effective policymaking. Another respondent from the OPM pointed out that although there are many arenas for public participation, the manner in which the comments inform the system and process feedback is a serious challenge.

Therefore, it may be concluded that although Namibia complies with all the ideal legal and policy requirements for entrenching the principles of public participation on paper, the current practice illustrates that there are ample opportunities to improve the process. The next section highlights the responses to the next research question which deals with the Namibian context of public participation.

5.5. The Context of Public Participation in Namibia

Research Question 3: To what extent does the political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental milieu allow for public participation in Namibia?

Although there are some form of legal guidelines making disparaging remarks about another person or group, Namibia's score of 2 out of 7 according to Freedom House which is characterised as "free" provides the press with the liberty of criticising the government or individuals.

In defence of Namibia being a true participatory democracy, one of the respondents from the OPM mentioned that Namibians enjoy the privileges of free speech, citing the recent debates surrounding the Prime Minister's paid for trip to watch the last match at the World Cup and the conceivable implications for ethics and potential for corruption which dominated both the Namibian Press and social media for weeks afterwards.

Confirming the literature on the media being the Fourth Estate and, accordingly, the censorship of the press and expression through social media (Maina, 2012; Shinovene, 2014:1), the same respondent from the Office of the Prime Minister provided Chinese and Russian examples with regard to media coverage of an event or incident. The respondent indicated that "Namibians can say what they want and criticise whomever they want to, often making unfounded accusations. Our Chinese and Russian

counterparts do not have that liberty as news is only published if the government agrees to the stories which are published.”

Given this statement, figure 4 provides a comparison of the countries listed in chapter three which indicates the extent to which a country is “free” to exercise political rights and civic liberties. According to the data sourced from Freedom in the World and Freedom House, Namibia, which is classified as “free” and scores a two in exercising both political rights and civic liberties, is better placed than Kenya, Nigeria and Singapore who have each scored a four. Interestingly, although China scores a 7 on both political rights and civic liberties, it still continues to show progress in development in economic terms.

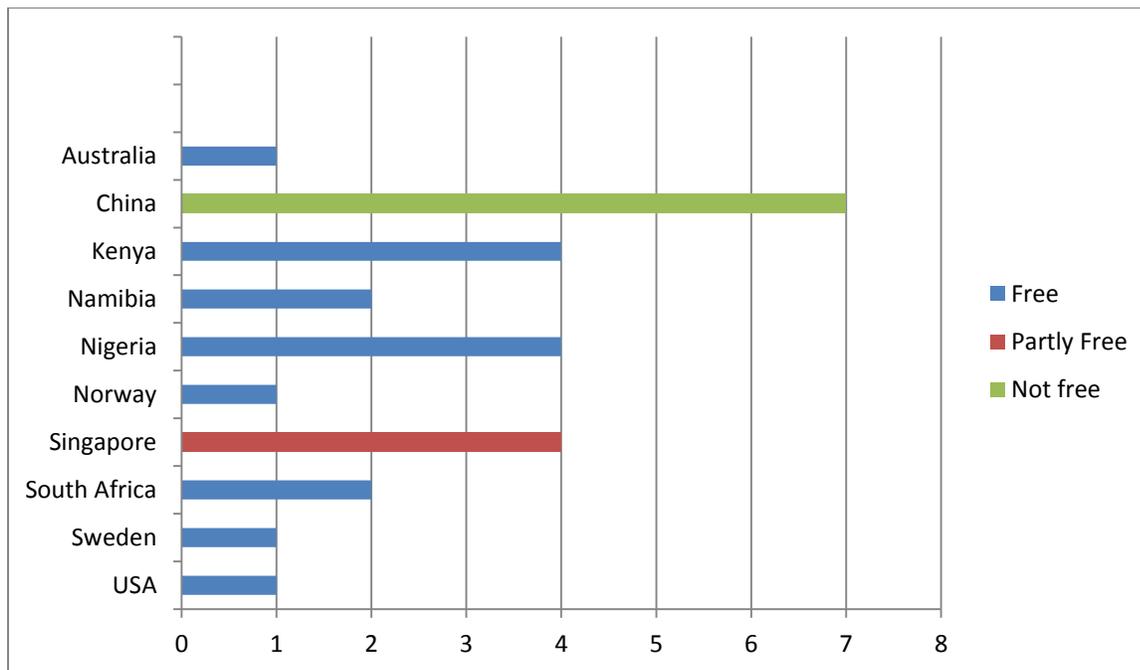


Figure 4: Comparisons across countries on political rights and civil liberties
(Source: Freedom House, 2014)

Hence, the importance of a free press in the context of good governance in Namibia is recognised. All the respondents were consistent in their view that although the general public may be perceived to be quite critical of the government in terms of press coverage, the independence of the media allows for a large portion of the population’s trust and many depend on the accuracy of the information.

However, all the respondents mentioned that the manner in which feedback from the government is provided to the public is problematic due to the manner in which the government is structured, which causes multiple communication breakdowns. It is also interesting to point out that in the website analysis, issues with regard to language and translation issues were not addressed. Although English is the official language of Namibia, its diversity both in terms of ethnicity and language has been pointed out in chapter four of this study and it has implications for engaging the public. Moreover, the lack of efforts to address these cultural and language challenges on the websites that were visited may continue to contribute to the lack of representation and authentic public participation of all Namibians. Addressing these challenges may also assist in building the public's trust in government. However, despite Namibia's rating of two, according to Freedom House, in order to continue building public trust to complement the balanced media reports, all the respondents indicated that, apart from the media, current efforts do very little in terms of restoring trust and building confidence in the government's activities.

In acknowledgment of the perceived lack of public confidence in the government, communication and feedback challenges, there was consensus that the speed of technological change, coupled with the cost of extensive public participation efforts contribute to the barriers in using social media. As figure 5 indicates, the lack of basic ICT competencies and the absence of a social media policy are contributing factors to effectively using social media for public participation.

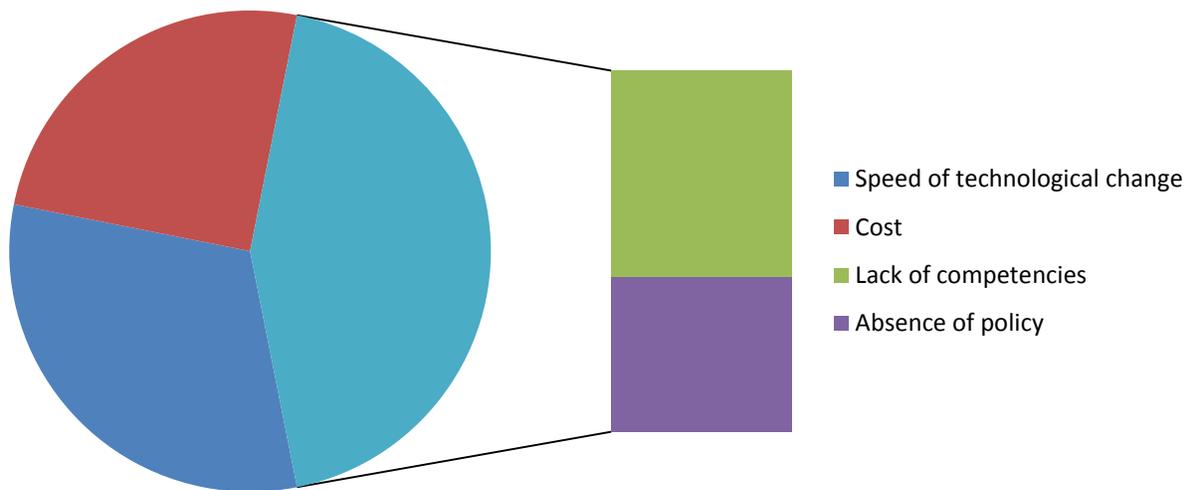


Figure 5: Challenges to the use of social media as a strategy of public participation in Namibia.

Finally, having answered the third research question regarding the Namibian context of public participation, the section which follows provides insights into the government's level of readiness to use social media as a public participation strategy.

5.6. The Readiness of Namibia to use Social Media to improve Public Participation

Research Question 4: To what extent is the public service of Namibia ready to use social media as a means of improving current public participation efforts?

In response to the research question on the Namibian government's readiness to use social media as a public participation strategy, all the respondents were in unison that there are several opportunities to enhance the image of government among the broad public. Four of the six respondents that were interviewed indicated that the public service needs to revisit the use of social media as a key communications medium, indicating the potential of e-government to accommodate social media in enhancing public participation in Namibia.

However, all the respondents also mentioned that in as much as there are possible opportunities, there are a number of equally pressing concerns of which the main issue is of a political nature. Consistent with the findings on the key challenges in using social media in the previous section, one respondent from the OPM mentioned that due to the absence of policy and regulatory framework for the use of social media, political parties misuse it to disparage others – particularly during the election period.

Another respondent from the OPM pointed out that since government has not officially proclaimed itself on the use of social media, politicians have started using their own social media accounts as a campaign strategy for the upcoming elections with Facebook and Twitter being the most popular. Another respondent from OPM indicated that the current bureaucracies within the government with regard to the release of official information may complicate how social media is used to engage the public. Thus, the statement of these problems acknowledge that there are challenges in using social media for public participation, but at the same time provide opportunities to explore its use particularly within the context of the use of ICTs and e-government.

One respondent from the MICT deliberated on the challenges of the current public participation efforts in reaching the youth, which are classified as the segment of the Namibian population between the ages of 18 and 40. Citing the recent voter registration process, the respondent indicated that “the use of social media as an informal strategy to raise awareness and inform people about the importance of registering prior to the elections was noteworthy; with over a million voters who registered at least 40 percent comprised the youth.” This finding resonates with Bechmann and Lomborg’s (2012:3) study which argues that typical social media users interact in a networked manner, “de-institutionalizing communication.”

Hence, these emerging findings argue that although politicians and high-ranking government officials may resist the use of social media, transformations in information communication technology have interesting implications on how it may be used as a strategy to engage the public (Crawford, 2009:53; Enli & Moe, 2013:637). Speaking to

Kellerman's notion of "followership", as briefly discussed in chapter three of this study, the role of those who are not in leadership positions cannot be underestimated, as they utilise their networks, mutual power and collective efforts to influence one another through the use of social media (Kellerman, 2007:91).

In terms of the Namibian context, answers from the respondents echo the findings of the study undertaken by Thomas and Streib (2003:101) which found that despite certain countries being at an advanced level of e-government implementation, the level of interaction was still very low, with the emphasis largely falling on the provision of information. The majority of the respondents indicated that the Namibian government is still reluctant to integrate social media as a strategy for public participation. All the respondents mentioned that social media would enhance the publicity and communication efforts of government, but would not necessarily employ it as a dual process of engaging in feedback. With this reluctance in mind, another respondent pointed out that the boundaries between government business, communication and the role of ICT are blurring. This introduces challenges, but at the same time offers huge potential for improved governance.

The responses to the research question exploring the readiness of the Namibian government to use social media for public participation illustrate that there is an instrumental relationship between political developments and the changing digital media landscape. Unravelling the research up to this point, with regard to the legal framework, context and readiness of the public service of Namibia to use social media as a public participation strategy, has provided the background to the final question which examines the manner in which social media may be introduced.

5.7. The Use of Social Media as a Public Participation Strategy in the Public Service of Namibia

Research Question 5: In what ways can social media be introduced within the public service of Namibia to support current efforts in promoting public participation?

In various interviews, all the respondents provided options for the use of social media given the lack of readiness on the government's part to use social media for public participation. One respondent from the MICT indicated that the use of social media like Facebook has built-in applications which gauge a user's preference in terms of supporting/"liking" or opposing/"not linking" a given policy directive.

Although all the respondents acknowledged the potential of social media to promote an authentic, two-way dialogue which includes the processing of dual and reciprocal feedback, one respondent from OPM mentioned that "Namibians are not quite ready to engage government at that level – right now, social media has high entertainment value and is useful for providing information or sensing what people like or don't like about a particular government initiative."

Accordingly, there was consistency among all the respondents where they indicated that although government, in terms of its structure and culture, is not yet ready to use social media for public participation, its use as a strategy to supplement, and not to replace existing methods, was pointed out. Respondents from the MICT indicated that the use of online questionnaires or brief polls through the government portal as an added development towards increased participation which would enhance government's efforts to engage the public, albeit at a superficial level.

One of the respondents from the OPM mentioned that "the ultimate form of e-government is 'i-government', which is an integrated government", indicating that the manner in which future government websites would be designed to speak to an integrated and full service portal which is not only personalised for individuals, but also provides information and access to the government official responsible for the service required. In recommending other ways in which social media could be utilised, the same respondent mentioned that the use of mobile and smartphone technology provides additional avenues for expression and public participation.

In this regard, the use of applications such as SMS, WhatsApp, Google Chat, Hangouts, Mxit, Instant Messenger, Facebook, Twitter and Skype were cited as useful. It was

mentioned that with the developments in technology, Namibia is not necessarily using Web 2.0 anymore, but has moved on to a more advanced form of portal development which includes the incorporation of Web 2.0 in embedding social media icons as part of the government website.

Suggestions from respondents on how social media can be used best in the current context culminated in figure 6 which combines the use of mobile applications, Web 2.0 applications and raising awareness of government services as an initial step in introducing its use.

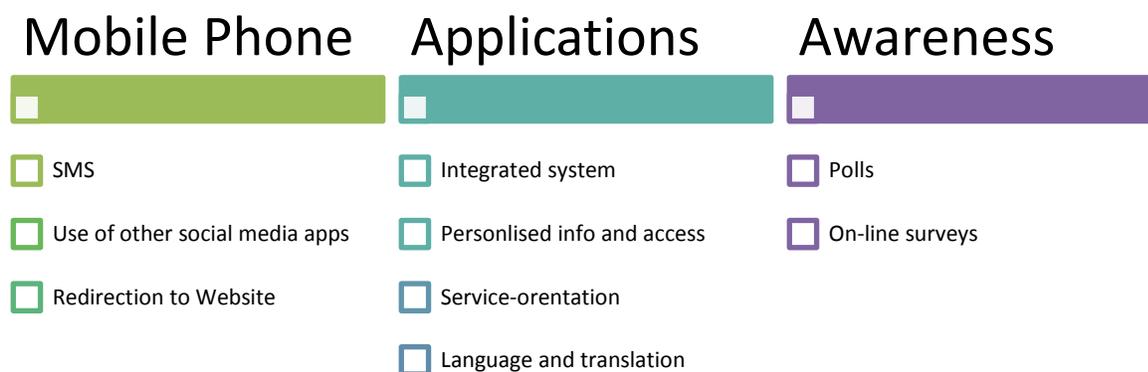


Figure 6: How social media can support public participation in the public service of Namibia.

Finally, given the absence of a social media policy for Namibia and bearing in mind the ideal form of i-government, the work of Hrdinova et al. (2010:19) has relevance in that the future use of social media which encompasses all five levels of the IAP2's participation spectrum, as illustrated in figure 2, should be structured and systematically followed. Having explored the options for the manner in which social media can be utilised as a public participation strategy in the public service of Namibia, the next section restates the key question for this study which has implications for how social media may be utilised in future.

5.8. Summary

Is it possible to conclude that the Namibian government is not ready to use social media as a public participation strategy from this study of limited scope? The collection of literature, media reports, country cases and arguments support the claim that the use of

social media and the advances in ICT cannot be divorced from the political, socio-economic context. In as much as it may be utilised as a strategy to further the goals of good governance and democracy, it may also be utilised as a strategy to further “poor governance” in mobilising the masses, overthrowing an existing regime, or it may be utilised as a strategy of domination, control, propaganda and oppression.

Thus, the answer to the question posed in the foregoing paragraph on the readiness of Namibia is that on paper the country has all the ‘right elements’ in place. Backed by the constitutional provisions of a participatory democracy and a national development agenda which accommodates the principles of public participation, developments on the ICT front are also noteworthy. However, in furthering the goals of accessibility, transparency, openness and effectiveness, a change is required with regard to the mindset of those in the public service and the structure and the dynamics of both organisational and national culture. With only 21 percent of the government websites illustrating the capacity to use social media as a public participation strategy, there is a limited readiness to harness its potential. Following Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of engagement (figure 1), Namibia is located at the third rung of the ladder, which is described as ‘tokenism’ in that although the views of the public are considered, these views at directing and influencing any real change is limited. Similarly, according to the IAP2’s (2013) spectrum (figure 2) Namibia lies on the first level of public participation, which is public participation as information sharing. The study therefore concludes that the use of social media as public participation strategy in the public service of Namibia is still significantly minimal.

In conclusion, this chapter consolidated and integrated the findings from the interviews with the respondents with the literature review and chapter on the Namibian context in the first three chapters of this study. A systematic approach to answering all five research questions was followed and conclusions were reached. With the achievement of providing answers to all five research questions in the study, the objectives were met. The next chapter synthesises the chapters contained in this study and extrapolates the

key recommendations. The limitations of the study are outlined and possibilities for future research arising from this study are proposed.

Chapter 6 – Findings, Summary and Recommendations

This final chapter summarises the findings of the study by reviewing the research question and objectives. In the final section, the study concludes that there are a number of challenges which prevent the use of social media to be utilised as it should. Among these challenges, the current structure of the Namibian government does not adequately allow for its use as a strategy of public participation strategy as an avenue to provide information – if it is used at all.

6.1. Introduction

As other countries have embarked on e-government strategies, the use of social media and its mobilisation power to engage the public is redefining current engagement patterns and the use of digital media to promote transparency and improved service delivery. The last part of this chapter outlines the limitations, lists key recommendations for the government, offers suggestions for additional research and provides the conclusions. First, however, the chapter begins with a restatement of the research questions and objectives.

6.2. Restatement of Research Questions and Objectives

As this study is positioned across three theoretical perspectives related to public participation, social media and good governance, answers to the key research question which posits the readiness of the Namibian government to use social media as a public participation strategy are generated. The main research question which the study sought to answer is: How ready is the Namibian government to use social media as a strategy of public participation?

Guided by five corresponding objectives, the research question encompassed five sub-research questions which, inter alia, reflect on:

1. the current status of the use of social media in public participation within the international and regional context of good governance;

2. the extent to which the political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental milieu allows public participation in Namibia;
3. the legislative, regulatory and policy mechanisms to promote and enhance public participation in Namibia;
4. the readiness of the Namibian public service in using social media as a means of improving current public participation efforts; and
5. the ways in which social media can be introduced within the public service of Namibia to support current efforts in promoting public participation.

This study set out to answer five research questions, and the findings, which are stated in the next section, show that all the questions were answered.

6.3. Summary of the Findings

The research results illustrate that overall the official Namibian government portal is still dominated by content and as an information source. In this regard, now in the early stages of e-government implementation, there are limited services available with no options of using social media to fully participate and collaborate with the government.

An equally important part of the findings is that in terms of e-government, there is a strong potential to use social media as a strategy for public participation in empowering the public to fully participate in policymaking. However, the study found that there were a number of associated challenges which include, firstly, that policymakers have not yet taken advantage of the opportunities this brings. Secondly, despite the sound policy and legal framework supporting broad public participation efforts, the bureaucratic manner in which government is structured and how general communication is managed in government do not allow for the responsiveness and the feedback that a social and digital media environment may bring.

Similarly, the study also revealed the absence of a social media policy which is aligned to the strategic and e-government framework. Given the rights to freedom of expression, this, nevertheless, has implications for how social media is used or in some

cases misused by politicians, political parties and interest groups to advance their individual agendas.

Hence, the study proposes recommendations for policymakers as well as issues on public participation and the use of social media for further research which are stated next.

6.4. Recommendations for Policymakers

To begin with, a policy for the use of social media which outlines its use and outlines the risks and aspects pertaining to security, updating, maintenance and interaction with the public is recommended. In particular, the manner in which feedback is managed through social media and digital channels should be addressed. With a multitude of issues on various levels, content, language, ease of use and translation issues should be addressed. Hence, in crafting the social media policy, a multi-stakeholder approach ensures that the only drivers of the policy formulation phases are not within the sole control of the technocrats and ICT experts.

Secondly, the Namibian government web portal and, particularly, the individual websites of Offices, Ministries and Agencies, as part of the e-government strategy, should consider incorporating social media applications and strategies which not only provide information, but also promote additional means of interacting and collaborating with the public they serve. In addition to the introduction of these applications, the government should consider intensifying its efforts at redirecting users to government websites which should be updated regularly and should be less content driven and more service orientated.

Thirdly, the manner in which government builds and sustains relationships and networks to foster trust deserves attention. The introduction of other forms of engaging the public through the use of other digital and social media channels such as short messaging service (SMS), WhatsApp, Google Chat, Hangouts, Mxit, Microsoft Instant Messenger (IM), Facebook, Twitter and Skype were considered for these purpose.

Fourthly, in terms of the poor levels of public participation, the introduction of publicity and raising awareness through the use of social and digital media should feature prominently as a precursor to the provision of information so that the public are given a holistic picture and in the process develop and enhance the relationship between the various stakeholders and government. The integration of services to speak to individual user requirements as a benefit of an integrated “i-government” outcome speaks to the requirement of fostering relationships and building confidence in the government.

Finally, the existing mind-set towards the use of social media and the cultural as well as organisational barriers with regard to its use need to be addressed. Hence, there is a need for the Namibian Institute of Public Administration and Management (NIPAM) to introduce and present courses on the principles of public participation and strategies. Other training in this vein could also focus on the usefulness of social and digital media for improved service delivery and governance and building competencies. This is also useful in addressing issues pertaining to the digital divide; where in addition to having access to information, politicians, the public and interest groups need to be educated and made aware of the potential of social media to increase transparency and to nurture a culture of accountability.

Consequently, these five key recommendations for policymakers which may require extensive stakeholder consultation are based on both the theory and practical experiences of the respondents that were interviewed. The next part outlines recommendations for future research.

6.5. Recommendations for Future Research

After highlighting the policy recommendations in the previous section, this study has identified potential and future research areas. Future studies may consider a longitudinal comparative analysis between developed and developing ‘informational’ countries. Additional research may also consider the successes of the use of social media in public participation and in doing so explore the critical success factors. A study on the users of social media in relation to effecting significant policy changes may prove

to be interesting. Additionally, studies exploring the use of social media in terms of the stages of e-government and the frameworks of public participation may also shed light on its usefulness. Moreover, an exploratory study on countries implementing e-government, observing the trends and principles pertaining to good governance and democracy may be useful. Finally, prospective research may focus on leadership and followership studies as they relate to the political, economic, social and legal contexts in using social media for public participation.

6.6. Limitations

There are limitations which this study has revealed. Firstly, this study only focused on sourcing respondents from two key government institutions. Despite being the policy custodians and lead implementation agencies the nature of this qualitative mode of enquiry dictated the use of a purposive sampling strategy; hence, diverting from the focus of providing broad generalisations to the broader public service. Similarly, the absence of a policy on the use of social media meant that any attempts at unravelling the use of digital and social media would be fruitless as its use is not currently promoted for government use. The intention, therefore, was to explore the opinions and experiences of those who were in a management and policymaking capacity in order to obtain a holistic view of the use of social media. With this in mind, the use of localising this study to Namibia is explained as a possible limitation next.

In order to place the study in an international setting the title of the study clearly demarcates its scope as confined to the public service of Namibia. Given the paucity of research and developments both on an ICT and social and digital media level, the study attempts to provide a brief analysis of how the country compares. Mindful that the use of the multi-case study and in particular the case study does not provide for broad generalisations, hence the use of an exploratory, qualitative research designs. This study is a first attempt at shedding light and providing a stepping stone for future studies of this nature.

In conclusion, in adopting a futuristic outlook with regard to the use of social media and the ICT environment for public participation, political scientist Farrell (2012:47) predicts that the dynamics and interplay of the relationships between politics and the internet will be “both ubiquitous and invisible” in time, as it becomes normative to study political science, ICT, media and governance holistically. Finally, the next and final part summarises the chapter.

6.7. Summary

The chapter began with a restatement of the research question and objectives. A summary of the findings as discussed in the previous chapter followed. A set of recommendations for both policy and further research was presented, which made room for addressing the study limitations. In closing, the study concludes that although the context and legislative framework support public participation broadly, there are still a number of challenges which impact on the readiness to use social media as public participation strategy in the Public Service of Namibia.

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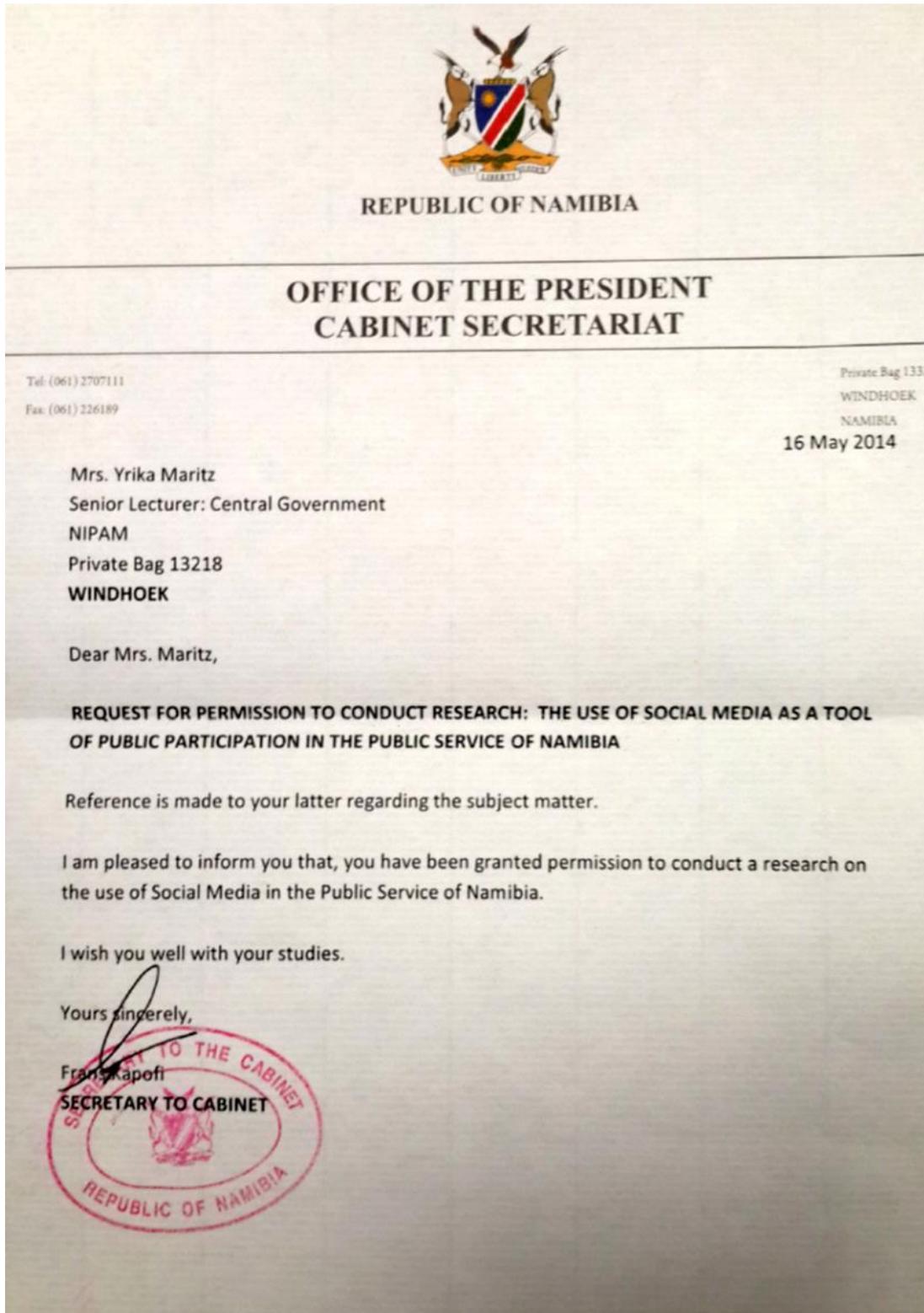
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Appendix 1A: Letters of Permission to conduct the Study



Appendix 1B: Letter Seeking Permission to Conduct the Study

P.O. Box 29647
Klein Windhoek
Namibia
14 February 2014

The Secretary to Cabinet
Office of the President
P Bag 13347
Windhoek

Dear Mr Kapofi

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A STRATEGY OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE OF NAMIBIA

In fulfilment of my role as Senior Lecturer at the Namibian Institute of Public Administration and Management (NIPAM), I am conducting research on how social media can enhance the public participation process in the context of e-government. The study will include the use of interviews with key government officials who are responsible and involved in projects pertaining to e-government initiatives as well as projects on public participation.

The study will also examine the existing state of the Namibian e-government environment and how it compares to other countries with reference to the use of social media and public participation efforts. As such, one of the key objectives of this research is to determine whether the public service is ready to make use of social media to enhance the public participation process.

I hereby seek permission to conduct this research in the public service. I will not cover all the Ministries, Offices and Agencies (O/M/As) but be purposeful in selecting only those O/M/As who have been described to have a strong web presence and readiness to incorporate social media to promote a two-way dialogue with the public.

With your permission, and to guarantee that they will not be derailed from their usual duties, I intend to schedule well-planned interviews with key senior managers, public relations and information technology staff.

Yours respectfully,

Yrika Vanessa Maritz

Tel: +264 61 296 4754, cell +264 813 168 548, email: yrika.maritz@nipam.mdi.na

Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form

Research title: The use of Social Media as a Strategy for Public Participation in the Public Service of Namibia

Name of researcher: Yrika Vanessa Maritz
 Senior Lecturer: Central Government Business Centre
 Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management (NIPAM)
 Telephone: +264 61 2964754
 Mobile: +264 81 3168548
 e-mail: yrika.maritz@opm.gov.na

Information

The aim of this research will be to explore how social media can enhance the public participation process in the context of e-government. The study will include the use of interviews with key government officials who are responsible and involved in projects pertaining to e-government initiatives as well as projects on public participation. The study will also examine the existing state of the Namibian e-government environment and how it compares to other countries with reference to the use of social media and public participation efforts. As such, one of the key objectives of this research is to determine whether the public service is ready to make use of social media to enhance the public participation process.

Your involvement and contribution towards this research is very important. Your responses will be maintained under the strictest of confidence to ensure that your anonymity is protected. The interview will not take up more than 20 minutes of your time. Please also note that your involvement in this study is voluntary and, as such, you may at any point choose to withdraw.

The results of this research, which will be availed to the institution upon completion, will ultimately contribute towards enhancing the public policymaking process and ultimately good governance.

My supervisor for this research is Professor Erwin Schwella, at the School of Public Leadership, University of Stellenbosch who may be contacted at: +27(0)21 918 4122 or via e-mail: Erwin.Schwella@spl.sun.ac.za

If you voluntarily agree to participate in this study please indicate your consent by signing this form.

Name:	Signature:	Date:
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Appendix 3: Format for Data Collection

Instructions to the Researcher:

These guidelines have been formulated to give structure, guidance and consistency to the process of collecting data and as such should be strictly adhered to as documented.

Italicized text within brackets is intended for the interviewer only and should not be read out aloud during the interview.

Preamble

(Greeting) I am Yrika Maritz and I am embarking on a Masters research which looks at the use of social media as a strategy to enhance public participation in Namibia. I would like to examine and document where government is in terms of its current web presence and also how current e-government efforts are able to accommodate the use of social media to enhance current public participation efforts.

Consent

I have gone through the process of obtaining permission from the Head of the Public Service to conduct the research in your Office/Ministry/Agency and have subsequently been given the go-ahead by the Accounting Officer. I am, however, asking for your approval to participate in this study by signing a consent form indicating that you have no objection to be interviewed.

(Give the form to the individual to sign if they agree with participating in the research. If they are not comfortable with signing, thank them and proceed to another participant.)

Before we continue, do you have any questions which I could answer about my study?

(Pause for a response from the participant. Answer any questions if there are any at this point; if none proceed with the interview.)

I would like to explain the procedure to you briefly. Firstly, I am going to ask you a number of questions on several aspects related to this research. Please give me detailed answers as opposed to just answering with a just a 'yes' or a 'no'. Please do not worry if you cannot answer some questions; it may be helpful though to refer to someone else who will be in a position to answer those particular questions instead. Please let me know if you can think of additional documentation or information which may help me understand the issues better, so that I can incorporate those sources as well.

With your permission, I would like to write down some notes as we conduct this interview to help me remember key points, but in order for me to capture the full gist of

our discussions, I would also like record the interview. Would you mind me recording our discussion?

(Give the participant time to answer you. If they indicate a willingness to be recorded, continue. If the participant questions the need for the recording to take place, assure them that the recording will be treated with the confidentiality assumed under the ethics of research and will only be used to verify the data collection and analysis process. If the participant insists that they are still not comfortable, do not persist; agree and proceed only with taking notes.)

The Interview

I am now going to begin with some questions. *(For participants who have agreed to be recorded) May I just switch on the device? (Turn on the recording device and ensure that the recording is underway before continuing).*

Appendix 4: Website Analysis

GRN Website ¹	Updated	Site statistics	Main Content	Contact details	Comments
Offices					
• Office of the President	2012	18 926	Structure, Vision, Mission, Strat plans, news	President, Founding President, SC, Minister Pres. Affairs, general landline, fax	Only founding President had e-mails
• Office of the Prime Minister	2013	51 770			
Government Ministries					
• Agriculture, Water and Forestry	2013	Could not access	Policies, Services, Publications	Minister and PRO's contact	Only PRO's email address; Map and address
• Defence	None	No site stats	Stories, News, Journals and video clips	Minister and Dep. Minister tel. and fax. Only U/S and Chief of Defence had e-mail address	Ready format for email –dropdown box CoD and U/S yahoo accounts
• Environment & Tourism	21/7/2014	No site stats	Structure, services, downloads, publications, International Partners,	Entire Mgt. from PS to DD level complete with e-mails, no mobiles	Website development outsourced to Private service provider, RSS feeds and Feedback page complete with e-mail ready box
• Education	2014	No site stats	News, Policies, Projects, Downloads, Student portal – Student chat, Directory – other	MoE, PRO details, general info@moe	Outsourced Only FB - Like, Register for RSS

¹ All government websites accessed between June and August 2014.

GRN Website ¹	Updated	Site statistics	Main Content	Contact details	Comments
			office details, no e-mail addresses		feeds, Student chat disabled
• Finance	2014	No site stats	State Accounts, Administration, Internal Audit, IT, EPAS, PSEMAS, Revenue Management, Structure and services	All of Mgmnt land line and faxes	No email addresses. Only photos of Min, PS, DPS shown
• Fisheries & Marine Resources	2014	Votes - 2	Structure, Acts and policies, SoEs, News	Only general contact details, no name	Fishing Industry Associations and regional centres have e-mail addresses
• Foreign Affairs	2014	36 277	Useful – services, lists for download and info on how to obtain services, link to consulates abroad	Show / hide list of Minister and Mgmnt with contact and fax numbers – but e-mail was to a generic e-mail address	MFA Mail, link to FB which could not be displayed
• Gender Equality & Child Welfare	2012	None	Structure, Vision, Mission, Strat plan for download, policies,	For Minister and Dep. Minister, PS e-mail present but outdated.	All other management have multiple e-mails contacts and contact landline numbers
• Health and Social Services	No	website			
• Home Affairs & Immigration	2010	None	Services, structure, vision, mission, downloadable forms	Only US and Directors names listed complete with e-mail addresses and mobile numbers	Only OMA so far with listed mobile numbers

GRN Website ¹	Updated	Site statistics	Main Content	Contact details	Comments
• Information and Communication Technology	2014	None	Mission, Vision, Strat plan, services, media and news	Only a general contact with switchboard, general info@mict	
• Justice and Attorney General	No	website	i-way developed		
• Labour & Social Welfare			Mission, Vision, Minister's speeches, Legislation	Photos of Minister, Dep. and PS – general contact telephone, no fax details of mgmt., No e-mails	Interesting circular informing the public of public meetings – labour advisory council. Outdated Jan 2014
• Lands and Resettlement	2012	None	Vision, Mission, Laws, policies	General and outdated telephone and fax of Senior mgmt.	
• Mines & Energy	2006?	subsystems	Vision, Mission, Structure, Strat plan, downloads, forms	General e-mail, Tel and Fax of mgmt.	
• Regional, Local Government & Housing & Rural Development	?	None	About us, Structure, Regional Governments Acts & Policies, News & Media, Governors Programmes, HRDC, Contacts, Adverts	Contacts of Mgmt, email,, fax and landline	e-gov. plan but no evidence of this implemented on site
• Safety & Security	2010	None found	NAMPOL (2014) & NCS	Generic, postal and switchboard nos	NAMPOL – Facebook Like
• Trade & Industry	Could	not	Access site		
• Veterans Affairs	2013	15 498	Home, Background, The Minister, The Deputy Minister, The Veterans Act, Organisational Structure, High	Full addresses of community liaison officers in all 13 regions i.e. Mobile,	

GRN Website ¹	Updated	Site statistics	Main Content	Contact details	Comments
			Level Initiatives, Veterans Board	email, land and fax no	
• Works and Transport			Minister's Office, Deputy Minister's Office, PS's Office, Deputy PS's Office, Departments, Public Entities, Stakeholders, Services, Projects, Vacancies, Wellness, Downloads	Full contacts of regional offices but with no names	
• Youth, National Services, Sport and Culture	2011	4 020	Minister, Deputy Minister, Permanent Secretary, Organisational Structure, Document Archive, Programmes and Activities, Photo Gallery, Vacancy, Contact Us	Minister and Dep. Minister tel. and fax, no mobile but have e-mail addresses	
Government Agencies					
Agencies					
• Anti-Corruption Commission	2014		Toll free line, structure, mission, downloads, Act, Annual report	Predetermined message user generated	RSS Feed, hotline toll free number
• Electoral Commission of Namibia	2014		Google map, address, info on services and voting	Predetermined message user generated	FB and Twitter links take you to ECN 2,798 likes and 150 visits FB
• Namibia Central Intelligence Service	None				
• National Planning Commission	2013	15 likes of FB and 1 twitter post	Services, Development partners, National documents, news	Physical location given Predetermined message user generated	FB, Linked In, Twitter and GooglePlus. Requires login

GRN Website¹	Updated	Site statistics	Main Content	Contact details	Comments
• Office of the Auditor-General	2012	None	Auditors reports, services	Contacts page organised and have faces of staff, landline and e-mail address	Also have physical address. Audit, admin or web related
• Office of the Ombudsman	May 2014	4728 since 2012	Filing a complaint, structure, vision, mission	General switchboard and landline and fax, no names, Regional switchboard contact details given, no names	
• Public Service Commission of Namibia	2014	None	Reports, Services, what they do,	Physical Address given and general contact number	Only contact details of secretaries and the US: PSC
Legislative and Judiciary					
Legislative					
• National Assembly	No access				
• National Council	No access				
Judiciary					
• Supreme Courts of Namibia	2007	Maintained by UNAM	High Court and Supreme court	Photo of Judges and resumes General tel., fax and registrar e-mail address	
• High Court	No access				
• Lower Courts	No access				

Appendix 5: Interview Guide

1. How does Namibia compare in terms of the use of social media in public participation within the international and regional context of good governance?
2. How do governments engage the public in decision-making?
3. Does the O/M/A have an e-government strategic plan?
4. What is the approximate timeframe for the implementation of the plan?
5. Who is responsible for the implementation of the plan?
6. Who is responsible for the management of the e-government strategy?
7. What are the legislative, regulatory and policy mechanisms in place to promote public participation in Namibia?
8. To what extent does the political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental milieu allow for public participation in Namibia?
9. How are Namibians in general involved in governance and public administration issues?
10. In what ways can ICT help in encouraging public participation?
11. To what extent is the public service of Namibia ready to use social media as a means of improving current public participation efforts?
12. In what ways can social media be introduced within the public service of Namibia to support current efforts in promoting public participation?
13. What are the criteria for successful public participation?
14. What is the role of public participation in advancing Namibia's development agenda?

Appendix 6: Summary of raw data from in-depth Interviews, field notes and emerging findings

<p>1. How does Namibia compare in terms of the use of social media in public participation within the international and regional context of good governance?</p>	<p>Responses triangulate the literature and public policy documents and existing legislation. Only ECN and ACC use Twitter & Facebook. MET, NAMPOL, MFA and NPC – futile efforts at SM logo (FB) embedding. PP theory suggests that these are at the very lowest level of PP.</p>
<p>2. How do governments engage the public in decision-making?</p>	<p>Collective agreement that the public should actively participate in the development of government policies. One respondent OPM - government to participate with the public but the main emphasis of public participation for policy development was on the internal role players: CROs, PS's & Cabinet. Interactive participation efforts non-existent – mainly one-way communication.</p>
<p>3. Does the O/M/A have an e-government strategic plan?</p>	<p>e-Government strategic action plan published but not disseminated widely. The Ministry of Regional & Local Government – only OMA to have an action Plan due to achieving decentralisation objectives. Very few public servants are familiar with the national plan. Issues of how people access social media not addressed.</p>
<p>4. What is the approximate timeframe for the implementation of the plan?</p>	<p>Approximately 5 years for the national e-Government plan; efforts in the RC due to challenges to decentralisation prolongs time for implementation.</p>
<p>5. Who is responsible for the implementation of the plan?</p>	<p>Various role-players involved. Mainly OPM and MICT. There appears to be confusion on which role-players should drive the national strategy and the public sector strategy.</p>
<p>6. Who is responsible for the management of the e-government strategy?</p>	<p>Once again, various role-players were cited with key role-players being OPM and MICT. Private sector and the SOE role-players such as Telecom, MTC increasingly more important. WACS to address access issues in terms of affordability and addressing digital divide.</p>
<p>7. What are the legislative, regulatory and policy mechanisms in place to promote public participation in Namibia?</p>	<p>Several acts as indicated in the study were cited and listed, confirming the importance of providing an enabling environment. Issues of non-discriminatory access were mentioned, as were the absence of policy guidelines on how SM is to be used for PP.</p>
<p>8. To what extent does the political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental milieu allow for public participation in Namibia?</p>	<p>Implications on universal freedoms; speaking to the notions of the 5th Estate and move towards two-way participation. Reality on the ground - no-one controls social media. Is it possible to influence but not to change the status quo for two-way policy making? Issues of feedback and management of communications through SM critical. Language and diversity issues play role.</p>
<p>9. How are Namibians in general involved in governance and public administration issues?</p>	<p>Lethargic; poorly attended PP gatherings. Host of challenges. UA&S Policy & ICT Policy mentioned as ready and good on paper but fraught with challenges w.r.t. implementation. Poor confidence in GRN.</p>
<p>10. In what ways can ICT help in encouraging public participation?</p>	<p>May help through use of sms, and social media once policies and guidelines for use are in place. Bureaucratic structure. Public do not understand government business. Not enough public education.</p>
<p>11. To what extent is the public service of Namibia ready to use social media as a means of improving current public participation efforts?</p>	<p>No major strides made in exploiting SM as a complimentary strategy. Absence of policy, issues of security and M&E of the medium remain a challenge. Misuse of SM to disparage others. "High entertainment value".</p>
<p>12. In what ways can social media be introduced within the public service of Namibia to support current</p>	<p>Objectives need to be clear (OPM). Manner and process of providing feedback to promote two-way dialogue still an issue. GRN still heavily bureaucratic. Efforts to use it during voting period / elections</p>

<p>efforts in promoting public participation?</p>	<p>enhanced. Use of SMS; opinion polls; personalisation. Redirection to website. Access and cost effectiveness. Address language issues; integration; Use of social media and other Apps. Redirection to OMA website.</p>
<p>13. What are the criteria for successful public participation?</p>	<p>i-Government mind-set. Full service integration for improved service delivery. Personalised, access through any mediums, particularly smartphones and mobile technology. Resonates with the theory that ideal PP strategies must be at the highest levels of Arnstein's ladder & the IAP2 Spectrum. Use of SM supplementary.</p>
<p>14. What is the role of public participation in advancing Namibia's development agenda?</p>	<p>PP (and the corresponding use of SM – promotion of universal freedoms; free speech, thinking, notion of two way communication accountability – communication – democracy – good governance – supports developmentalist thinking / agenda for Namibia.</p>