THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO ENHANCE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WITH NAMIBIAN PARLIAMENTARIANS

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PAMELA MATE

200423142

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MAIN SUPERVISOR: PROF. CATHRINE NENGOMASHA

CO-SUPERVISOR: MS MARTHA MOSHA

ABSTRACT

This thesis aimed to determine the extent to which social media can enhance public engagement between Members of Parliament and the public in Namibia. The purpose of the study was to determine how social media could be a vehicle or platform for Members of Parliament (MPs) to communicate matters of the legislature to the public, and how the public would use social media to communicate and interact with MPs. The study is founded on the Diffusion of Innovation Theory and, therefore, explored social media use at Parliament based on the five elements of innovation, namely relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability. A quantitative research approach was employed by way of survey research design, using a survey questionnaire to collect data. All 146 MPs and people in the Windhoek city centre at the time of the research formed the population. Several sampling methods were used - simple random sampling method for MPs and a combination of purposive, stratified and convenience sampling for members of the public. Purposive sampling was used to produce a representative sample of the Namibian public. Stratified sampling was used to ensure that there was equal representation of male and female while convenience sampling was used to ensure that all respondents were eighteen years and above and Namibian citizens. SPSS software was used to come up with descriptive and inferential statistics. The study's key findings revealed on the information component, social media had relative advantage over traditional media while on predictability, structure and format, traditional media trumped social media. The study further found that social media use for engagement included a relatively small number of people separate from those already politically involved. The study concludes that social media has still not attained dominance and preference over traditional media as an engagement tool for MPs and the public. Additionally, the main barriers to social media use are the absence of a policy or framework, unaffordable data, skills training and general lack of interest in the work of Parliament. In addition, it was found that social media for engagement was perceived as

complex, suggesting that social media use would be met with difficulty. The study, therefore, recommends the formulation of a social media use policy for MPs and social media training to encourage use. Furthermore, social media use for public engagement is still a new phenomenon in Namibia, hence, there is a need for a Namibian study on the effectiveness of social media in reaching the marginalised and disengaged.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

APP	-	All People's Party
CoW	-	City of Windhoek
CRAN	-	Communication Regulatory Authority of Namibia
DOI	-	Diffusion of Innovation
GRN		Government of the Republic of Namibia
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
IPPR		Institute of Public Policy Research
IPU	-	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IT	-	Information Technology
MEP	-	Member of European Parliament
MICT	-	Ministry of Information and Communication Technology
MP	-	Member of Parliament
MTC	-	Mobile Telecommunications Company
NA	-	National Assembly
NC	-	National Council
NUDO	-	National Unity Democratic Organisation
PDM	-	Popular Democratic Movement
RDP	-	Rally for Democracy and Progress
RP	-	Republican Party
SMS	-	Short Message Service
SADC		Southern African Development Community
SNS	-	Social Networking Site
SNSes	-	Social Networking Sites
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

Swapo - South West Africa People's Organisation

TRA - Theory of Reasoned Action

TAM - Technology Acceptance Model

UK - United Kingdom

UPM - United Democratic Movement

UNAM- University of Namibia

UTAUT - Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology

WRP - Worker's Revolutionary Party

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The glory belongs to God and to Him alone. He is my rock and my fortress. He is my enabler and my strength. All my thanksgiving, adoration and honour are for you my Lord. Please receive it, for you are so worthy. Isaiah 41:10 remains my portion.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my darling daughter Jozika Mate. Everything I do, I do it for you. You bring so much joy, meaning and purpose to my life. May you grow up to be bigger, better and bolder than I ever could be. I love you and thank God for your life.

DECLARATION

I, Pamela Mate, declare hereby that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part thereof, has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

Student's Signature	30/10/2020 Date

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the study whose title is *The Use of Social Media to Enhance Public Engagement with Namibian Parliamentarians.* The chapter begins with the background of the study, followed by the statement of the problem and research objectives. Then the chapter discusses the significance, limitations, and delimitations of the study, after which the context of the study and a brief of the research methodology are presented, concluding with a summary of the chapter.

1.2. Background of the Study

Since the introduction of social media at government level in the last decade, 29% of national parliaments have opened a Facebook and/or Twitter account (Leston-Bandeira & Bender, 2013), but whether these sites communicate effectively and are engaging has not been researched for the Namibian Parliament. Williamson (2013) states that Members of Parliament (MPs) now post comments on social media as events unfold and the public, therefore, communicates with the members, and further notes that "social media are a new and effective way for parliaments (institutionally and members) to connect with the public" (p. 7).

This statement is supported by Loukis, Charalabidis and Androutsopoulou (2014), who discovered in their study on social media use in the European Parliament that content published by members of the European Parliament reached many citizens, making it possible for MPs to communicate messages and content concerning problems that require policy change. However, MPs face various challenges in using social media to communicate with citizens, such as the

fear of bringing a state institution into disrepute. These and other challenges identified under this section are discussed thoroughly in Chapter 2.

Using new technologies, citizens now have many ways of representation and engagement. It is important that parliaments and MPs understand these changes in technology and adapt to this ever-changing and demanding pace of innovation to meet public expectations (Power, 2012). To meet these expectations, MPs are now increasingly expected to use digital technologies for public engagement. Of the total members surveyed (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2018), 96% used mobile devices, while 80% expected communication with the public via new digital media tools to increase. Meanwhile, 75% of MPs regarded e-mail as an important communication tool, followed by social media networking sites (SNSes), Facebook and WhatsApp (IPU, 2018). For this study, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram were selected as the social networking tools under study. The researcher will now expound to substantiate why these four SNSes were selected. Several studies in Namibia, including that of Matali (2017), used Facebook to measure the impact of social media on activities of a radical social movement. Facebook is reported to have 570,000 subscribers, most them aged between 18 and 24 years, with men marginally more than women by a mere 0.1%. Facebook is particularly common, as over 10% of Namibia's population has a Facebook account, most of them youth between the ages of 18 and 35 years, and a majority of these are aged between 18 and 24 years (Shihomeka, 2019). A pilot survey at the University of Namibia (UNAM) revealed that students were interested in having a Facebook account and had knowledge of other social media such as YouTube and Twitter (Fox, 2010). Shihomeka (2019) further supports this claim when he states that, "an increasing number of young people around the world have been found to use new media such as Facebook, Twitter, and the mobile phone as avenues for political engagement, social leisure, and entertainment" (p.5). Furthermore, six of

the 11 political parties with seats in the Namibian Parliament have social media presence on Facebook or Twitter or both (Institute of Public Policy Research [IPPR], 2015a). Based on the above findings, the present study was thus well-informed when it decided on the SNSes selected for this study.

The Government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN), through its organisations, ministries and agencies, uses the social media as a formal communication tool. However, the current social media use policy (Ministry of Information and Communication Technology [MICT], 2016), which runs until 2022, only makes provision for government information workers. This leaves MPs without guiding framework to communicate online in their formal capacity. The IPU has emphasised the need for parliaments and MPs to seek engagement by championing public engagement in the law-making process through finding the people right where they are, and that is on social media (Williamson, 2013). This notion clearly demonstrates the importance of social media in participatory democracy and the willingness of parliamentary governing bodies and governments to have MPs actively engage and interact with the people they represent.

Social media and its engagement for parliaments is not only necessary, but also central to the very essence of these institutions. All parliaments aim to connect government with the people and public engagement remains a recurrent strategic objective of many parliaments of the world, further establishing that it is central to its functions (Power, 2012). The parliament of neighbouring South Africa aims to build a people's parliament that is responsive to the needs of the people, further deepening public engagement and as well as public participation, while in Malawi, one of their parliament's four strategic objectives is to "increase outreach work in order to bring parliament closer to the people" (Power, 2012, p. 25). For the Namibian Parliament, the National Council 2017/2018–2021/2022 Strategic Plan also identifies public

participation as a key objective to realise and enhance public engagement in the legislative process (National Council, 2017).

To enhance and revitalise public engagement in the political discourse, a third of parliaments in the world was present on social media by 2012, while many others have since joined (Williamson, 2013). IPU Secretary General (Williamson, 2013) further expounds on the reasons why guidelines were necessary for parliaments, highlighting the need to encourage wider, more efficient and effective social media use by parliaments. Social media "can strengthen links between parliaments and citizens and thereby contribute to better parliaments and stronger democracies" (p. 4).

Parliaments in Africa are shaped by colonial legacy. Hence, Namibia's adoption of the Westminster-style parliamentary system, constituting of two Houses of Parliament (Power, 2012). Namibia's legislature thus comprises the National Assembly (NA) and National Council (NC). The Namibian Parliament created its official Facebook page in 2010 and its Twitter account six years later in 2016 (D. Nahogandja, personal communication, March 27, 2017). This demonstrates that government institutions recognise social media as a vital tool for engagement.

From the invention of Web 2.0 technologies, parliaments, as institutions, have been aware of the strengths and opportunities that they present. Following is a summary of e-parliament reports produced by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2008; 2010; 2012; 2016; 2018). The first e-parliament report of 2008 stressed the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in enhancing engagement and highlighted important differences between parliaments in high- and low-income countries. However, many parliaments still did not understand the potential impact of ICT and its place or role (IPU, 2008). By 2010, the e-

parliament model was based on several pillars, among them active engagement and adequate resources (IPU, 2010). The 2012 e-Parliament report revealed progress in the development of e-parliaments and that an increasing number of political leaders were gearing towards establishing institutional goals and objectives for ICT, while mobile devices and applications were adopted more widely. A major communication challenge identified was the lack of knowledge and member experience with technology, as opposed to lack of access. Meanwhile, a significant number of parliaments identified the lack of knowledge on the part of citizens about law-making and the legislative process in general (IPU, 2012). By 2014, internet access was available in most parliaments and that year's report noted that the use of ICT required a commitment to transparency and accessibility. Additionally, the report looked at how the attitudes of politicians could be transformed to increase transparency and promote two-way dialogue with the public (Williamson, 2013). By 2016, significant progress had been made and the digital parliament was largely realised, linking citizens and lawmakers, as was previously envisaged (IPU, 2016). By 2018, social media had overtaken broadcasting as a medium for communication for parliaments and their citizens. Many parliaments saw digital media as having greater potential to traditional media while radio, as a traditional media platform, remained relevant, especially in developing countries. Around 75% of citizens are reported to have used digital channels to communicate with MPs (IPU, 2018).

SNSes became useful tools that enabled citizens to connect and communicate more effectively with parliaments and MPs. Concerning this study, the most important revelation from the 2016 IPU survey is that for ICT to be truly transformative for parliaments and enhance communication, openness and citizen engagement and participation, the MPs themselves must provide the required political leadership (IPU, 2016). In support of this, Power (2012) argues that the public deem parliaments as essential in the functioning of representative democracy

and although they may appear low on certain polls on trust, the opinion and attitudes towards MPs tend to be higher, thereby increasing expectation. The 2018 report indicates that more parliaments were using ICT applications to inform, explain and engage with citizens (IPU, 2018).

As previously discussed in this section, by 2016 parliaments were increasingly adopting new media. However, traditional media such as radio and television remain important and preferred largely due to the unreliability of internet access for MPs, parliaments, and citizens alike. In Africa particularly, radio remains the primary source of information (Power, 2012), while in Namibia, 69% of the population has access to radio, and the percentage is even higher for urbanites (Shihomeka, 2019). There has been an improvement in barriers to citizens' access to the internet from 2016 to 2018 but this improvement is not evenly distributed, as internet access remains a barrier in low-income countries, especially those with large rural areas such as Namibia. In 2016, social media tools took the lead among television and radio as the media most preferred and used by parliaments to communicate with citizens and by 2018, 70% of the parliaments were using some type of SNS. On the other hand, most MPs were still using email, followed by instant messaging, websites, and social media, respectively, although largely used to broadcast as opposed to engaging (Williamson, 2013).

As citizen's expectations change, so will the response from parliaments and MPs. Communication technology and inundated media coverage of politics and governance have thrust parliaments and MPs in the media fore, thereby increasing the fear of being overwhelmed by the quantity of communication (Power, 2012). This is intensified by inadequate skill levels, lack of training for MPs and concerns over security and trust of social media platforms remains

a challenge. And although over 97% of parliaments were online, many were using these online platforms to give information and not to receive it (Power, 2012).

On the part of the citizens, limited internet access, skills and knowledge about parliament were identified as barriers to involvement, and Williamson (2013) claims that there is a willingness by parliaments to adopt new technologies, albeit, not at the rate of the citizens. In another study on citizen engagement in politics through digital media in Namibia, Shihomeka (2019) found that poor network was a challenge to social media engagement. That study further found that old media shared preference with new media, although social media now had a wider reach, especially among the youth. The study by Shihomeka (2019) concludes that all media could enhance engagement and that social media, therefore, could be used for engagement, which is a conclusion this study also reached.

The social media use policy of the GRN states that social media "helps to add value to the methods through which government engage the public in social dialogue with the purpose of providing access to public information in order to create knowledge-based society," (MICT, 2016, p. 6). However, the social media policy mentioned above fails to give directives where MPs are concerned. It only implores government communicators to ensure the implementation of the document is in accordance with other national documents and omits any clear policy or guideline relating to MPs. The same can be said for the Parliament secretariat and political parties represented in the legislature, as none of them has guidelines for MPs' social media.

> *The use of social media for non-personal purposes has been described as a frontier-like environment with a lack of clear rules, and a lack of control. In such an environment, the established rules likely do not apply, and may in fact be harmful. Realisation began to dawn that the increased use of the Internet and social media*

> *demanded a dedicated, specific policy response from government entities that had designs on using it* (Fitch et al., 2009, as cited in Magro, 2012, p. 152).

In the absence of any clear guidelines, Williamson (2013) asserts that MPs would not effectively engage with the public on social media in the fear of side-stepping parliamentary protocol and unauthorised dissemination of information. The bureaucratic environment in which Namibian MPs operate would make it more challenging to operate without a policy or guideline. Despite the rapid growth of ICT in Africa, in general, and Namibia, in particular, citizens still experience challenges in accessing internet services that would allow them to participate and engage with their lawmakers, the MPs. Hamajoda (2016) identifies several challenges that will be expounded on in greater detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis. However, a few challenges relating to the context will be highlighted here. One of the challenges has to do with poor network connection in certain parts of Namibia that could deny citizens internet access.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

A research problem or statement of the problem is an "issue or concern that needs to be addressed" (Creswell, 2014, p. 20). The 'issue' under study was to investigate whether social media could be used to optimise engagement between MPs and the public. The use of social media has been seen to enhance communication at both social and government level. New media has a part to play in enhancing democracy. A study was done on citizen engagement in politics through digital media in Namibia (Shihomeka, 2019), but this study targeted the youth in the Ohangwena region in northern Namibia and how they used mobile phones to engage with their political leaders. However, no study has been conducted in Namibia, as far as this researcher is aware, which investigates how Namibian MPs could effectively optimise the use

of social media for public engagement and determine if the challenges identified in the orientation of this study applied to Namibia. A Namibian Afrobarometer survey conducted in 2014 revealed that there is a lack of consultation between the public and regional councillors, some of whom were included in the population of this study. This called for research that will provide a suitable engagement strategy (Shihomeka, 2019), a call this study heeds in part, by way of recommending the formulation of a social media policy for MPs that will provide a clear strategy for engagement.

1.4. Research Objectives

The aim of this study was to determine how social media can be used to enhance public engagement between MPs and the public. The objectives of the study were to:

1. Investigate the perceptions on the use of the social media as a tool for public engagement;
2. Explore whether social media can play a vital role in creating a responsive parliament;
3. Establish the desired nature of social media engagement between citizens and MPs;
4. Identify factors that determine the use of the social media by MPs and the public;
5. Recommend how Namibian MPs can use the social media to enhance engagement and communication with the public.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study on social media use by the Namibian MPs is important for several reasons. First, the information derived from this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on this topic. Second, the recommendations of the study may inform policy and practice and may, therefore,

be incorporated into the Social Media Use Policy and Communication Plan (MICT, 2016) of the GRN in future for implementation. As far as this researcher is aware, there have been several studies done in the greater area of media. As previously mentioned, the study by Shihomeka (2019) focused specifically on mobile phone-related citizen engagement in one of Namibia's 14 regions, the Ohangwena region, thereby limiting the scope of the study, whereas the present study considered several social media uses from all internet-connected devices including computers, from respondents from all parts of the country. This thesis thus fills this gap.

Filling this gap in literature may provide a better understanding of the nature of parliamentary communication in the new media age, and provide solutions and enhance participatory democracy not only for Namibia, but also in other parts of the world.

1.6. Limitation of the Study

Limitations are those factors which are beyond the control of the researcher. This section is concerned with what can and what cannot be done, guiding the reader towards understanding the limits of the study (Denscombe, 2012). Limits in quantitative research are limits of structured observation and analysing secondary data (Flick, 2011). For this study, the researcher only considered respondents in the Windhoek city centre at the time of the research. Therefore, the researcher is aware that this is not a representative sample of the Namibian population, nor of the Windhoek population. Hence, the findings are not generalisable to the entire Namibian population.

1.7. Delimitation of Study

The term delimitation means to "demarcate or set the boundaries around something" (Denscombe, 2012, p. 69). This involves setting self-imposed limits and boundaries that have

been identified by the researcher (Denscombe, 2012). For this study, the population of members of the public was limited to Namibian citizens, because this is the group with whom engagement and interaction is sought.

1.8. Context of the Study

Before the study delves into ICT policy formulation, it is imperative that the researcher briefly touches on the history of mobile telecommunications and internet use in Namibia, as it is regarded as a key vehicle for public engagement. According to Shihomeka (2019), the surge in mobile phone ownership and access to the internet have greatly influenced communication and interaction between citizens and government.

Hesselmark and Miller (2003, p. 5) state that since the mid-1990s, the growth of the ICT industry has been exceptional, adding that "much of the growth has taken place in the developing world…and has resulted in a significant increase of telephonic access for marginalised people". The authors further state that the Mobile Telecommunications Company (MTC) officially started operating as Namibia's cellular service provider in April 1995, and by mid-2001, MTC had reached 100,000 customers (Hesselmark & Miller, 2003). Namibia went from just about 20,000 cell phone users in 1998, to over a million users in 2008. This resulted in broader and wider communication (Economy Watch, 2010). Today, this figure exceeds that of the entire population, and Shihomeka (2019) notes that this could be because one user may have more than one mobile device.

IWS (2016) reveals that there are over 470,000 internet users (23.4%) via mobile phone daily. As of March 2018, Namibia's mobile phone network population coverage increased to 95% and subscriptions were recorded at 112.95 per 14,100 people, signalling the rapid growth of mobile communications in Namibia (Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia

[CRAN], 2018), so much so that the data indicate there are more mobile phones than there are people in Namibia. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) reports that Africa had about 162 million active mobile broadband subscriptions in 2015 (Shihomeka, 2019). This increase has resulted in what some authors (Ponder & Haridakis, 2015) believe will cause an increase in political engagement.

The study now analyses the ICT policy implementation in Namibia. The Telecommunications Policy for Namibia (MICT, 2009) defines ICT as "all technologies that store process and transmit information and that allow people or devices to communicate with each other" (p. 6). ICT infrastructure has grown significantly since the introduction of ICT in Namibia. Namibia digitalised its telecommunication switching and transmission network in 1999 with the laying of the fibre optic cables that were to make data affordable, bandwidth faster and network accessible (Afunde, 2015).

According to the General Policy Guidelines on Universal Access and Service in Communications (MICT, 2013), Namibia aims to create a society and economy where information and knowledge are an abundant resource for individuals, communities and businesses, for men and women and those living with disabilities as well as the marginalised, in urban and rural areas in order to address the digital divide and to provide an ICT sector that enables social development and economic growth for all. Despite these improvements, Namibians continue to have uneven access to media, particularly the internet. Goggin (2006) refers to this as the digital divide. To further address this cause, associations that promote internet access and use, such as the Internet Society Chapter in Namibia, have since been established (CRAN, 2018). It is reported that 69% of Namibians have access to the radio, with urban Namibia recording higher access by only 9%. However, the difference is wider for

mobile phones between urban and rural areas. Of the total 52.6% with access to mobile phones, more than half (68.6%) is in urban areas while the remaining 40.6% is in rural areas. However, access to ICTs such as computers and the internet is limited, and more so in rural Namibia (NSA, as cited by Shihomeka, 2019).

The sincerity of the Namibian government in realising this is evident with the formation of a single MICT, as is in line with countries leading the ICT sector. The MICT is responsible for all ICT policy formulation, including e-government and other initiatives that may provide citizens access to government. This objective requires the availability, affordability and accessibility of ICT networks and services from fixed and mobile devices to broadband-enabled services. It also necessitates an environment in which devices and services will be affordable and relevant to the people of Namibia, such as broadband, high-speed data transmission, which means bandwidth higher than 2 Mbps (MICT, 2009a). The Telecommunications Policy for the Republic of Namibia (MICT, 2009a) characterises telecommunications in Namibia as having increased access to the internet and growth in the ICT sector, improved literacy and skills development in ICT, provided for independent regulation of the sector and fair competition. Despite all these achievements, Namibia's ICT usage was described low and not affordable. The same report further states that Namibia lacks an innovative environment with poor ICT usage. However, the report ranked Namibia's political and regulatory environment favourably on the sub-index, which assesses the usage of ICTs by individuals, business and government (World Economic Forum, 2013).

Namibia measures 824,265 square kilometres. To the south, Namibia borders South Africa. Angola and Zambia borders Namibia to the north and Botswana and Zimbabwe to the east. According to the country's 2011 population census, the population of the country stood at

2,104,900 (National Planning Commission, 2012) for a country roughly the combined size of Sweden and Denmark, making it one of the world's most sparsely populated countries. However, latest statistics put the figure at 2,495,770 (World Population Review, 2019). Namibia is a largely rural country, with 55.2% of the population living in the urban areas compared to 44.8% in rural areas (Worldometer, 2020).

Namibia's population resides in 14 regions. This includes a few main cities and towns, many villages and settlements, and many rural and remote areas. Most of the population lives in remote highly dispersed areas, with limited or no access to ICT infrastructure. According to the General Policy Guidelines on Universal Access and Service in Communications (MICT, 2013), ICT is imperative to social development and economic growth.

Despite vast deposits of natural resources, Namibia remains one of the most unequal countries in the world in terms of income, and its capital city Windhoek ranks among the most expensive cities to live in in Africa. Unemployment is also very high and per capita gross domestic product is low. According to Vision 2030, Namibia intends to move away from a factor-driven economy to a services-led economy by 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2004). Vision 2030 stipulates that ICT must be the most important sector in economic development by 2030. As part of moving into the services era, the Namibian government seeks to introduce electronic government services in areas such as information services and education. This will require Namibia's population to have access to ICT infrastructure to use e-government services and to participate in the services industries of the economy (MICT, 2013). Vision 2030 aims to transform Namibia into an innovative, knowledge-based society, supported by a dynamic, responsive and highly effective education and training system.

However, the Global Information Technology Report of 2016 (World Economic Forum, 2016) describes the usage of ICT in Namibia as low and not affordable, lacking an innovative environment with poor ICT usage by government. In the overall Networked Readiness Index, Namibia ranked 99 out of 139 countries, an improvement from position 111 out of 144 economies on the Networked Readiness Index (World Economic Forum, 2016).

In the overall environment for technology use and creation, Namibia ranked 53 (World Economic Forum, 2016). The political and regulatory environment ranked 31, a significant difference from the 103 ranking for the business and innovation environment sub-index (World Economic Forum, 2016). This is a clear indication that policies and political will is there, hence the establishment of a regulatory authority. However, the business and innovation sector is lagging behind.

On the readiness sub-index, Namibia ranked even lower at position 110 (World Economic Forum, 2016). The pillars for readiness are infrastructure, where the country ranked 81, affordability, which ranked 119 (the poorest recorded for the 2016 report) and 109 on skills (World Economic Forum, 2016). Namibia recognises the access deficit with respect to broadband internet communications and, according to the Universal Access and Service Policy for Information and Communications Technologies (MICT, 2009b), the country aims to achieve 98% universal access and 95% universal service in respect of telephony, broadcasting and broadband services within a period of 10 years or less. In terms of broadband infrastructure, Namibia has undersea cables, landing stations, rights of way and radio-frequency spectrum, backhaul infrastructure and mile infrastructure (MICT, 2013). Howie (2010) claims that discussions on ICT policies in developing countries take place from the perspective of those developing countries with good infrastructure and this results in gaps between policies and

practice. Although Namibia has been commended for its efforts in ICT infrastructure, it is another challenge to ensure that the benefits trickle down to the people at the grassroots level.

The usage sub-index ranked Namibia 94 out of 139 countries and reported individual, business and government usage at 98, 57 and 92 respectively (World Economic Forum, 2016). This indicates that government and individuals use the internet poorly, while businesses fair better. However, whether this usage is for purposes of participatory democracy is a question this study aimed to probe.

Another revelation relevant to this study is that although the country ranked exceptionally well for mobile network coverage, the internet bandwidth was low as 68 (World Economic Forum, 2016). Additionally, although it ranked a satisfactory 69 on prepaid cellular tariffs, Namibia's fixed broadband internet tariffs were at a staggering high at position 121 (World Economic Forum, 2016). However, within Africa and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) economic bloc, Namibia ranked 16th and fourth, respectively, for offering the cheapest voice and short message service (SMS) products in 2017. These statistics also reflect in the General Policy Guidelines on Universal Access and Service in Communications (MICT, 2013), which states that mobile telecommunications access in Namibia is relatively high (98%) and includes those in the low-income household category. However, there remains a substantial lack of access to the internet and broadband and this gap is wider between urban and rural inhabitants. As stated previously by the World Economic Forum (2016) report on ICT, as highlighted under this section, the affordability of ICT products in Namibia remains a challenge. The country ranked 21st in Africa and fifth in SADC in offering affordable mobile prepaid broadband prices and a shift towards data revenues driven by social media services was reported (CRAN, 2018).

The General Policy Guidelines on Universal Access and Service in Communications (MICT, 2013) further states that only 46% of Namibians aged 15 and above and living in rural areas had a mobile phone in 2011, compared to 77% in the same age group living in urban areas. Again, only 2% of rural households had internet access, compared to 27% of urban households, further reflecting the urban-rural divide in respect to access to ICTs, which is related to other urban-rural disparities such as access to electricity and telecommunications. Against this access gap, the key focus priority is reducing the urban-rural divide (MICT, 2013).

GRN is divided into three organs: the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. These three organs of the state are said to be independent and enjoying a clear separation of powers (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2016). This may, however, be a misrepresentation, as a cabinet minister, who serves in the executive, also serves in the legislature as MP. The executive consists of the President and cabinet ministers. The judiciary is the courts and the legislative branch consists of Parliament. The two houses of Parliament, namely the National (NA) and the NC are together known as the Parliament of the Republic of Namibia and have 146 combined members (Republic of Namibia, 2016). The NA has 104 members who secure seats through the party list. The remaining eight are selected by the President. The 42 NC members are direct representatives of the people, having been elected from the regions. Each region elects three regional councillors to serve in the NC. Of the 42 members in the NC, 40 are from the ruling party, the South West Africa People's Organisation (Swapo), and the remaining two from National Unity Democratic Organisation (Nudo) and Popular Democratic Movement (PDM). Political parties have greater representation in the NA than in the NC. In the NA, the ruling Swapo party has 77 seats, the PDM has five, the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP) has three. Nudo, All Peoples Party (APP) and Workers Revolutionary Party

(WRP) have two seats each followed by the United People's Movement (UPM) and Republican Party (RP) with a seat each (Parliament of Namibia, n. d.).

1.8.1. ICT Policy Formulation

Many governments have realised the benefits that ICT offers and, therefore, have developed national ICT policies. Based on a study focused on the use of ICT in education in Africa, Farrell and Isaacs (2007), report that 36 out of the 53 countries surveyed had ICT policies in place, although a few of these were underdeveloped or not developed at all. Further to this, Adam, Butcher, TusSubira and Sibthorpe (2011) claim that not all countries in Africa have complementary policies to the ICT policy or dedicated budgetary allocations. However, Namibia is one of the exceptions, as there are other policies such as the Telecommunications Policy and ICT Policy for Education, which strengthen the overall ICT policy. However, it is worth noting that there is a narrowing gap in the digital divide, and young people in developing countries now have access to mobile phones and are active social media users (West, 2015).

It is imperative that a study exploring social media use for engagement expound more on the concept of digital divide, as it is a major factor that impacts engagement. To address this initiative, the Namibian government introduced ICT in schools to accelerate the bridging of the digital divide. Studies found that improvements were made in ICT skills training in Africa, although not as significant, if one considers the resources and effort that is put into it (Afunde, 2015).

Namibia has been engaged in ICT and telecommunications policy-making and legislation since the early 1990s. In 1990, the Office of the Prime Minister created the Department of Public Service Information Technology Management to oversee the adoption and use of ICT in the public service. This was followed by the establishment of a Cabinet Committee on Information

Technology to ensure that ICT matters feature at the highest decision-making levels (Nengomasha & Uutoni, 2015).

In 1999, the second National Information and Communication Infrastructure workshop recommended the formation of a taskforce to draft an ICT policy by 2001. By 2002, the ICT policy was before the National Assembly and passed soon thereafter (Hesselmark & Miller, 2003). The ICT Policy for the Republic of Namibia of 2002 calls for the establishment of a body that will spearhead the implementation of the policy whose key recommendations are to boost rural access to information, strengthen the ICT professional community and achieve public ICT education (Nengomasha & Uutoni, 2015). Another policy, the Use of Electronic Communications and Transactions Bill, whose objective is to provide for the promotion, regulation and facilitation of e-communications and transaction (Nengomasha & Uutoni, 2015), is relevant to this study in that it aims to facilitate and promote the use of e-communication and e-governance by extension, thereby providing a safe and regulated environment in which to engage formally through ICT with government representatives, such as MPs. Numerous recommendations emanated from the ICT policy, including, enhancing rural access to information through multi-purpose telecentres, public access points as well as subsidised internet access. Other policies that emanated from the ICT policy are the Communication Act, Social Media Use and Implementation Policy, Access to Information Bill and the overall Government Communication Strategy.

The E-Governance Policy for the Public Service of Namibia of 2005 facilitates the provision of Government services via ICTs. The policy recognises the need for a new legal framework to provide key financial services and security for online government services, such as procurement, customs and taxation. The Information Technology Policy for the Public Service

seeks to create an environment that ensures that government reaps the benefits of computer use within and between government ministries (MICT, 2009b). Furthermore, the Communications Act of 2009 provides for the regulation of telecommunications services and networks, broadcasting, postal services and the use and allocation of radio spectrum, for which purpose CRAN was established (MICT, 2009b).

1.8.2. E-governance

As earlier alluded to, Namibia has an E-Governance Policy for the Public Service of Namibia of 2005, which ensures the government works towards realising its e-governance initiatives. Through this, Namibia promotes the use of ICT to enhance communication and interaction between Government and its citizens. Governments particularly use social media to involve citizens in decision-making and to broaden participatory democracy by helping citizens to communicate with MPs and with each other (Davies, 2014).

According to Shihomeka (2019), e-government initiatives in developing countries focus more on e-readiness, as opposed to empathising engagement. In the case of Namibia, government agencies are e-government-ready, meaning they are concerned about their relations with the citizens and, therefore, have online presence that allows it to transform how they connect with stakeholders. However, what is lacking is e-governance, which, according to (Shihomeka, 2019) is different from e-government. The author differentiates the two and describes e-governance as having more to do with engagement and participation, using social media and other new media technologies, with engagement being the component this study has aimed to research. Therefore, e-governance is the activity that ought to follow from e-government, wherein the government and political leaders employ social media to encourage engagement

in decision-making and policy formulation by allowing citizens to have a say in how they want to be governed.

Government also uses ICT to improve service delivery and democratic engagement and participation of government (Nengomasha & Uutoni, 2015). The use of ICT in Namibia has generated e-services, such as e-government and e-commerce. This sporadic use has made ICT services affordable for all people, including the disadvantaged citizens. Through proper use of technology, government can increase public access to information, improve the quality and safety of information and reduce access and use costs.

In the ministry of education's ICT policy, the government strives to produce ICT-literate citizens, who can work and participate in rising ICT economies and societies. The government strives to achieve this by improving the efficiency of education administration and management from the classroom level to the school and the entire education sector. There has also been provision made for informal education, such as the funding of facilities to access ICT through integrated multi-purpose regional centres, youth centres, vocational training centres, community skills development centres, libraries and teachers' resource centres and other such centres. Additionally, the Community Education for Youth programme also provides public access to ICTs (MICT, 2009b).

Then Minister of ICT Tjekero Tweya said statistics indicated that Namibia has 30% internet coverage. Then, Minister Tweya said 75% of Namibians were offline, something he said should be a concern to lawmakers and politicians (Namibian Broadcasting Corporation [NBC], 2017). The former Minister further noted that access does not only strengthen local governance, but also allows ordinary people to participate in e-governance and policy formulation (NBC, 2017).

1.8.3. Current Infrastructure, Policies and Bodies

For e-governance to be effective, the availability of ICT infrastructure is crucial. According to Nengomasha and Uutoni (2015), ICT infrastructure includes both hardware items such as telephones, mobile phones, personal computers and servers and software, including data, networks and software applications. In Africa, the lack of infrastructure remains a barrier to widespread development and adoption of e-government services and Namibia is no exception.

The 2013 Universal Access and Service Policy for Information and Communications Technologies identifies factors and resources concerning broadband that must be regulated to nurture and sustain the growth of ICT in the country (MICT, 2013). In addition to the infrastructure, a need was identified to foster affordable pricing, high quality of service and effective consumer protection to increase access and usage (MICT, 2013).

The 2009 Telecommunications Policy for the Republic of Namibia (MICT, 2009) acknowledges the large unmet demand for telecommunications services and this is what necessitated the establishment of CRAN in 2006 to ensure compliance from all sectors. The responsibilities of the regulatory authority are, among others, to protect consumers and purchasers from unfair pricing quality and variety of services, ensure that telecommunications are suited for economic and social development as well as promote fair competition to regulate pricing and access (MICT, 2009).

In addition to mobile voice communications and television broadcasting, the critical focus areas for policy intervention regarding universal access and service for information and communications technology services include mobile and fixed broadband internet (MICT, 2013).

Namibia's General Policy Guidelines on Universal Access and Service in Communications (MICT, 2013) states that the country aims to achieve universal access and service regarding all ICT technologies. The policy goals for access and service to ICTs include internet coverage for schools, informal businesses and health services. Added to this is the non-governmental sector that the policy identifies as a sector engaged in promoting democracy and social welfare. The policy document further states that universal access and service is an important component of an "emerging broadband-enabled economy and society, and a key to promoting Namibia's social development and economic growth, enabling infrastructure, content and services to reach all Namibians" (MICT, 2013, p. 4).

GRN encourages the development of electronic content services, specifically the emergence of electronic government services targeted at low-income and remote households (MICT, 2013). To this end, the regulator claims that active mobile broadband subscribers increased from 1.5 million in 2016 to 1.6 million in 2017, an indication that more people are using the internet via their mobile devices (CRAN, 2018).

In addition to providing service and access, the policy also provides the regulatory authorities with an enabling framework, to ensure availability and affordability of ICT products and uphold fair competition (MICT, 2013). It is against this background that CRAN commissioned the roll-out of ICT to unreached remote and rural areas in Namibia in 2015 when it announced that it would impose a universal access levy on the annual licensed ICT providers by 2017 to narrow the digital gap. CRAN hoped that about four years after collecting these levies, sufficient funds would have been amassed to roll out ICT infrastructure and services to remote areas with no access latest by 2021 (Weidlich, 2015). So, in 2017, CRAN imposed additional

obligations on telecommunications licences to accelerate coverage and improve service to remote and unserved areas (CRAN, 2018).

Namibia does not have an access to information law. The Draft Access to Information Bill is yet to be signed into law since it was tabled in 2016. In the absence of such an Act, there is no law that forces MPs or the institution of Parliament to disclose information. It remains to be seen whether greater engagement would come because of an Access to Information Bill. The Model Law on Access to Information in Africa recognises that if properly implemented, access to information legislation could provide good governance by enhancing accountability and greater involvement of the public in their affairs (African Commission on Human and People's Rights, 2013).

In terms of the law, the GRN complies with international standards in promoting legislation for information security, data protection and the protection of privacy to build confidence in the security of online communications (MICT, 2009). This confidence is an important factor in promoting the growth of ICT. The privacy of information is protected and monitoring and interception is only considered in matters of national importance. The GRN protects information privacy; and only intercepts and monitors information of national importance.

The Overarching Information Communications Technology Policy for the Republic of Namibia (MICT, 2009) states that Namibia has made significant strides in developing the ICT sector, despite the challenges that exist. One such stride is the development of a national ICT policy aimed at strengthening Namibia's position in the dissemination and use of ICT. According to the Government's Universal Access and Service Policy for Information and Communications Technologies (MICT, 2013, p. 7), "Universal access and service with respect to information and communications technology infrastructure, services and content is

supported by the Namibian government for all sectors", making this a priority for Namibia. Central to this is the desire to promote access for those Namibians in poor households and in rural areas. Documents such as the Telecommunications Policy and the Information Technology (IT) Policy are all central to the concepts that laid the foundation for the Overarching Information Communications Technology Policy of 2009 MICT, 2009). The GRN subscribes to various regional and international structures to improve the efficiency of its ICT sector. Namibia is signatory to initiatives such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development Declaration on Policy and Regulatory Framework for ICT Broadband Infrastructure Network for Eastern and Southern Africa of 2006, SADC Declaration on Information and Communications Technology of 2001 as well as the International Telecommunications Mission for ICT in Namibia, among many others (MICT, 2009).

1.8.4. Vision 2030

Statements made in Vision 2030, the National Development Plan 3, and other ICT policies such as the 2009 Communications Act indicate the intention by the GRN to ensure all Namibians have universal access and service with respect to ICT infrastructure, services and content. Vision 2030 document states that by 2030, Namibia must become a knowledge-based society (National Planning Commission, 2004). This intention is further strengthened in the Universal Access and Service Policy for Information and Communications Technologies (MICT, 2013), which aims to ensure shared ICT usage for all and in the case of Namibia, encompasses the availability, affordability and accessibility of ICT infrastructure, services and content to communities through public access points (MICT, 2013).

Government policies outline an ideal scenario where Namibia is an ICT-enabled, digitally supported nation that requires access to ICT services for development (MICT, 2013). These

information services may include public messaging particular issues via bulk mobile phone messaging services available to government and community at low cost. The hope for the near future is to offer electronic government services to the people, which would thus require effective access to broadband internet. Access to a wide choice of ICT services and platforms such as social media will play a crucial role in developing informed and empowered citizens that are able to contribute to democracy and development. Furthermore, the Universal Access and Service Policy for Information and Communications Technologies (2013) document states that effective pricing of mobile and internet services can promote social networking, presenting Namibians with opportunities to communicate more effectively with each other within Southern Africa (MICT, 2013). However, Vision 2030 makes no exclusive mention of extending the use of social media to include its use in law making.

In summary, the context of Namibia's ICT history, from policy formulation to infrastructure and institutional development highlights the vigour with which government has welcomed ICT innovation and, by extension, social media use. However, although the indexes reveal that Namibia is doing relatively well globally with respect to reach, Namibia's fixed broadband internet tariffs are at a staggering high. Affordability of data was highlighted as a challenge, but whether if and how it trickles down to impact engagement between MPs and the public remains to be seen. Overall, there is an enabling environment for social media engagement given the environment that exists in Namibia.

1.9. Research Methodology

This section only introduces the research methodology, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 3. This study was informed by a positivist paradigm; hence it applied a survey research design within the quantitative approach employing a survey questionnaire for data collection. Surveys

aim to collect information from a sample of well-defined population and study causal relationships between variables (Czaja & Blair, 2005). The data collection instruments were two questionnaires with closed-ended questions, one for the MPs and the other for respondents in the Windhoek city centre. A face-to-face administration of questionnaires was applied. This method was useful for a study on social media use because when a respondent does not understand a question, the researcher may help clarify it (Bernard, 2000). The study also conducted a pre-test that helped identify shortcomings in the data collection instruments. Six pre-test respondents were selected from the population from which the sample of the study was drawn. The challenges and errors identified were worked on to refine the actual data collection process and ensure minimal errors. The first population of the study was all 146 MPs of the Namibian Parliament. The second population was the people in the Windhoek city centre at the time of the research. A 90% confidence level was used to calculate the sample for the 146 MPs, equalling to 60 MPs. The simple random sampling method was used on the sample of MPs. The sample of respondents in the Windhoek city centre was 200, to allow for meaningful data analysis, generalisability, and interpretation of findings. The researcher was unable to determine the population size in the Windhoek city centre at the time of the research, as this information does not exist and, as such, was unable to draw an acceptable sample using a sampling formula.

The data were organised and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software for comparisons, summaries, graphs and interpretation. The research instrument developed by the researcher included nominal, ordinal and interval scales to strengthen the power of measurement.

1.10. Research Ethics

The consideration of ethical issues is an important component of research and researchers need to protect respondents and promote the integrity of the research (Israel & Hay, as cited in Creswell, 2014). Additionally, ethics provide guidance on what is permissible and what is not in the process of undertaking research and this is evident because researchers need prior approval to undertake a study from their respective ethics committee to ensure that the research causes no harm (Denscombe, 2014). As such, the researcher obtained ethical clearance (see Appendix "A") from UNAM with which the researcher obtained permission from Parliament and the City of Windhoek to conduct the research.

The National Assembly, the National Council and the City of Windhoek gave letters of access (see Appendices "B", "C", and "D"). The researcher ensured that the research conformed to ethical values, respecting the fundamental research principles of ethics and scientific integrity defined in the University of Namibia Research Ethics Policy (University of Namibia, 2018). Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) identify two general principles in research ethics, first, that respondents suffer no harm and, second, that participation is voluntary and informed. Denscombe (2014) expounds on this when he identifies four key principles of research ethics, which were all upheld in this study. First, is the protection of interest of respondents. Second, is voluntary participation based on informed consent. Third, is the upholding of scientific integrity and the avoidance of deception. Finally, is that the research complies with the laws of the land. However, "it is not enough to obtain permission, people need to know what they are being asked to participate in. Only then can they make an informed decision" (Neuman, 2011, p. 149). To uphold this, respondents must be provided with sufficient information about the study to judge reasonably whether they want to participate or not (Denscombe, 2014). Therefore, respondents were required to give informed consent (see Appendix "E") upon which the researcher and research assistant administered the questionnaires. Informed consent is an

important component of research because, first, it provides the potential respondent with enough information to make an informed decision on whether to participate or not and, second, it provides the researcher with evidence that respondents agreed to participate by way of written evidence (Denscombe, 2014).

The researcher informed respondents, where appropriate, about all aspects of the research, especially its aims and implications for them to make an informed decision. The researcher first reached a clear and fair arrangement with the respondents by way of appointments and other relevant arrangements, before involving or engaging them in the research process. Primary data collection from people or institutions using interviews or questionnaires where people are asked to provide information requires ethical approval (Denscombe, 2012). This research employed a survey questionnaire (see Appendices F and G) and based on this, an informed consent was obtained from the respondents before data was collected and participation was encouraged.

The researcher did not encroach on private details of the respondents other than the information as required in the data collection instruments. Due to familiarity with some of the respondents as an employee of the National Council, Parliament, the researcher recused herself from the exercise and allowed an assistant to administer and collect the questionnaires from National Council MPs to address the issue of familiarity. Anonymity with members of the public was adhered to. The researcher could, however, not guarantee anonymity with MPs, as this group was already identified.

The researcher emphasised from the onset the participants' volunteer status and their right to withdraw from the exercise at any time if they felt uncomfortable or were unable to continue, even during the data collection process. None of the respondents were coerced or forced to

participate in the research. The researcher also informed the respondents that no payment or any other compensation was offered for conducting the interview. The researcher does not regard the pursuit of knowledge as the supreme goal at the expense of the personal, social and cultural values of the respondents.

The researcher always respected the privacy and psychological well-being of respondents, especially regarding non-volunteers, based on observation or on records. The researcher did not encroach on the private details of the respondents other than the information as required in the data collection instruments. Names and contact details of respondents were not mentioned or required. The researcher honoured all guarantees of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher also guarded against coercing people to take part in the study and engaging in conduct that could humiliate respondents. The researcher could, however, not guarantee anonymity with MPs, as this group was already identified. The researcher exercised caution when discussing results of vulnerable people, such as respondents living with disabilities. The researcher was responsible, considerate and did nothing to injure, harm, or disturb the respondents during the data collection period.

Due to familiarity with some of the respondents, as an employee of the National Council, Parliament, the researcher recused herself from the exercise and allowed an assistant to administer and collect the questionnaires from National Council MPs to address the issue of familiarity. The research assistant participated in the pre-test of the data collection instruments, thereby undergoing training on administering and collecting questionnaires as well as adherence to ethical issues of privacy, confidentiality and upholding voluntary participation.

The study also upheld data protection principles, which guarded that data collection and processing was done in a fair and lawful manner; that the data collected was accurate; that data,

wherever possible, was anonymised to protect the identity of any particular individual to whom this information could be traced back; that the data would not be kept longer than necessary; and that the data collected would only be that necessary for the study (Denscombe, 2014). The research assistant also signed a confidentiality clause and, therefore, adhered to the same ethical guidelines as the researcher. The data collected was stored in a secure place only accessible to the researcher; and will be destroyed after five years.

1.11. Definitions of key terms

The key concepts used for this study include social media, new media, public engagement, public participation as a ladder to public engagement and e-government. The definitions of these terms and other inter-related terminologies are designed to help readers, who are unfamiliar with these terms, to better understand and characterise them in the context of the framework of this research.

1.11.1. Social media and new media

Social media have been described as 'new media' due to their advantages over old media, including their interactive ability and real-time communication (Castells, 2000; Lister, Dover, Giddings, Grant, & Kelly, 2003).

Understanding what social media is differs from one person to another. This is highlighted by Bryer and Zavattaro (2011) and Sidorkiewicz (2013), who observe the lack of a shared definition though social media changed the way society communicates and constitute a period marked by many research projects.

Magro, Ryan and Sharp (2009, as cited in Magro, 2012), argue that social media includes SNSes, such as Facebook, as they are primarily characterised by user-generated content.

Williamson (2013) describes social media as "a set of varied tools that allow individuals to access, engage and interact with each other as and when they choose" (p. 9). This definition has been adopted for the study, as it is less technical and links engagement, interaction, communication and access as the bi-products of social media. Social media, an element of new media and mass media, incorporates a range of platforms, tools and applications, including what are commonly referred to as SNSes, which enable users to consume, create and add to the

current content through creating profiles, sharing pictures and making comments on posts. An example of this is Facebook and Twitter.

Griffith and Leston-Bandeira (2012) claim that for parliaments, methods such as discussion groups and e-petitions can also take the form of social media. Then there is micro-blogging, which uses short messages and hashtags, such as Twitter and Branch. There are also video and photo-sharing sites, such as Instagram and Flickr, including blogs, discussion boards, and instant messaging apps, such as WhatsApp (Williamson, 2013).

1.11.2. Public Engagement

For the purposes of this dissertation, public engagement will adopt the contextualisation employed by Shihomeka (2019), which is stated as the active involvement in political discussions, debates and other democratic processes through elected leaders for the improvement and upliftment of one's socio-economic standards.

Only a little more than 10% of Namibia's population of 2.1 million people is on Facebook; and a large part of this percentage consists of 18–35-year-olds. Furthermore, about six of the 11 political parties with seats in Parliament have social media presence on Facebook or Twitter or both (IPPR, 2015b).

The relationship between social media and government is interlinked in that the social system that engages on social media platforms also has the ability and interest to engage with government on issues that affect them; and the response of government to these issues raised on the internet is what is referred to as e-government (Magro, 2012). As such, e-government broadly refers to all online contact and interaction between governments and citizens but terms such as e-democracy and Government 2.0 that will feature in this study are all used to refer to

online activities aimed to garner the views and inputs of citizens in the workings of government (Silcock, 2011).

An ICT platform that contributes significantly to e-governance is social media, as such, the term e-government will feature often in this study. Magro (2012) defines e-government as "the use of ICTs and particularly the internet, as a tool to achieve a better government" (p. 148). This definition and other characteristics of social media identified under section 2.2.1. further underscore that, social media possess a particularly appealing potential for e-participation (Bertot, Jaeger, & Grimes, 2010), which is the participation of citizens in the work of government using the internet. In another definition, e-government is the use of ICTs in government to improve public service delivery, managerial efficiency and improve democracy (Al-Shafi & Weerakkody, 2008).

Due to the ever-increasing use of the internet and ICT by ordinary citizens, governments are compelled to adapt to these new communication media if they are to keep in touch with the people.

This study considers engagement as "a two-way communication involving a significant level of cognitive, affective and/or participatory response (Macey & Schneider, 2008). A further characterisation of engagement is from Bertot, Jaeger, Munson and Glaisyer (2010) and Bertot, Jaeger and Hansen (2012), who describe engagement as the way social media technologies employed to engage the public in government policy-making, promote participatory dialogue and give a voice to more citizens' groups in discussions concerning the development and implementation of policies. To satisfy interest, the other two are public services co-production and crowd-sourcing solutions and innovations, albeit, unrelated to this study.

1.11.3. Political Communication

Many scholars define political communication differently. However, Shihomeka (2019), who also conducted a study like the current study in Namibia, adopted a definition this researcher believes best suits the Namibian context. The definition is from Resnick and Casale (2014), who describe political communication as those activities by citizens that involve voting in elections, meeting community members and leaders, engaging political leaders and activities pertaining to some sort of collective action. For the purpose of this study, which is based on communication between parliamentarians and electorates, it may be useful to add onto this description by briefly looking further into a Olabamiji (2014), who describes political communication as the "dissemination of information about how people and government relate to foster understanding and peace in a society" (p. 94). This may include townhall meetings, radio and television interviews, brochures, posters and now, social media, to reach their audiences.

1.12. Structure of thesis

In the introductory chapter of this thesis, the study explored the background, context, definition of key terms as well as the ethical issues that were under consideration, among others. The introduction chapter was followed by the chapter on literature review and framework, which dissected literature relating to the title of this study. The Diffusion of Innovation Theory was adopted as the theoretical framework for this research. Following the theoretical framework, the literature review was arranged according to key issues drawn from the research objectives of the study. In the third chapter, the methodological choices selected for this study, including sampling, data collection methods, population and so forth were discussed and justified. This was done to give a concise overview of the work and processes that were carried out in the

empirical collection of data. In Chapter 4, the data collected was presented, with the aim to help readers gain a deeper understanding of how the study turned out. Next, the research discussed and interpreted the data presented in Chapter 4 to make linkages and comparisons of the data collected with the literature, as presented in Chapter 2. In the sixth and final chapter of this thesis, a summary of the findings, providing conclusions and recommendations were presented.

1.13. Chapter Summary

This chapter laid the foundation and basis on which this study was built. At its departure point, the chapter introduced the study. The researcher then went on to paint a background of social media as a new concept, its use in parliament, and further to this, how it has been received and applied here in Namibia, both at social and more professional level, particularly at Parliament. The objectives of this study, which largely focused on social media that could be an engagement tool between MPs and the public, were then outlined. Because ICT landscapes and policies differ in different parts of the world, it was imperative to dissect the context to the Namibian situation to allow the reader to appreciate the social media use characteristics and background information unique to Namibia that have bearing on the findings and outcomes of this study. In so doing, this chapter explored the history of ICT policies that govern social media use and access, e-governance in Namibia, the infrastructure and institutions that implement these policies and looked at the national documents and their position on ICT. In outlining the background and context of this study, several key terms were re-current, and these were also discussed thoroughly to provide the definitions and context within which they were used in this study. The next chapter reviews literature related to the title of this thesis, with

particular focus on the objectives of the study, and identifies the theoretical framework that this study adopted.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature relating to this study, titled "The Use of Social Media to Enhance Public Engagement with Namibian Parliamentarians". Literature review is one of the most important processes in research as it ensures a meaningful research design and findings. These are key in identifying gaps in the literature as well as in helping select appropriate methods to employ for specific studies and finally, the review of literature describes the inferences made from previous research (Gliner, Morgan & Leeach, 2010).

As diffusion of an innovation is unique to different people, under different circumstances, this chapter aimed to explore and dissect the variables that influence social media as a tool for public engagement. The literature reviewed in this chapter is broad, and consists of studies, research and concepts from here in Southern Africa to other parts of Africa, as well as in Europe, Eastern Europe, Asia, the United States of America and various parliamentary bodies.

This chapter begins with a review of the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory. Other literature reviewed include scholarly work relating to the use of social media engagement at Parliament, political communication, barriers and enablers to social media use, social media as a communication tool, the power of social media in forming informed communities and engagement between constituents and the legislature as well as challenges in other countries.

The chapter advances the theoretical framework that guided the study. Following the theoretical framework, the literature review is guided by and arranged according to key issues drawn from the research objectives as follows:

- perceptions of social media use as a tool for public engagement
- social media as a political communication tool for Parliament;
- social media as an engagement tool;
- the role of social media in a responsive government;
- the benefits of public engagement;
- Challenges and enablers of the use of social media by MPs and the public.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the Everett Rogers' DOI theory, also referred to as the Innovation Diffusion Theory. However, in this study, the abbreviation, DOI will be used. The theory explains and estimates the rate at which innovation adoption is diffused and accepted in society. The theory develops predictive accounts of diffusion that is believed to enable technology implementers advance the diffusion of specified technologies.

The term innovation and technology are used interchangeably by Rogers (1983), hence, its suitability for the present study that aimed to dissect the use of social media as an ICT component. Because of its relevance in explaining the adoption of an innovation, which is at the centre of this study, the researcher will employ this theory to explicate how social media use can be used to enhance public engagement with Namibian MPs.

As previously mentioned, the DOI theory is widely used in innovation diffusion and has guided numerous studies, which have analysed ICT-related innovations in both the public and private sectors (Loukis et al., 2014). This study, therefore, assessed whether, and to what extent, social media, as an innovation can be adopted and diffused by Namibian MPs in their public engagement programmes. DOI was found applicable to this study because it has proven to be more specialised for innovation and has been used to explain the 34 diffusion of different

innovations. The DOI theory accommodates more diffusion factors that help determine perceptions and usefulness of social media as an innovation when adopted.

The DOI theory includes the innovation-decision process, which takes place through five stages, namely knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation. The present study found that it was only possible to apply the DOI's innovation-decision process to this study under the first four stages since adoption is an ongoing process. To address this, the present study measured the findings largely against the five innovation characteristics mentioned under this section.

For the befit of the reader, this thesis will briefly summarise each innovation decision process, as mentioned above. Rogers (1983) identifies knowledge as the process of gaining knowledge about an innovation. Next is persuasion, which is the process of forming an attitude towards an innovation, negative or positive. Following is the decision to either adopt or reject the innovation. Next in the process is implementation, defined as making use of the new practice or innovation; and finally, confirmation, which is the reaffirmation of the use of the technology (Rogers, 1983).

Albirini (2006) claims that most diffusion studies in developing countries are fixed on knowledge and persuasion. To address this concern, this study focused on all processes and further employed the five characteristics of an innovation to answer the research question. Zolkepi and Kamarulzaman (2011) state that "the leading theory for analysing technology characteristics in relation[s] to media consumption is DOI by Rogers. Rashtchy (as cited in Zolkepi & Kamarulzaman, 2011) claims that the strength of the DOI theory is its ability to be applicable to all kinds of communication media. Its wide-ranging characteristics allow it to fully grasp new age communication that has seen computers, cell phones and other hardware

become more than just static receivers of information. DOI enables researchers to understand the diffusion and adoption process from beginning to end, by its ability to measure attitudes, perceptions and approaches. To demonstrate this, a study to analyse nurses' perceptions towards the use of a new computerised system was done in Taiwan using the DOI theory. The results indicated that the DOI model accurately described the nurses' behaviour towards the adoption of the new system (Folorunso, Vincent, Adekoya & Ogunde, 2010).

Because DOI theory is predictive and pre-emptive in its approach, it allows for determinants to be anticipated well ahead of time and be catered for beforehand. The advantage remains that the DOI theoretical framework for this study has the potential to create inter-related studies in topics around social media engagement and usage due to its broad-based nature.

For these and other reasons, the DOI theory is best suited and most applicable to measuring the objectives of this study.

Rogers (1983) defines DOI as the process "by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels, over time and among the members of the social system" (p. 5). Therefore, these four main elements of DOI, innovation, communication channels, time, and the social system are expounded on further in this discussion on the theoretical framework.

The theoretical lens used for this study was a social science theory, using a deductive approach in its methodology. The deductive approach is defined as one that begins with a theory or hypothesis, which is then evaluated through observation using a predetermined design. The deductive approach is most suited for quantitative studies, as it is objective and general in its application. Unlike the inductive approach, which starts with observation that is used to create a theory or generate a hypothesis, the deductive approach begins with an existing theory or hypothesis (Morgan, 2013).

2.3. Elements of Diffusion of Innovation

Diffusion has four main elements, namely, innovation, communication channels, time and social systems (Rogers, 1983). A basic diffusion process involves an innovation, an individual or group that has knowledge on said innovation, an individual or group that does not have information on said innovation and then the communication channel that links these two entities together for the exchange of information to take place. In the case of social media as a tool for public engagement, MPs may be aware the innovation as a tool for public engagement based on positive or negative perceptions. The expectation therefore exists that an innovation be better for users as opposed to an old one. This is true for social media use for MPs, many of whom may need to be persuaded on the benefits of this supposed 'superior' alternative looking to replace tried and trusted traditional media.

2.3.1. Innovation

Folorunso et al. (2010) define diffusion as "the process by which an innovation is adopted and gains acceptance by numbers of a certain community" (p. 362). A better characterisation of the definition is from Zolkepi and Kamarulzaman (2011), who state that "this theory suggests that when a concept is perceived as new, an individual utilises communication tactics within their social system to arrive at a decision point of either adoption or rejection of the innovation" (par. 13). It is these innovation characteristics that influence the decision to adopt or reject an innovation. However, great innovations with obvious benefits do not necessarily guarantee rapid diffusion. Rogers (1983) identifies adopter characteristics, social networks, communication process, innovation attributes, as identified in the DOI theory, as factors that influence adoption. Others argue that it is only when the benefits to adopt are obvious, and when a need to adopt exists, that an innovation will be adopted (Janković, as cited in Simin &

Janković, 2014). Therefore, the claim by Landsbergen (2010) that "social media is growing rapidly because it supports some important social needs" (p. 134) holds true if one considers the adoption rate.

2.3.1.1. Characteristics of an Innovation

Some innovations diffuse at a more rapid pace than others. This difference in diffusion affirms Roger's argument that all innovations are not equal units of analysis. It is the different characteristics of innovations that determine the rate at which an innovation is diffused. These five characteristics or constructs are: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, observability and trialability and will be discussed in greater detail in this section.

Penning and Harinato (2007, as cited in Folorunso et al., 2010) argue that the "essence of the use of the five constructs is to empirically test part of DOI's attributes with a view to exploring factors that brought about the adoption of the innovation of social networking sites" (p. 362). In view of this argument, the five constructs that influence the adoption, when tested against the objectives of the study, could determine if social media would be a tool for participation and engagement. These constructs were also able to identify perceptions, as laid out in the objectives of this study.

The first characteristic is relative advantage, defined as the degree to which an idea is regarded more superior than that which came before it (Rogers, 1983). Here, what matters most is perception, never mind the real advantages of the innovation. So, the larger the relative advantage, the more positive the perception than that which currently is in place, hence speeding up diffusion. The second characteristic is compatibility, defined by Rogers (1983) as "the degree to which an innovation is perceived to being consistent with the existing values, past experiences and needs of potential adopters" (p. 15). Some ideas, no matter how good, are

just not compatible with the existing customs and norms of potential adopters, therefore, resulting in the failure of diffusion. The third characteristic, complexity, is defined as "the degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand or use (Rogers, 1983, p. 15). New ideas that are easier and simpler to understand diffuse faster than those that require the potential adopter to learn a new skill to understand it. For MPs who may have little to no familiarity with social media, this characteristic would be a challenge to overcome in the diffusion process. Trialability, the fourth characteristic, is the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis (p. 15). Innovations whose success can be tried in phases before full adoption are generally adopted faster. Equally, this represents less uncertainty for the potential adopter. Finally, observability, which is "the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others" (p.16). The more visible the results of the innovation, the more likely it is to be adopted and the more other people see these positive results, the more they will speak on it, prompting further innovation-evaluation information about the innovation. All these determinants, except for complexity, must be perceived high for the innovation to adopt more rapidly. Based on these features, the objectives of this study can be effectively measured in relation to how well they pair with each characteristic as presented below.

- Relative advantage will enable MPs' perceptions of social media, vis-à-vis traditional media, to be measured to determine the media which they perceive to be better.
- Compatibility will allow for the needs and values of parliamentarians and Parliament as an institution to be juxtaposed with perceived values of the innovation.
- Complexity will determine to what degree MPs find social media difficult to use and understand. This information will be the basis of the recommendations of this paper, upon which guidelines will be formulated to ease the transition to Web 2.0 for MPs.

- Trialability will allow for experimentation to enable researcher to test engagement and effectiveness.
- Observability, over time, the results of intense and sustained engagement over social media sites may be tested and be determined if they are visible to others.

2.3.2. Communication channels

Communication channels are defined as the "means by which messages get from one individual to another" (Rogers, 1983, p. 17). It is this information-exchange relationship between those with the information and those without that determines the conditions under which those with the information will or will not transmit the innovation to those who do not have it, as well as what the effect of such a transfer may be (Rogers, 1983).

DOI involves a process whereby "innovation is communicated through certain channels…" (Rogers, 1983, p. 5). However, in diffusion, this relates only to the communication of new ideas, which is the knowledge that exists about this innovation, persuasion around adopting and the decision on whether to adopt. With new ideas, however, comes uncertainty, which results in the lack of predictability, structure and information. This can be mitigated with information sharing, which is believed to reduce uncertainty. Therefore, the more information there is about social media and its benefits, the less uncertainty there may be, resulting in increased diffusion.

2.3.3. Time

The third element is time, which is a strong variable in diffusion research and the inclusion of time as variable is what gives strength to the diffusion research (Rogers, 1983). The time dimension in diffusion is involved in three critical ways. First, the innovation-decision process

when an individual either adopts or rejects the innovation, second, the rate at which an innovation is adopted in comparison with other individuals or groups in the unit of analysis and third, time is measured to determine the number of adopters in a social system over a set timeframe (Rogers, 1983). Beukes-Amis and Chiware (2005) claim that the DOI theory is applicable to a study of something new or perceived as new. The authors further posit that over time, there will be those who know of the innovation, those who will first resist and finally, those who will take longer to learn and share information about the innovation.

The innovation-decision process, as mentioned above, is influenced by several key factors. The first factor is knowledge, which refers to that which is known about the innovation and its functions. Here, all the would-be-user is interested in is what the innovation is all about. During this stage, a lot of persuasion takes place due to the information sharing between peers and other homophilous groups and individuals about the innovation (Rogers, 1983).

The second factor under the time element is the decision, described as the choice to adopt or not. Once a decision to adopt has been taken, implementation follows. However, discontinuance could happen, when the adopter reverses the decision to adopt and abandons the whole innovation because of unmet expectations, a newer and improved innovation or conflicting messages regarding the innovation. Again, the same can occur in reverse, potential adopters may decide not to adopt, but later change this decision and adopt (Rogers, 1983).

Finally, is the rate of adoption, which is described as “the relative speed with which an innovation is adopted by members of a social system” (Rogers, 1983 p. 23). This element of time demonstrates how time is an element of diffusion and how it is linked to the role models or innovators in the diffusion process. Role modelling is the key motivational factor in the adoption and diffusion of technology (Afunde, 2015). This aspect as identified by Afunde

(2015) explains the adopter categories of Rogers and equates ‘role models’ to the first category known as innovators, those who adopt the innovation first, followed by early adopters, early majority, late majority and finally laggards. Growth, however, usually surges when more people copy the use of an innovation from the role models. When plotted on a cumulative frequency basis over time, a curved letter ‘S’ appears when the diffusion process is complete. This is because at first, the innovators are plotted, and as the early adopters and early majority start catching on, the diffusion curve starts to form. Adoption rates are measured by the “length of time required for a certain percentage of the members of a system to adopt an innovation” (Rogers, 1983, p. 23).

The focus for the education sector in Namibia, Beukes-Amiss and Chiware (2005) argue, must be on the early majority. However, it is yet to be determined in which adopter category studies in the field of media and ICT must focus on and this is a task other researchers in this field could consider.

2.3.4. Social System

The final element is the social system, defined as a set of interrelated units that are engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal. The members or units of a social system may be individuals, informal groups, organisations, and/or sub-systems” (Rogers, 1983, p. 24). Social structure affects diffusion in that the predictability and stability of the structure may enhance or hurt the diffusion process. Because diffusion occurs in a social system, the structure of this system has a bearing on the diffusion process due to the boundaries and complexities of a system such as norms, opinion leaders and change agents (Rogers, 1983). Opinion leaders are very important to the diffusion process because when they are opposed to an innovation, it is more than likely to take off, and if not, the opposite may happen.

In a study on the applicability of the DOI theory in agriculture, Simin and Janković (2014) caution that when looking into diffusion analysis, it is important to consider the diversity of the society and the way the information about the innovation is transferred among individuals. This is particularly true for Namibia, and more so for an institution as formal as Parliament. Representatives in Parliament are elected from different backgrounds; hence, adoption may be more complex than anticipated.

There are factors which influence communication, the most basic of which is when ideas are shared between people who are alike. Rogers (1983) calls this homophily, which is the "degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are similar in certain attributes, such as beliefs, education, social status, and the like" (p. 18). For social media diffusion at parliament level, homophily exists because the unit of adoption is homophilous, all are MPs, politicians, constituency councillors (in the case of the National Council) and mostly ministers (in the case of the National Assembly). Simin and Janković (2014) identify several key influences, including the local community, impacts of different social groups, the social structure, and the openness of a society to accept and welcome innovation.

When plotted on a cumulative frequency basis over time, a letter 'S' appears when the diffusion process is complete. This is because at first, the innovators are plotted, and as the early adopters and early majority start catching on, the diffusion curve starts to form.

2.4. Limitations of the Diffusion of Innovation Theory

The DOI theory has some shortcomings, as detailed by Lyytinen and Damsgaard (2001). Although not tested against social media or SNS, the authors' question the use of DOI in standard-based, complex network information technology. For their study, Lyytinen and Damsgaard (2001) summarise six conjectures of the DOI (Mahajan, Muller & Bass, 1990;

Rogers, 1995; Tornatzky & Klein, 1982). However, this study highlights only two opposing arguments of these conjectures that apply to this study. The first conjecture is that technology moves in a discrete package from an independent and neutral innovator to the adopter through a constant social ether called here a diffusion arena. Lyytinen and Damsgaard (2001) expound on this with a definition that states that DOI research connects an innovation with unique and measurable features. They then argue this definition by raising several points and questions such as, why the same set of attributes should be ascribed to all technological innovations and finally, how these various characteristics influence the different stages of diffusion. In applying the attributes of innovations, this study also found the DOI theory wanting in that it does not consider the resources of an individual that may influence access to an innovation, nor the necessary social support to adopt innovation. The study also found that the theory does not consider the overall development or ranking of a country, especially in ICT, and nor does it consider the accessibility and affordability of an innovation to the population, as these are factors that influence the diffusion process. Thus, the diffusion arena in which an innovation travels from innovator to adopter, as mentioned by Lyytinen and Damsgaard (2001) above, may be different based on the issues identified by this study.

As such, they concluded that it is the herd effect and not specific technological characteristics that lead to the decision to adopt. This argument, therefore, posits that the DOI theory does not convincingly prove that an innovation is adopted simply due to certain characteristics of the innovation and that it could be because people imitate behaviour from others who adopted before them. In relation to this study, however, the herd effect does not apply as most respondents adopted social media because of its benefits and not because others before them did.

The second argument by Lyytinen and Damsgaard (2001) is that diffusion rate is not solely a function of push and pull forces. According to their study, the push and pull factors did not influence conditions for adoption in any way. Lyytinen and Damsgaard (2001) conclude that although DOI research has had considerable positive impact on information studies, new media, ICT and other innovation research, it is found wanting on certain theoretical constructs that should explain how complex technologies would diffuse. As such, the authors recommend that several premises of the DOI be reconsidered specifically for complex technologies. For studies which may include technologies which are more complex, the DOI theory may be limited in its theoretical constructs to explain them.

However, this researcher is of the opinion that complexity is relative, and hence, what may be complex to one, may not be to another. Any new form of innovation would, therefore, have some degree of complexity, as this study was able to determine with social media use. The researcher thereby disagrees with the findings by Lyytinen and Damsgaard (2001) and concludes that the DOI theory was able to determine the complexity of social media use in as far as that complexity was identified by respondents.

2.5. Other Theories Relating to this Study

Zolkepi and Kamarulzaman (2011) argue that studies on social media are unable to explain the aspects that influence people to adopt social media. For example, the authors investigate the features of social media such as usability and sociability to determine if indeed they have a direct correlation to usage and adoption. Shen and Khalifa (2010) make a similar observation when they identify four gaps that exist in applying theories directly to social media and SNSes. First, the authors argue that the usage of social media goes beyond the initial adoption phase and must be considered as post-adoptive behaviour, which existing theories may not fully

explain, as they are more focused on adoption. Second, the applications of social media are considered in isolation without considering other features that social media integrate. The features are interpreted differently and, therefore, determine the outcome. As such, it is important to take a future centric view of technology when probing social media use and ICT. Third, most of the theories do not consider emotions as an influencing factor, but negative emotions are said to influence the user's behaviour. Lastly, most theories are not able to capture social computing applications such as social media.

In reviewing the theoretical framework for this study, the researcher considered two other theories, as discussed below. However, they were found lacking.

One was the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Usage of Technology (UTAUT), which was created as a blend of prominent theories after overlaps rooted in the social cognitive theory were realised. However, it was created in the context of organisational information systems and only captures core predictors that include performance expectancy, social influences, effort expectancy and facilitating conditions (Shen & Khalifa, 2010). As such, UTAUT may not be able to capture the essence of SNSes.

Another theory examining the adoption and use of new IT applications is the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which predicts behaviour as a "function of behavioural intention depending upon attitude toward behaviour and subjective norm" (Shen & Khalifa, 2010, para. 5). This theory was applied by Davies (2014) to explain individual acceptance of technology and he developed the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which predicts "information technology acceptance and usage on the job with perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and subjective norm" (para. 5). Loukis et al. (2014) argue that the TAM is not very specialised for innovation and does not propose a wide set of innovation diffusion determinants. This

argument applies to this research in that it was found to be limited when tested against the objectives and the lack of a wide set of determinants did not satisfy the scope of the study.

Other shortcomings identified by Shen and Khalifa (2010) include the inability of the existing theories to go beyond and explain the initial adoption stage, inability for interpretations to be made individually as opposed to a whole group and overlooking the role of emotions and perceptions, which are central to this study.

2.6. Perceptions of Social Media Use as a Tool for Public Engagement

In the formative years, the advantages and disadvantages of social media use in government were yet to be determined, as the innovation was still relatively new. Although there were success stories such as the Obama victory of 2009, they were applauded with much caution. Moriera, Moller, Gerhardt and Ladner (2009) substantiate this view by stating that government's use of social media could encourage engagement or create individualised and ignorant citizens who are unable to commit and lack concern.

Various perceptions related to the use of social media as a formal means of communication have been recorded, including the ability to undermine deliberations, encourage populist rhetoric and reduce responsible collective action (Davies, 2014). Contrary to this, others suggested that "social media had the potential to promote a positive perception of government through dissemination of information and by providing a platform for citizen and government interaction" (Magro, 2019, p. 152)

The first element of diffusion, *relative advantage,* is rooted in perception. The perceptions MPs have on the use of social media, either positive or negative, will have a direct impact on social media and its adoption. Beukes-Amis and Chiware (2005) claim that teachers are willing to

use ICTs in the classroom. Furthermore, another study found that teachers who had a positive attitude towards applying ICT in the classroom were more likely to incorporate it in their studies. However, this positive attitude was affected by lack of skills and confidence to use ICT, which resulted in anxiety and reluctance (Bingimlas, 2009; Iipinge, 2010; Becta, as cited in Afunde, 2015). The relevance of the referencing teachers and ICT use in this study was done to reference two things, one, to demonstrate how feelings and behaviour impact perception and, two, how lack of skills impacts complexity, which will be dissected in greater detail in the following sections.

Before social media, all communications and news from parliament were delivered via traditional media (e.g. radio, television and print) and this has been regarded as safe, factual and reliable. Perhaps greater trust and comfort is due to the predictability and control of traditional media. However, these perceptions should be informed in as far as social media vis-a-vis traditional media. Other forces have compelled a slightly different kind of change within mass media itself where traditional media now use social media content to feed their platforms. Berkowitz (1991) identifies minimal resources to cover stories, availability of news, access to ICTs and citizen journalism as the reasons for this shift. New media and traditional media do not only have the communication component as a shared characteristic, but new media also can perform the functions of traditional media. These functions include providing information in the political space, driving discussions and debates through interconnected platforms, informing the public on issues of governance and acting as watchdogs against government corruption. To further enrich this, Ojebuyi (2012) claims that new media do not result in the removal of old media or traditional media. However, it is the convergence of the two that creates a balanced media environment.

According to Booysen (2015), most political parties in South Africa are still familiarising themselves with the social media as a formal communication tool for public engagement, but one thing remains common across the board, they could all relate to the great impact social media had during the 2014 national elections, compared to earlier elections in 2009. However, the hierarchy of political parties' media usage in South Africa indicates that traditional media is still the most preferred channel when it comes to engaging with followers. This is followed by intermediary electronic media such as SMS or emails and finally, social media. This indicates the dominance traditional media still have over social media and the supposed reluctance political leaders have in using new media. Regarding *compatibility,* it becomes necessary here to determine the values and goals of parliament as an institution in relation to what social media may represent for MPs, to better help determine if the values speak to one another. The third characteristic which deals with perceptions is *complexity,* which is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand, implement and use. Perception, however, is interlinked with attitude, motivation and needs. Eagly and Chaiken (as cited in Zolkepi & Kamarulzaman, 2011) state "a person's attitude signifies the individual's psychological tendency that is expressed through a particular object that serves the consumer's various motivation (par. 9). Hence, an innovation is selected on the assumption that it would satisfy the motivation needs of the user. However, Luo, Chea and Chen (2011) argue that the DOI theory alone would not suffice in determining needs as a construct for adoption. Instead, the authors argue that an integration of theories would better help the understanding of what leads to diffusion and adoption.

Doubts on whether social media could be truly useful in government, Parliament in this case, have been in existence as early as 2010. Landsbergen (2010) argues that social media enhances the need for human networks and interaction and that for government to use social media, they

must understand these needs. Different researchers in this field seem to have different viewpoints, some more pessimistic than others, "…while politicians are concentrating on the traditional tools of political marketing…online tools will remain slightly out of view" (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2013, p. 13). This argument could explain why some European political actors are convinced that social media will remain "a crisis communication tool for a lot of people," according to Member of European Parliament (MEP) political advisor (Vesnic-Alujevic, p. 28).

As social media continue to make inroads as a communication and engagement tool for government, this pessimism is slowly changing and more agencies and governments are embracing the power that lies within social media. Some MPs from the European parliament remain optimistic, even daring to believe that it "will take over from classical methods" (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2013, p. 25).

Loukis et al. (2014) state that although research on different forms of social media use in government has been conducted, their adoption by government agencies, the benefits and value they will generate will depend on factors associated with the "management and operation structure of government agencies, their culture and orientations, and also with the political characteristics of their environment," (para. 3). It, therefore, becomes important to identify the existing (formal and informal) forms of social media usage, not only from communicators of government but also from political players. These identifications will help determine the negative perceptions and operations that contribute to effective social media usage, especially in relation to the values of parliaments. For some MPs, the use of social media to engage the public may be perceived as a more complex innovation, and reasons for such must be investigated and determined because, according to the theoretical framework of this study, the

more complex an innovation is perceived to be, the less it will diffuse. This is equally important in as far as how MPs perceive social media in relation to the trusted traditional media. Based on this and other studies on innovation, the researcher could identify factors and characteristics in diffusion that influence how acceptable a 'new' form of communication tool may be in the legislature.

Based on the diverse motivations and attitudes, Folorunso et al. (2010) argue that it affects the decision to trust social media or not and that people tend to be reluctant to trust an innovation due to discomfort and panic. However, a study by Dwyer, Hiltz and Passerini (2007), which compares perceptions of trust and privacy concerns against the willingness to share information and grow online social capital, counters the notion of online trust. The results of that study found that trust was not as essential in forging new relationships, as in face-to-face encounters. Teerling and Pieterson (2009) stress the importance of effective and targeted communication in building citizens' awareness, knowledge, perceptions and trust in e-government services. Shah (2010) argues that trust is a key component to the adoption of government online services and initiatives and that the success of any e-government service would depend on the trust that exists between citizens and the government. As such, trust is central to diffusion and linked to perception and remains a reoccurring theme that influences adoption and use. Hence, for this study, it was an additional construct to the five identified by Rogers, namely, relative advantage, compatibility, trialability, complexity and observability.

2.7. Social Media as a Political Communication Tool for Parliament

Way before social media invention, governments have always been interested in communicating with citizens concerning issues of governance, such as the laws they pass and public policy matters. This led to the development of public engagement and public

participation concepts and designs, prior to the invention of the internet or Web 2.0 (Charalabidis & Loukis, 2012).

From as early as 2007, literature predicted that social media would play an important role in this interaction and communication in future (Mislove, Marcon, Gummadi, Druschel and Bhattacharjee, 2007). And because this interaction breeds relationships, it becomes an effective way for government to connect with citizens. Other literature supporting this claim argue that new media have emerged as one of the foremost ways in which parliaments can foster engagement with citizens, this, along with transparency and accountability (Griffith & Leston-Bandeira, 2012). "New media can directly influence key elements of the relationship between parliaments and citizens: openness, transparency, accountability, and engagement" (Griffith & Leston-Bandeira, 2012, p. 498). However, IPU (2016) asserts that for engagement to be effective, it requires an understanding of the audience and the purpose of the engagement (p. 57). Below is a practical demonstration why this may be the case.

In 2009, the parliament of the United Kingdom suffered a scandal. Social media was used as relief and a variety of online reforms were proposed to increase public participation in the work of parliament. Fox (2009) is of the opinion that there is no evidence to suggest that the social media campaign that involved increased public participation to tackle the scandal in the UK resulted in increased political engagement. It is neither clear whether social media use really is the solution to engaging citizens with time constraints in the law-making process, nor is it clear whether social media use could strengthen representation.

For some, social media platforms such as Facebook may be useful in building relationships only, and perhaps not be fully used in political communication. However, these 'relationships' could be useful at a different time and place when citizens would like to interact or reach out

to an MP on a law or policy matter. Olabamiji (2014) states that it is the well-informed and politically well-aware people that use the internet and other online services. Hence, these individuals are already in the political discourse space and social media may do nothing to limit or increase their pre-disposed decision to participate in governance. Davies (2014) agrees and claims that some experts are sceptical about the effects of social media in engaging the marginalised, citing that the evidence suggests that those who use social media for political engagement are the same people who are already involved in politics and that social media may be less effective in engaging the marginalised. Available research, therefore, suggests that most social media primarily support pre-existing social relations.

Additionally, a well-connected group of individuals may overuse social media platforms to drive a particular agenda. Hence, it is not clear if the people engaging with politicians on social media today are the same as those who attend town hall meetings, public hearings, outreach programmes and other activities of parliament or if they truly are a new and "excluded" group. Therefore, citizens' needs and opinions on social media use for political discourse needs to be well identified and established. "Instead of inviting the citizens to interact with government in the official e-participation spaces, in accordance with their rules and structures, government can go to the Web 2.0 electronic spaces where citizens prefer to have discussions, create content and collaborate with others" (Charalabidis & Loukis, 2012).

Additionally, in political environments where parliaments are far removed from the people, social media can make parliaments visible (Griffith & Leston-Bandeira, 2012). For the case in Namibia, there are no regional or provincial governments with autonomous legislatures, but rather one parliament in one location, far removed from anyone who lives outside the capital

city, Windhoek. Social media can bridge this gap by linking MPs with the people by enhancing communication and engagement.

The critical role social media play between parliament and citizens is supported in literature. It can build, foster and sustain relationships between MPs and citizens. “They provide a direct channel of communication between representatives and the represented and the means to make a substantial amount of information available to citizens” (Griffith & Leston-Bandeira, 2012, p. 497). Social media has widened the public’s participation and thus, engagement in government in what we previously identified as e-government (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2004; Sanford & Rose, 2007; Saebo, Rose, & Flak, 2008; Charalabidis & Loukis, 2012). The benefits of this include creating space for dialogue and better understanding of public opinion. Others claim that social media has the capacity to enhance public engagement in the parliamentary process and methods provided for on such platforms, such as online consultations, “help to improve public perceptions of parliament” (Duffy & Foley, 2011, p. 199).

ICT studies have examined how technology could be used for parliamentary democracy through participation and engagement and one such tool is Arnstein’s ladder of participation which demonstrates the linkages between information and influence (Arnstein, 1969). Bellamy and Raab (1999) use this ladder to demonstrate how technology can strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the state in controlling and serving the people, and how ICTs can transfer decision-making power to the people, the further one goes up the ladder. The first step of the ladder is when ICT is used to improve the workings of parliament. At this rung, parliamentary democracy is strengthened through the effective operations of parliament. The second step is when ICT is used to improve the interface between parliament and the public. Better information is made available through the internet via platforms such as the website. The last

step is when ICT contributes to the development of a new form of participatory democracy. Here, parliamentarians themselves use ICT to ensure that they are connected to the people and by giving opportunities to the people to actively participate in policy formulation. Here, ICT is used to improve Parliament's representative role.

It must also be established to what degree members of the public are interested in political engagement. Most people prefer their elected representatives to do the political decision-making on their behalf and are not very interested participating at that level. They may choose to contribute in the political decision-making process only minimally and not desire anything that takes up too much time and commitment (Fox, 2009). This argument suggests that new media could be the answer to those members of the public who prefer limited engagement and not a blanket solution, thus relying on the third rung of the ladder for inclusivity.

As societies become less homophylous, societal problems increase, thereby increasing the need for policies that are aimed at addressing them (Charalabidis & Loukis, 2012). With the increased need of public policies, comes the need for a more holistic consultation approach, to incorporate different views and opinions. To meet these ever-growing and changing socio-dynamics, governments must aggressively engage its citizenry to gather the appropriate views and suggestions that will bring about the desired solution in the shortest possible time (Brabham,2008). For these reasons, strategic social media use intervention by Parliament is imperative in promoting and enhancing engagement with citizens. Before the emergence of interactive platforms, citizens were expected to visit government portals and discuss whatever was presented using the language, rules and protocol of the page, with minimal user-friendly online assistance, and on the terms of the government agency. As expected, the outcome of these initiatives were below expectations (Chadwick, 2009; Ferro & Molinari, 2010).

According to literature, 2010 saw the eruption of research on social media and its use in government, bringing to light a more detailed account of the advantages and disadvantages of this innovation. In doing so, Dadashzadeh (2010) suggest planned, fair, engaging and transparency use of social media by government of instead of randomly implementing social media for the sake of it. As such, social media use in Parliament should be used as a tool to collaborate, simplify, engage and educate for the interest of the electorates. In support of this stance Williamson (2013), who reports on Afghanistan members of parliament, identifies the benefits of social media as maintaining better connections with their electorates and engaging young people.

Davies (2014) identifies the major advantages for both the electorate and the public office bearer when using social media. They are: bypassing media filters; when social media becomes an important alternative source in carrying the news of work and activities of MPs in Parliament. Second, influencing mass media; social media can influence stories in the mass media in a way that could spark a follow-up story and garner interest or change perspective. The third benefit is providing a view of the electorate, as MPs monitor what is happening with their electorate. Finally, the public can use their own user-generated content to support a particular MP on a motion or Bill. Based on the benefits discussed here, the study included the following key questions in its questionnaires; are active political users of social media influenced on these platforms or are they already committed to political engagement? Is social media the most effective way for MPs to engage the disengaged and does engagement on social media equal actual contribution and participation in the work of Parliament? The literature on the matter is cohesive and, according to Olabamiji (2014), democratic governance has gained momentum in Africa and with the introduction of new media into the political communication space, politicians and electorates use platforms such as social media and blogs to communicate

matters of politics and governance. Matali (2017) claims that most social media support pre-existing social relations. Van Zoonen (2005) shares the same view when they revealed that the most active social media users who engage politicians are those who are already in the political domain, such as activists, party members and politicians themselves. This supports the claim that social media use for engagement does not necessarily draw in new users but is another platform for those already in the political arena.

"New media are bridging the knowledge gap between the information rich and the information poor through the interface of technology" (Olabamiji, 2014, p. 93). Therefore, this communication between politicians and the electorate transmitted through new media will change, as it is more direct and face to face, requiring immediate responses due to its two-way, instant nature.

2.7.1. Political Communication

In determining social media as a political communication tool for Parliament, one must, therefore, expound more on the concept of political communication. In political communication, there are numerous functional uses for social media. Soriano and Sreakumar (2012) argue that online media outlets provide unlimited access to the public and improves the quality of debate.

Hamajoda (2016) went further by looking into new media in political communication in West Africa. His study specifically focused on the core functions of Parliament, namely, law-making, representation and oversight, and based on these, asked key questions to garner more specified views and practices of parliamentarians in relation to new media channels. This is most useful for this study as well given that the type of engagement that may be required for oversight visits may differ from public hearings, and as such, different media may be required.

For this study, the use of the different social media under study were tested against the core functions of the Namibian Parliament, which is law making, law review and oversight. Udende (2011) claims that social media play a significant role in creating awareness around the political process through enabling debate, interaction and problem-sharing but more so, issues and people are brought to the fore in debates that are of importance and value.

According to Griffith and Leston-Bandeira (2012), the relationship between Parliament and citizens exist on several levels. The authors further argue that the independence of the legislature and individual members from government impacts how Parliament communicates with the public. The first relationship is on an individual representative basis, followed by political party groupings and finally through parliament as an institution (Griffith & Leston-Bandeira, 2012). As per its objectives, this study explored the first two levels in detail, with greater emphasis placed on individual MPs, as perceptions and use vary among these political actors. The personal attitudes and feelings as a result helped answer the five diffusion characteristics. Additionally, the research garnered MPs' views on the institution of parliament's implementation and drive of social media and determined if it affects the first two levels. Comparison to individual representatives or political parties, parliaments have more challenges in adopting social media due to laws and regulations, as well as adding on an additional layer of responsibility. Griffith and Leston-Bandeira (2012) add, "…parliaments have complex and slow processes, making them uneasy bedfellows with fast-changing technology" (p. 498). This argument by Griffith and Leston-Bandeira (2012) informed this study to investigate similar issues in the case of Namibia.

Unwin (2012) identifies characteristic of modern ICTs that point to the ability of new media to change political communication. Among them were the "space time liberty, sharing liberty and access liberty" (p. 3). Space time liberty refers to the ability to communicate with anyone, at

any time, in any part of the world. Sharing liberty is the change in distributional power, which allows for anyone to create content and share this content in either up-down or top-down approach. Finally, access liberty is the ability of many people to access information that they otherwise would not have had the opportunity to do so due to the reduction in costs (Unwin, 2012).

The liberties, as outlined by Unwin (2012), have impacted the communication process between governments and the electorates, enabling politicians and MPs to engage and speak to the people without a third party and for people to share any information affecting them with their MPs. Others who substantiate this claim argue that social media provides access, a face, a name and a reputation to government agencies (Landsbergen, 2010).

2.8. Social Media as an Engagement Tool

Social media engagement is an essential part of social media marketing. If you do not communicate in a two-way dialogue with others in social networks, then you are simply giving out information and not engaging (Sherman & Smith, 2013).

It would be useful to first consider 'engagement' in its active form and touch on the six different stages that cover an entire engagement exercise as mentioned by Williamson (2013). In an engagement, there is first conception of ideas, which is followed by the preparation of information and resources to support these ideas. After this, there is engagement with the public through deliberations and generating recommendations. The next step is deciding on a course of action, followed by the implementation and follow up and the exercise ends with evaluation and analysis. Therefore, social media must be meaningful, well thought out and planned and if done correctly, may provide users with a "deep and rich experience for participation, interaction and collaboration" (Banday & Mattoo, 2013, p. 47). The 'deep and rich experience

for participation', as just mentioned, was central to this study, as it aimed to determine how social media can be used to not only enhance participation, but engagement between MPs and the public as well.

With the improvement of technology and the use of mobile phones to access the internet, statistics indicate that 90% of people using the internet would at one point or another access social media sites. This is no exception for Africa, as social media use on the continent is ever increasing.

Vesnic-Alujevic (2013) states that the 2004 and 2009 European Parliament elections differed significantly, mainly because of the introduction of the internet at parliament level. Broader internet use emerged in 2005 and by 2008, the electoral campaign in the US popularised the use of social media in political campaign throughout other parts of the world. By 2009, the full impact of the campaign of newly elected US President Barack Obama was a marvel and the EU Parliament created several social media sites in the aftermath to create a sense of closeness with citizens. Political parties and candidates in the 2009 elections campaign followed suit, with an MEP noting that "If it is used in a proper way, Facebook can be an instrument of approach because it explains – it allows dialogue with citizens" (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2013, p. 13). However, Unwin (2012) argues that technology is not an independent tool that can be used for either good or bad. Evidence tells us that historically, technologies have been manipulated by the powerful for their own benefit (Habermas, 1978). So, it is yet to be determined whether social media is an exception for creating a new information age (Castells, 2012), "whereby existing structures and political processes can be fundamentally changed" (Unwin, 2012, p. 2).

Others claim social media is very useful in addressing the democratic deficit and decreasing social capital owed to diminishing levels of trust in the legislator. "ICT-based methods of

communication, and especially new forms of social media, offer parliaments the opportunity to communicate with citizens and engage them in the political process more effectively" (Griffith & Leston-Bandeira, 2012, p. 498). Davies (2014) states that there is an increasing disengagement of youth on matters of democracy. However, the importance of the youth in this discourse is further alluded to as follows; "The political discussions that take place on social media are intended to promote the greater participations of citizens. Common to all these aspects is the specific way of approaching the audience, which consists mainly of young adults, in order to make them aware of and involve them in the political processes" (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2013, p. 8). Various studies (Otienno & Mukhongo, 2013; Van Belle & Cupido, 2013) on participatory democracy and engagement found that the youth considered modern-day politics to be disengaging and can thus not relate to politicians and government, resulting in them feeling barred from the political arena. To address this, the GRN has made great strides in social media engagement and citizens are now involved in public policy-making by way of social media (MICT, 2016).

Some observers are, therefore, of the opinion that social media offers the possibility of encouraging more active involvement in debate and elections, thereby improving the apathy towards issues of the legislature. Shihomeka (2019) refers to studies on political engagement and participation, social media and elections and concludes that social media could be an effective tool for political engagement and the strengthening of democracy.

It is these young people's frequent use of social media that prompts political parties to use social media for both party advancements and democracy in general (Booysen, 2015). Lewis (2009) holds a different opinion when she states that "As we have learned from traditional media and media literacy literature, being immersed in the media does not equate to

understanding its power and influence or how to channel and employ that power," (p.28). According to Olabamiji (2014), new media in Nigeria has motivated political participation through the availability of and access to information, especially among the youths. The South African Poverty Reduction Network n.d. defines youth in South Africa as those people in the age group between 14 and 35 years.

Policymakers have thus adopted social media because politicians now understand that to have social media presence, they will need to have a particular kind of appeal that will empower them to widen their online connections. However, what is most important is being interactive and responsive on these platforms. Vesnic-Alujevic, (2013) identifies a critical advantage of social media perhaps not previously identified in other literature, "the possibility of engaging people through them, by organising events in which they can participate, such as Facebook chat with a politician interested in a certain target group (e.g. youth)" (p. 31).

However, a 2011 survey on MEPs use of the internet and social media conducted in countries of the European Parliament shows that despite the known benefits of social media in bringing together citizens and elected representatives, by 2013, the full potential of SNSes such as Facebook were still underutilised and many MEPs were sceptical about the use of Twitter, Fleishman-Hillard (2011).

According to Vesnic-Alujevic (2013), "the Internet's potential to attract citizens and widen participation is accepted on the condition that citizens participate in a two-way conversation with politicians" (p. 13), as such, any online activity aimed at successfully strengthening communication and engagement would be futile if there is no thoughtful, proper and timely feedback. To this, others claim that "the new media are enhancing political communication in Nigeria…the new media have promoted political participation among users" (Olabamiji, 2014,

p.99). The use of traditional media is declining as more people adopt online media, which Olabamiji (2014) associates with the economy and urban migration. This is because most people, and not all governments, now understand the importance of the technology that is available in new media through the control they have over this media (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). These factors have resulted in an increase in the need for social interactions among individuals, governments and corporates through new media. Unwin (2012) identifies characteristic of modern ICTs that point to the ability of new media to change the political communication. The author argues that new ICTs (social media included) have impacted the communication process between governments and the electorates, enabling politicians and MPs to engage and speak to the people without a third party and for people to share any information affecting them with their MPs. Others who substantiate this claim argue that social media offers citizens access to each other (Landsbergen, 2010).

However, parliaments as institutions of government should not simply support social media as a platform for citizen engagement, but should spearhead and mobilise the actual use of these new media because in this way, the use of the internet could help to engage and entice informed citizens with a keen interest in politics and governance, thereby positively influencing the overall democracy (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2013). This view is supported in the work of Duffy and Foley (2011), who reference findings from a 2010 House of Representatives Inquiry. As far back as 2004, the House of Commons Modernization Select Committee realised the success of online-consultation experiments that had been conducted in efforts to include citizens who would otherwise be excluded. By 2006, a call for a more strategic and less ad hoc approach to the use of emerging technologies was made. Parliament was to drive the change and manage the adoption of new media, especially in engaging the public and seeking input from the community. To this, Olabamiji (2014) opines that internet industry professionals must plan,

develop and manage communication strategies because the open nature of the internet requires some responsibility, and more so in an environment like Parliament.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union approved a resolution on the use of social media to enhance public engagement (Williamson, 2013). However, in the UK, 80% of Parliament's social media postings tend to report parliamentary activity rather than actual engagement and deliberation. Leston-Bandeira (2013) then asks to what extent MPs use social media and, if so, how this promotes new forms of parliamentary engagement. This research aimed to find answers to these questions.

Parliamentarians in advanced democracies use social media sites such as Facebook, as they regard them as the catchment area for the youth. The research by Booysen (2015) revisits an important assumption of this view that places MPs at the centre of championing engagement efforts with citizens. Booysen's research targeted South Africa's five biggest political parties, all the parties were cognisant of the impact of social media in contemporary politics (Booysen, 2015). Bertot et al. (2010a) identifies key strengths of social media as participation, empowerment, and time, as it gives users a platform from which to speak. Here, empowerment can be equated to mean engagement, as empowerment speaks to the influence citizens may have over public decisions.

All these advantages, as stated by the previous authors, interlink with the four main elements of the DOI theory; innovation, communication channels, time, and the social system (Rogers, 1983) in that social media has numerous communication channels or platforms, each unique with its own set of characteristics. Social media is also used over time, with each time set allowing for the introduction and increased and enhanced flow of information, participation, education, engagement, collaboration, and empowerment. Finally, the social system, as the

final element, can be thought of as the social media networks and the people who use it to interact and communicate.

The influence and power of the social media is insurmountable and today one can either not do without social media, or is affected or impacted by it in one way or another.

For enthusiasts, social media offers parliamentarians effective new ways to connect influence and engage with citizens. This platform stands to revolutionaries the way citizens engage and influence MPs (Grant, Moon, & Grant, 2010). The four attributes of political communication via social media are to influence mass media, provide a view of the electorate, allow for user generated content and bypass media filters, according to, "social media can also be used to broaden political participation by helping citizens to communicate with their representatives and with each other" (Davies, 2014, p. 2).

Shah (2010) is somewhat sceptical when he argues that despite these known benefits, government, including Parliament, have not been proactive in its adoption. Parliament, as major players in public engagement are therefore called to be at the forefront of this innovation in order "to communicate their positions and plans, justify their decisions and policies, and at the same time 'listen' to the citizens, solicit their opinions and comments and in general gain a better understanding of their needs and opinions" (p.79).

The adoption of social media as an innovation is a personal choice and one that is slow among individual MPs as opposed to the larger institution of Parliament or other ICT interventions such as emails. "It is more difficult for parliaments to keep track of which members are using social platforms and how, because these channels invariably operate outside of any official parliamentary ICT or communications function" (World e-Parliament Report, 2016, p. 57).

Williamson (2013) also underscores the importance of developing new strategies and policies to support new media.

For the Namibian Parliament, this study aimed to determine whether the formulation of a social media communication policy for MPs would increase the rate of diffusion. Overall, the IPU Global Parliamentary Report (2012) indicates that most MPs consider social media and other new media digital tools as useful platforms to inform citizens about new Bills and policy-related matters as well as other matters that come before Parliament.

2.9. The Role of Social Media in a Responsive Government

Literature shows that good governance, democracy and participatory democracy have become synonymous with social media use in parliament. New media can strengthen democracy through information sharing (McQuail, 2005). However, Unwin (2012) asserts an opposing view and argues that the effects of social media on the political process are not understood well. The author opines that the desire is there to believe that the emergence of social media has increased democracy but that the evidence to support such claims is lacking. Kingham (2003) argues the opposite when he states that:

> *"The greater the public participation…the more representative government is likely to be. The more accountable the government is for its actions, the more likely it is that decisions will be made in the interests of the majority. The greater the transparency of government decisions the more likely they are to take into account the people's wishes"* (p. 4).

According to Kingham (2003), parliaments that are using new media are said to be more efficient and "individual representatives too have benefited from using ICT to extend their knowledge on a vast array of subjects and to enable them to become better connected with their

electorate or constituency" (p. 6). The challenge is that it may become overwhelming for MPs to attend to citizens on multiple social media platforms and for MPs in the National Assembly, who are elected on the party list system, to use technology such as SNSes effectively without defined geographical constituencies and in ministries whose functions and duties may overlap.

However, the ideal democracy, according to Kingham (2003), is participatory democracy, which comprises the best of direct and representative democracy. In participatory democracy, governments are called to establish greater inclusion of ordinary citizens in decision-making (Kingham, 2003, p. 7). Others regard direct democracy the same as participatory democracy, which is the involvement of citizens in activities beyond the election process and expressing of opinions (Carpentier, 2011). This model of democracy is different from the representative model since electorates actively participate in making decisions that affect their livelihoods as opposed to giving input on these issues under representative democracy.

2.10. Benefits of Public Engagement

The common advantages of social media, as either a public engagement or a participation tool, are identified in the literature as reviewed in this thesis. Onto these, Vesnic-Alujevic (2013) adds that "the ability to establish personal connections, greater freedom of expression, greater contact time then exists in traditional media" (p. 20). However, the same author also identified time as a disadvantage, stating that MPs would find time constraints a challenge in engaging with their electorates on social media. It can only be assumed then that it can work both for and against considering where one looks at it from.

There has been a growth in social media use in European politics and in online engagement by citizens as well Fleishnman-Hillard,2011). Citizens may use social media for several reasons, to organise and consolidate their own interests regarding issues of politics or service delivery,

uncovering corruption or sharing opportunities. This can be done through caucusing with other online community members affected by a similar issue or having mutual interest in a particular issue. In countries were democracy is shunned, more organised social media could pose serious threats to governments. These groups have the potential to challenge governments by mobilising citizens, as was the case with the Arab springs of 2012.

As stated previously, "new media are promoting good governance culture in Africa" (Olabamiji, 2014). Through social media, access is guaranteed given that new media enable a wider scope of contributors. Thus, politicians can use this opportunity to solve problems of the electorate, as they start to build up and equally, the electorate can communicate with their MPs, thus bridging the gap between the information-rich and the information-poor and further holding government to account (Olabamiji, 2014). Hamajoda (2016) states that the electorate can also benefit by participating and influencing decision and policy making processes. Unwin (2012) outlines the other benefits and describes the great potential of social media as the freedom of communication with others across the widespread creation and sharing of information and opinions and the reduction of costs in getting information across (p.3). This view is shared by Williamson (2013) when he states that social media provides parliaments with new ways to "communicate and engage with the public, consult on legislation, deliver educational resources and promote transparency" (p. 7). A study in Nigeria concluded that "new media breathes more life into political communication" (Olabamiji, 2014, p. 97).

Researchers (McNamara et al., 2012; Kingham, 2003; Power, 2012) argue that interactive communication platforms can open channels of interaction between the electorate and legislators, quite often in real time. By doing so, "… legislators as representatives can sharpen their skills in all forms of communication – written, oral and visual" (Hamajoda, 2016, p. 1).

2.11. Challenges and Enablers of the Use of Social Media by MPs and Public

An Inter-parliamentary Union Hansard report revealed that citizens are interested in seeing MPs use digital tools that would allow engagement and communication to improve communication and address their issues (Robert & Namusonge, 2015). The respondents were looking to engage and not be fed information without the opportunity for feedback. Pătruț and Pătruț (2014) state that citizen engagement offers a solution to top-down politics, where leaders make decisions with little to no input from citizens. This has been made particularly possible with more affordable new media devices and low-cost data options, as more citizens are able to engage with their political leaders in this digital space on issues that concern them, unlike when it was government or politicians feeding the information to the people without them having an opportunity to express their views (Evalistus, 2015).

Robert and Namusonge (2015), however, claim that in the Third World, MPs continue to broadcast instead of engage, therefore, citizens rely on traditional media and word of mouth to get more information on issues concerning law-making and Parliament. Shihomeka (2019) supports this argument by revealing that developed countries were indeed struggling to obtain real online engagement, and that most organisations who used social media for interactivity applied top-down dissemination of information. The author further posits that if countries who are developed are challenged, what of developing countries such as Namibia with far less resources.

Despite the rapid growth of ICT in Africa in general and Namibia in particular, as outlined in the context of this study, there exists some challenges for ordinary citizens to capitalise on this and make meaningful contributions to the process of law making and democracy to create responsive parliaments. Udende (2011) observes how being connected to everybody can put

everybody at risk. The risk referred to here may contribute to uncertainty, which, according to Rogers (1983), slows down the diffusion and adoption process. Hence, if parliaments are serious about engagement, they must mitigate these risks by formulating a regulatory framework within which to operate.

However, with greater public engagement comea some constraints, such as adapting to different protocol and etiquette different from other media, the need for carefully tailored content and good communication skills, reputational risks and the potential to move rapidly out of control (Williamson, 2013). Other limitations include how to handle parliamentary privilege to online communication and if this privilege can be extended to those members of the society who participated in online committee enquiries or other discourse. Additionally, parliaments as institutions and parliamentarians are sensitive and it is vital that their reputation not be damaged due to social media exposure (Duffy & Foley, 2011).

Hamajoda (2016) identifies six key challenges. The first challenge is poor network connection.

The second challenge is lack of knowledge and digital skills that further advance the digital divide. Olabamiji (2014) argues that for social media for political communication to be truly inclusive and successful, there is a need to "broaden the new media users' baseline through improved computer literacy in Nigeria otherwise it remains the exclusive preserve of the elites" (p. 100). MPs indicated that they get overwhelmed by having to attend to citizens on social media, a lack of interest and lack of skills and training as the main challenges that constrain them from effectively using social media to engage and interact with citizens. Griffith and Leston-Bandeira (2012) identify new media as a "tool to address poor engagement with politics" (p. 498) but add onto the skills deficit. The authors claim that the use of the innovation

that is challenging, hence its slow adoption at Parliament. According to Afunde (2015), employers and employees in Namibia have realised the benefits of ICT and now send employees for ICT skills training more frequently. However, a proper ICT skills audit and assessment for MPs is yet to be conducted.

The third challenge identified is what Hamajoda (2016) describes as "politician's selfish approach to the utilisation of new digital media" (p. 2). Here, the author references politicians who create websites during election campaigns that they abandon soon thereafter (Hamajoda, 2016). A study by Booysen (2015) reveals trends that suggest a similar pattern of behaviour in Southern Africa when the author points to a strong correlation between election and campaign periods and social media use by political parties. As has been observed in other parts of Africa, the use of these platforms is abandoned soon after elections and the obsolete information is what remains (Olabamiji, 2014).

Several political parties that participated in the 2014 Presidential election in Namibia are said to have campaigned vigorously through new media, particularly on Facebook, and were active and responsive to sell their political manifestos and responded actively to the comments or questions they received from the public. Although engagement has dwindled as per the analysis above, this, according to Shihomeka (2019), demonstrates that digital political engagement is possible if both the citizens and politicians are capacitated to become digital citizens.

The fourth challenge is the risk of uncontrolled interaction that may come with the creation of a social media site specifically designed for communication with the public (McNamara et al., 2012). The Inter-Parliamentary Union's Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (IPU-ASGP) report revealed constraints related to reputational risks when it states that the reluctance by MPs to engage on social media is not due to a lack of interest, but a fear of the

unknown and unfamiliar, chief among them, risks on their reputation and public image (Robert & Namusonge, 2015). The dangers herein lie in the possibility of criticism and defamation, which may make politicians very reluctant to engage. Williamson (2013) highlights bringing Parliament into disrepute, issues of authorisation to disseminate content and parliamentary protocol, which could all be regarded as risks when dealing with dissent and abuse from political opponents or electorates. The fifth challenge is the dominance of traditional channels of communication. This study attempted to separate dominance from preference by determining if social media as a communication tool would be a viable option for MPs as opposed to the traditional media. A study by Hamajoda (2012) found that those MPs above the age of 55 neither select the internet as a communication or engagement tool nor do they use new media-based tools to communicate with the youth. Therefore, the study considered the age of MPs in relation to their perceptions on social media. Traditional media was popular in a study by Shihomeka (2019), but that is largely because most of the respondents had these media in their homes already. However, the respondents in the study by Shihomeka did indicate their willingness to also use social media platforms, however, network connectivity was raised again as a barrier.

Finally, Hamajoda (2016) identifies the last challenge by looking at what he terms as the "faulty assumption that once interactivity is established between representatives and constituents, mutual inputs are guaranteed in law and policy making" (p. 2). The author elaborates on this by arguing that the public is generally mostly concerned with issues that concern them and not in the overall system of law making. This last challenge then begs to delineate the extent and interest to which the public are interested in engaging with MPs.

Olabamiji (2014) cautions that MPs should guard against using social media to post personal matters outside or not relating to their work in the legislature. MPs should also be careful not to over use social media to the extent of neglecting face-to-face interaction and engagement to stimulate understanding and cooperation. It should thus be emphasised that social media can never replace human interaction. Other less technical and more political reasons are that due to bureaucracy and political line-toeing, MPs do not fully exploit social media (Kingham, 2003, p. 8).

A study in South Africa raised concerns over Facebook and that it had the potential to get hacked and becomes too impersonal once the number of followers grows considerably (Booysen, 2015). Other limitations are identified by Williamson (2013), who states that adherence to a specific code of conduct, bringing a government institution into disrepute, security policies, authorisation to disseminate content and parliamentary protocol can "appear restrictive, even constraining, when fully trying to fully exploit media that need quick, more open and conversational approach" (p. 7).

Similar challenges identified by Banday and Mattoo (2013) include lack of awareness of social media accounts and initiatives of Parliament and MPs' ability to access and contribute to these pages, interest to participate, lack of government support and championing, the digital divide, lack of interest in government online activities and general lack of trust in government.

Booysen (2015) argues that political parties in South Arica find themselves in a conundrum when communicating with their supporters. The author states that there are youth, who are on social media and who can be found on these platforms, but then there are those supporters from older generations, who are not on social media, and political parties need to accommodate them as well. Other challenges cited include apathy from the youth with respect to politics,

infiltration by opposition parties, deficiency in that it lacks authority of sources. Limited resources and restrained in-house expertise from the side of political parties in maintaining social media sites beyond the election and campaigning period were also listed as challenges. In view of these challenges, Booysen (2015), therefore, argues that in as much as political parties need to embrace new media, they cannot afford to neglect traditional media altogether.

The application of social media for public engagement without the consideration of the people's desired level to engage on political matters is the reason social media campaigns fail, as pointed out by Fox (2009). The considerations Fox identifies are: time for participation in political discussions, no desire to be actively involved and self-interest to become politically engaged. The public may not be interested in sustained, deep and tasking consultations, but rather more targeted engagement on issues that affect them and are of interest to them.

Certain risks of social media use were discovered in a study done at the Parliament of Australia. First, it was feared that social media use by parliament would invite only a small number of people, thereby inviting criticism and ridicule and ultimately bringing the institution of Parliament into disrepute. The second risk was preserving the image of Parliament while remaining relevant to the target audience. Third, was that sensitive issues emanating from online consultation were a risk, as were other security-related risks where hackers could bypass the online security system of a committee's social media page. Finally, parliamentary procedural issues, such as parliamentary privilege were noted.

Other barriers that affect social media adoption include "unsafe disclosure of information…reputation of individuals and cyberbullying…" (Folorunso et al., 2010, p. 363).

Reasons for the reluctance of MPs to adopt social media as a formal communication tool vary. Vesnic-Alujevic (2013) cites the hesitancy of MPs to be directly responsible for the online

activities, promoting the page and monitoring statistical information, such as numbers and location. The issue of language was also identified, when MEP suggested the need for a second language to English to include all citizens. This could be a significant challenge for Namibian MPs, given that the country has about 14 languages, low literacy rate and a foreign language, English, as its national language. Opposing views between scholars on whether the internet brought anything substantive and new to politicians and their relationship with the citizens remains, with some doubting its success and its ability to change the relationship between electorates and MPs significantly (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2013). Establishing if any fresh changes exist will require a review of current internet content so it meets the needs of the electorate better, hence improving the quality of participatory government.

2.11.1. Enablers to Social Media Use by Parliamentarians

"The "best" way to use social media in government is a nebulous and subjective problem that does not lend itself to a single set of guidelines for every task, country, agency, citizen or government" (Magro 2012, p. 159). Therefore, a successful strategy, however similar the circumstances may be, cannot be 'copied and pasted' to fit the form of an institution of government such as parliament and the members that serve in it, given their unique dynamics and circumstances. The significance of this study, therefore, is once again highlighted in that the findings and recommendations of this study may offer input into guidelines and policies for the Namibian Parliament.

According to Loukis et al. (2014), previous research in the domain of private sector innovation has revealed that "ICTs are important innovation drivers, as they can greatly facilitate and support the exchange of knowledge and opinions among individuals with different education, expertise, experience and perspectives," (para. 7). For MPs, engagement with the public

through sustained ICTs such as social media would thus be very useful to gauge the views and seek the involvement of the public, resulting in responsive public policies.

Parliaments the world over now accept that members will post on social media while in the chamber either as a personal strategy or to broaden discourse and engagement (Williamson, 2013, p. 15). "In India, various ministers and officials actively use social media to communicate with citizens" (Banday & Mattoo, 2013, p. 47). However, to realise this there are several technical considerations as identified by Williamson (2013), who states that issues of bandwidth, network capacity and secure wireless networking capacity for members using social media in the chamber must be considered. As such, "social media usage within Parliament needs to be considered in the context of communications and engagement strategies, security policy, ICT usage policies and parliamentary protocol and guidelines…" (Williamson, 2013, p. 14 - 15).

Hamajoda (2012) ascertains that skills, improved connection and the public's access to the internet are factors that could enable parliamentarians to use social media more effectively. A study done in West Africa referenced the need for legislators to be highly equipped with information at personal level for them to participate confidently and fully on social media networks by having all information at hand.

Narrowing the gap in the digital divide could prove significant in enhancing effective public engagement via social media. However, the issue of internet coverage should not be the responsibility of the private sector alone, but of governments as well. According to Williamson (2013), factors that may propel MPs to use social media vary, and are not exclusive to issues of bandwidth and policies only, because once these factors have been addressed, MPs need training and support to use social media to increase democratic interaction and make members

accessible to their constituents. The author further suggests that Parliament provide resources to enable the public to identify their MPs and to connect with them personally on social media. The example given is for the official Parliament page to have a list of those members who are on social media to authenticate these accounts or to create links to the accounts of MPs' social media pages (Williamson, 2013, p. 15).

In countries where restrictions on traditional media like television or radio are overbearing, MPs, especially those from opposition parties, may criticise government using social media. Given that Namibia is a peaceful and democratic country, that could explain why social media use by MPs has not fully taken off.

A study titled: 'Social media adoption in local government. The case of Poland' identified three factors that influence the adoption of social media, as, information on best practices in the informal network of peers, passive observation of perceived best practices in the public and private sectors and market-driven citizen behaviour (Mergel,2013). In relation to factors that influence diffusion in the theoretical framework of this study, these factors relate to several constructs of the DOI theory, namely relative advantage and complexity as well as the communication and social structure element as outlined under 2.3 of this research.

An IPU report indicates that 56% of parliamentarians use new media to engage with the public as opposed to only 13% worldwide in 2010 (World e-Parliament Report, 2016). Power (2012) identifies two contributing factors that influence parliamentarians' engagement with the public. The first one is the interest and aspiration to involve the electorate in the activities of Parliament; and second, the need to give information and enhance the understanding the public may have of the work of Parliament. The third reason could be self-serving, as identified by Vesnic-Alujevic (2013), who observes that social media play a significant role in political

marketing, which is the development and application of "new techniques and media through which politicians can be promoted" (p. 8). Whatever the factors may be, Mergel et al. (2009) claim that the transformational effects of Web 2.0 use in government might be stronger than other ICT innovations that came before it. They owe this to the ability to comprehend use without much difficulty, resulting in lower cost in use, which they say allows for faster diffusion.

2.12. Chapter Summary

The future of the internet and Web 2.0 is limitless. Even more limitless is its influence and potential impact on the work of government, particularly parliaments. Web 2.0 social media might trigger a technological shift that will affect government structure and operation, perhaps resulting in a 'Government 2.0', or better yet, 'Parliament 2.0'. The literature in this chapter indicates that parliaments are adopting, or planning to adopt, social media as a means of boosting their relationship with citizens. Furthermore, this chapter aimed at linking the objectives of the study to current literature, and identified the various factors that affect the adoption of social media as an innovation at parliament. A recurrent theme in the literature is youth engagement via social media and trust in government, which brought about an added facet to the study.

Political communication scholars reviewed in this chapter focused on the use of new media in politics and a majority advance that new media can facilitate political engagement, and this what this study explored in the Namibian context. Many researchers share this view in this field because of social media's ability to create public platforms irrespective of one's social or political standing or background.

The next chapter discusses the research methodology for this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

Mouton and Marais (1996) define methodology as the logic of applying scientific methods to study reality and claim that the methodological dimension of research is concerned with answering "how" social science research was conducted. This includes the techniques and methods used that comply with the criteria of social science research (Mouton & Marais, 1996). It is the application of this systematic approach, therefore, that qualifies social science research as scientific and sets the ground work for the actual research. Due to the variety of research methods, paradigms and phenomena, it would be incorrect to assume that a single research methodology would be applicable in all social science research scenarios. This chapter, therefore, discusses and justifies the methodological choices that were found suitable and consequently selected for this study. It provides a concise overview of the work and processes that were carried out in the empirical collection of data. A discussion of the philosophical assumptions is followed by the research design. The discussion then delves into data collection methods, population, sampling, research instruments, reliability and validity, and data analysis.

3.2. Philosophical Assumptions

Philosophical assumptions, also referred to as research paradigms, are a set of general beliefs or assumptions that direct and inform research studies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Another term for paradigm, as used by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), is worldview, which they argue "may or may not be associated with a specific discipline or community of scholars but which suggests the shared beliefs and values of researchers" (p. 39). Denscombe (2010) refers to research paradigm as a pattern or model for research, thereby involving a philosophy of

research and other considerations such as a reference to the practices of research, preference for a belief or practice over another and the identification of research questions as more meaningful over others. According to Denscombe (2010), quantitative or qualitative nature of a study determines the philosophical assumptions or perspective and how knowledge will be gained.

At the heart of research paradigms lie four important concepts, which are ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology. An additional construct is rhetoric, which is the language of research. Paradigms or worldviews differ in ontology, which is the nature of reality where research in the social sciences is always directed at an element of social reality. Others refer to ontology as the "nature of social phenomena and the beliefs that researchers hold about the nature of social reality" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 118). Epistemology is defined as how we gain knowledge aimed at not only understanding phenomena but providing a valid and reliable understanding of reality; axiology is the role of values in research; and methodology is the research process, which must be objective by virtue of it being critical, balanced, unbiased, systematic and controllable (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Mouton & Marais, 1996).

Constructionists regard the social world as a reality that is constructed through the perceptions of people with social reality being constantly produced and re-produced through every life. They see the world as having multiple realities as opposed to a single reality (Denscombe, 2010). Interpretivism regards knowledge of the social world as something. There, all knowledge is produced and not discovered (Denscombe, 2010). A third approach is pragmatism, also referred to as the mixed methods approach, which recognises single and multiple realities with a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell &

Plano Clark, 2011). A fourth approach is post-positivism, which aims to reproduce natural science methods to explain phenomena in the natural world by applying methods used in natural science to studies of the social world (Denscombe, 2010).

The last philosophical assumption is realism on which this quantitative study was based. Realism regard the social world as an objective reality that exists whether anyone believes in its existence (Denscombe, 2010). It, therefore, tends to rely more on the quantitative approach, hence it's employment for this study. Denscombe (2010) argues that the philosophy upon which a research design is based should resonate with the methods of data collection and techniques for data analysis. post-positivism or critical realism

Denscombe (2010) further argues that data collection methods are laden with pre-existing assumptions of the preferred theory, as such, theory and methods are intertwined. For this study, the five constructs of the DOI theory, namely relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, observability and trialability were tested to determine if, and to what extent, they influence the diffusion of social media use at Parliament. The data collection instruments were thus designed to measure these constructs. Hence, for this study, a standardised questionnaire was used, under the same conditions to collect data. Respondents were not coerced to provide answers and the data collection process was free from any influence. Finally, this assumption posits that researchers should be objective in that they should always remain impartial and avoid asking questions swayed or influenced by personal feelings or values (Denscombe, 2010).

Research should be value free from biases and wherever biases may arise, researchers eliminate them by using checks. For this study, the familiarity of the researcher, who is in the employment of the National Council, with MPs from the National Council posed as potential

bias and to eliminate this, a research assistant was sought to conduct research with this group of respondents.

3.3. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach, hence the application of a survey research design using a survey questionnaire for data collection. The quantitative research approach was used because of its objectivity and ability to formulate a single reality, impartiality and lack of bias (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The design of a research project depends on the kind of data to be used and is aimed at aligning the objectives of the research with practicalities of considerations, limitations, nuisance variables and errors so they may be eliminated (Mouton & Marais, 1996). Basically, research design is meant to demonstrate that a research is planned. Quantitative data lends itself to various forms of statistical calculations making it useful for detecting patterns of activity (Denscombe, 2010). The objectives of this study were, therefore, best answered using probabilities, proportions and measurements, thereby justifying quantitative data as most appropriate for this study. Mouton and Marais (1996) describe the quantitative approach as research that is highly formalised and controlled, with a defined range and using methods relatively close to the physical sciences. On the other hand, qualitative studies are described as those approaches with less formalised procedures, with a more undefined scope, applying a more philosophical mode of operation. The quantitative research paradigm lends itself to the need for data in the form of numbers, lending itself to studies that require measurement and numerical values assigned to them. Due to this reason, quantitative research is largely suitable for the post-positivist worldview, which informed this study. The benefits of the post positivism philosophy for this study are related to the survey questions, the kind of data that is required and the benefits for which the findings

will be used, which is to supply reliable information for public policy (Denscombe, 2010; Mouton & Marais, 1996).

Quantitative research has three broad classifications; descriptive, experimental and causal comparative (Williams, 2007). This study adopted the descriptive research because it examines the situation as it exists in its present form. For this study, the use of social media was studied in its present form at the time of the research. Descriptive research involves the exploration of correlation between two or more phenomena and includes a large variety of types of research. The aim of descriptive studies is for researchers "to describe that which exists as accurately as possible" (Mouton and Marais, 1996, p. 44). Therefore, an important consideration for all researchers using descriptive classification is to collect accurate data. When descriptions are constructed by means of the relationships between variables that it is referred to as a correlation study (Mouton & Marais, 1996). For this study, descriptions of the relationships between variables such as level of education and preferred level of social media engagement were constructed and in addition to just providing the frequencies, the relationships were postulated to create correlation using statistical analysis and narrative descriptions.

Apart from the survey research design, there are several other research methods in descriptive research that can be used to conduct quantitative research, such as correlation, developmental design and observational studies (Williams, 2007). The correlation research method is most useful when examining differences between characteristics in the group under study and is closely linked to survey design. This study therefore had elements of correlation methods in its attempt to strengthen correlation stability. Developmental design explores how characteristics change over time within a study group, and is normally used in studies on child development. Observational research method provides an alternative for qualitative methods and here, a

researcher observes specific human behaviour objectively (Williams, 2007). Given these definitions and characterisations about the other types of quantitative methods, this study was best suited to employ survey design which proved to be more suitable given the objectives and title of the research. Further justification on why this study adopted a survey research design is under section 3.4 of this thesis.

3.4. Data collection methods

Data collection methods in quantitative studies include survey, experimental and quasi-experimental. For this study, survey research was used because surveys are very effective in representing large populations and therefore, the data collected through surveys offer a better representation of the general population under study. Because the aim of this study was to determine the public and MPs views on social media use, a survey research was better suited to provide a wider and inclusive view. A survey design can test a theory across several variables using standardised procedures. All procedures are standardised, including the questions and answers of the study, thereby ensuring objectivity. Another major benefit of surveys is that the results of a study can be generalised to the wider population (Morgan, 2013). Due to its high representativeness, surveys allow for various variables to be analysed and in the case of this study, identify barriers and enablers to social media use as well as perceptions around its use. Surveys also increase objectivity as all respondents are exposed to standardised conditions and standardised questionnaires thereby enabling greater precision of data collection and measurement, as a result, a researcher's biases are limited (Czaja & Blair, 2005). The questionnaires were administered face-to-face. Face-to-face methods of data collection are useful in that they allow for more complex questions (Neuman, 2011). This method is useful for a study on an ever-evolving subject as social media use because when a respondent does

not understand a question, the researcher may help clarify it (Bernard, 2000), thereby reducing the return of many unanswered questions and increasing the response rate.

Other advantages are that the sampling frame and response bias are usually low in the face-to-face method, questions can be more complex because it is administered by a trained researcher and finally, it can take longer than other types of procedures (Czaja & Blair, 2005). Others argue that face-to-face data collection methods enable researchers to establish rapport with the respondents, thereby motivating them to answer and participate (White & McBurney, 2013).

3.5. Population

According to Babbie and Mouton (2003), the population of a study is the group of people from whom the research aims to draw conclusions because it is not always possible to study all the members of a population (Bernard, 2000). Another definition is from Czaja and Blair (2005) who define population as the group under study to which the results are generalised. The population was all 146 MPs of the Namibian Parliament and the people in the Windhoek city centre at the time of the research. It is not possible to determine the size of population in the Windhoek city centre. However, Fox (2012) claims that internet use is urban-based and is therefore higher in the capital, Windhoek. The author further posits that those from Windhoek also favoured participatory platforms such as Facebook as they offered virtual spheres were people could meet and network. It is for this reason that the researcher opted for the population in the Windhoek city centre.

Thus, the units of observation were MPs and members of the public from whom analysis and conclusions about social media use and engagement were drawn. It is important to note here, in that MPs in the National Council are also regional representatives and thus serve a dual purpose as Regional Councillors.

3.6. Sample

The study employed the simple random sampling method to select MPs. A 90% confidence level was used to calculate the sample for the 146 MPs, equalling to 60 MPs. All 146 MPs were assigned a number and the sample was selected from a computed table of random numbers. This procedure was chosen because it gave equal opportunity for all 146 MPs to be selected, as the study was not aimed at specific respondents. To avoid disproportionate sampling, the proportional representation of each House of Parliament was calculated, giving the National Council 18 respondents and the National Assembly 42 respondents, totalling 60 respondents.

The researcher was unable to determine the population of people in Windhoek city centre at the time of the research as this information does not exist and as such, was unable to draw a sample using a sampling formula. The sample of respondents in Windhoek city centre was 200 respondents, which is a reasonable number to allow for meaningful data analysis, generalisability and interpretation of findings. This also allowed for correlation stability.

Respondents purposively sampled were Namibian citizens because the engagement under study was between MPs and this group. The study was unable to collect data from all 60 MPs as some were not available and others did not respond in time. The study also did not manage to reach 200 respondents in city centre due to time constraints.

Stratified sampling was applied to group the strata into gender and age. Respondents were segmented into two strata of age (millennials and adults) and gender (male and female). The reason for stratifying was to ensure that these important parts of the population were appropriately represented (Denscombe, 2014). According to Howe and Strauss (2003), the millennial generation is those born from 1982 to 2002. Respondents in the millennials group were from ages 18 to 35 years, referred to as youth in this study. The second segment under

the age strata was 36 years and above and referred to as adults in this study. Millennials make up 59.43% and those 36 and older make up 40.5% of the Namibian population (Namibia Statistics Agency [NSA], 2011). Based on this data, the total number of respondents per segment in this stratum were 118 millennials and 82 adults, totalling 200. According to NSA (2011), the gender ratio of the population of Namibia as per the demographics of Namibia is around 50% male and 50% female. Based on this data, respondents comprised 100 males and 100 females.

Convenience sampling was then applied until the total number of respondents per segment that happened to be in the Windhoek city centre (Wernhil Park, Town Square, Levinson Arcade, Post Street Mall, and Independence Avenue) during the time the research was underway was reached. Respondents were selected from various eateries, retail outlets, government and private business establishments and walkways to reach a wide demographic for the research. The data collection was done on weekdays to gauge views of the working/business group and as well as on weekends to allow more time for respondents to fill out the questionnaire and for a wider demography of respondents in the study.

3.7. Research Instruments

The data collection instruments were two sets of questionnaires, one for the MPs (See Appendix "F") and the other for the general public (See Appendix "G").

This study employed the use of closed-ended questionnaires. Welman et al. (2005) define closed-ended questionnaires as those which provide a range of answers from which respondents choose from. Because questionnaires do not involve direct observation of behaviour, they are therefore prone to measurement reactivity, which may include the withholding of information to intentional deception (Welman et al., 2005). To address this, key

issues were considered for this study, such as the literacy level of respondents, neutrality of questions, proper sequencing, and applicability of all questions to respondents as well as brief and concise questions that were easy to understand. Quantitative approach relies on the quantification of constructs; and quantitative researchers believe that the best way to measure social life is through assigning numbers to the qualities of things through quantitative measurement (Bernard, 2000), hence the employment of closed-ended questionnaires. There are numerous advantages to closed-ended questions. First, they are easier to answer. Second, answers are easier to compare, to code and to analyse. Third, answers are less confusing and those respondents that are less articulate can participate (Neuman, 2011). The significance of two separate questionnaires was that each sought to collect different data from different units of observation that was then measured and analysed separately and against each other to determine correlation. The research instrument developed by the researcher included nominal, ordinal and interval scales to strengthen the power of measurement.

Because social media is user-driven through the content and activity people choose to share and engage in, it was important to understand the perceptions and attitudes of social media users and potential users towards this innovation. This aspect has remained an important consideration for this study, specifically with the questionnaire questions, some of which were meant to capture this element.

3.8. Reliability and Validity

Validity refers to the "extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration" (Bernard, 2000, p. 122). Central to validity is reliability, which is defined as the "requirement that the application of a valid measuring

instrument to different groups under different sets of circumstances should lead to the same observations" (Mouton & Marais, 1996, p. 79).

3.8.1. Reliability

Reliability is influenced by four variables, namely: the researcher, the respondents, the measuring instrument and the circumstances under which research is conducted (Mouton & Marais, 1996). In respect to the first variable, the researcher was affiliated to a reputable tertiary institution under which the study was conducted and this information was provided in the questionnaire. Therefore, respondents were more motivated to answer questions seriously and truthfully. The researcher guarded against questions that would be confidential, intrusive or offensive, thereby ensuring trust and a high response rate. The researcher also minimised the distance between themselves and the respondents by administering the questionnaires and ensuring that they were well received. In all instances, the researcher and research assistant dressed to mirror the respondents and even went as far as addressing or explaining certain aspects of the data collection instrument in various Namibian languages, where necessary, to narrow the distance between themselves and the respondents and build rapport. The researcher did not coax prospective respondents who demonstrated signs of unwillingness to participate to do so, particularly those in the Windhoek city centre due to what Mouton and Marais (1996) refer to as interview saturation, which is commonly experienced by respondents in metropolitan areas who may be inundated with other surveys. The authors, Mouton and Marais (1996) claim that reluctance to participate is a good indication that they are over-saturated and hence, any information they would provide would be unreliable. The researcher also avoided the omniscience syndrome (Mouton & Marais, 1996) where respondents believe that they know everything, by explaining questions and answering to any concerns.

3.8.2. Validity

Social science research is a human decision-making process, and this makes it prone to human fallacy. Therefore, the methodology of a study aims to identify and eliminate incorrect decisions well ahead of time to maximise the validity of the research findings. Validity of findings can only be possible when the research is objective (Mouton & Marais, 1996).

To identify and eliminate improper decisions, the study conducted a pre-test on six of the members from each unit of analysis, who did not take part in the actual study. This exercise helped identify the challenges in the data instrument, attend to ambiguous questions and strengthened the validity of the research instrument. According to Bernard (2000), it is imperative to pre-test any survey instrument because it is almost certain that a researcher may have omitted something important or that a question is poorly worded and may need rephrasing. The research assistant also participated in the pre-testing of the data collection instruments. This allowed them to familiarise with the data collection process and enabled them to assist in identifying ambiguous questions. Data collected from the pre-test was analysed to address ambiguous questions, help identify the challenges and errors in the data instrument and strengthen the validity of the research instrument. Challenges identified and rectified in the questionnaire for the public were numbering errors in the instructions for Questions 34 and 35, where, instead of directing respondents who answered "No" to Question 34 to proceed to Question number 37, the instruction on the questionnaire erroneously directed respondents to Question 36 instead. For the MPs questionnaire, there was an error in Question 29 that was rectified. Question 1 on gender had the option of 'other' to include MPs who did not want to identify as either male or female. This was identified as not sitting well with the MPs and the gender question was then limited to only male or female categories. Question two that dealt

with age had an overlapping in the 41–51 years category and in the 51–61 years category. This was rectified by removing the second 51 and replacing it with 52 to only have a single category for it. These errors were rectified to refine the actual data collection process and minimise errors.

Another important variable that affects validity during the actual data collection process is the level of motivation. This is influenced by the characteristics of the researcher, the contextual factors in the questionnaire and the way questions are phrased (Mouton & Marais, 1996). The researcher tested the data collection instrument beforehand and applied basic courtesy and respect always during the data collection process to attain a meaningful and enjoyable experience for the respondents.

3.9. Procedure

The researcher obtained ethical clearance (Appendix A) from UNAM, which was used to request permission to conduct the research from the City of Windhoek, NC and NA, and permission was subsequently granted. The researcher made appointments to meet and discuss the aim of the research with the presiding officers and accounting officers of the Secretariat of each house of Parliament. The Speaker of the NA and Secretary of the NC both gave written permission for the research to be conducted at Parliament (Appendices B and C). Upon telephonic request, followed up by an email to the Chief Executive Officer of the City of Windhoek, the City of Windhoek Municipality also gave a letter of access for the research to be conducted in the Windhoek city centre (Appendix D). Additionally, the researcher called on the political heads of both House, the Chairperson of the NC and the Speaker of the NA to inform them of the research process that was to commence. The researcher identified a trained

research assistant, who collected data from the respondents of the NC to reduce bias due to the familiarity of the researcher as an employee of the NC.

Respondents were required to sign a consent form (See Appendix "E") upon which the researcher or the research assistant administered the questionnaires. Arrangements were made with MPs for data collection and with members of the public, who requested for times convenient to them. The researcher and research assistant were present during their respective data collection exercises when respondents were filling out the questionnaire ready to address concerns that arose and to allow the respondents to seek further clarity or more information.

The questionnaires were then collected promptly after completion. The data collected from the questionnaires were captured, organised, and processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software for comparisons, summaries and were presented in graphs and bar charts for interpretation.

3.10. Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of inspecting, cleaning and transforming data to gather information that informs the conclusion of the study and support the decision-making process (Xia, 2015).

Bryant and Charmaz (2007) identify three important purposes of data analysis. The authors claim that data analysis in social science research helps the researcher to understand the reality of the area under investigation as well as the meaning and values attributed by respondents in greater detail. In addition, data analysis focuses on explaining the differences in the data collected by looking for the differences and scrutinising them. Finally, they argue that data analysis helps in the development of a theory of the situation or circumstances under investigation. Others argue that the purpose of data analysis is to examine the characteristics

of the dependent and independent variable as well as the sample characteristics while others claim that social indicators provide answers to pressing questions in social science research. The author adds that data analysis and arguments grounded in thoughtful analysis of statistical evidence have many more advantage over arguments based on presupposition, hence the need for proper data analysis in research (Klass, 2012; Rasli, 2006).

Further to data analysis is data interpretation. The two go hand in hand as the researcher must first analyse data before they are able to interpret it (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). According to the authors, data interpretation refers to the inferences that are drawn from the data collected. This allows for a more detailed understanding of the researcher's inadvertent communications. There are numerous important reasons for employing data interpretation in research, such as providing a better understanding of the researcher's intended view, which is what the researcher was trying to express and giving meaning to what may motivate a researcher to say what they say, some of which the researcher themselves may not even be aware of. Finally, data interpretation helps the understanding of various social dynamics such as politics, economics or social, thereby making it possible for the researcher to express themself the findings of the issue under study (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

It is true when Mouton and Marais (1996) state that "the developments in the field of descriptive techniques and quantitative analysis have provided researchers with a wide variety of analytical techniques" (p. 105). However, this has major threats to validity because, for example, certain techniques apply to certain data or only work if data was randomly selected. Therefore, the researcher ensured that a statistician from the Namibia Statistics Agency vetted the data collection instruments to ensure that they would be analysed using the identified method.

Maxwell and Miller (2008) state that quantitative research employs a detailed and systematic general theory, which is known as statistics. This is done using various statistical techniques, as was done for this study with the use of the SPSS. SPSS software was used to come up with descriptive statistics to describe the data and inferential statistics to infer from the sample data the thoughts and perceptions of the respondents. The data were analysed and presented in bar graphs and charts because graphs and charts work best in visually demonstrating a relationship between values, in this case, the MPs and the public and their relationship to social media and to each other through measuring the research objectives and cross referencing the two sets of data collected. The researcher did, however, not use the graphs generated from SPSS, but opted instead to use the data generated from SPSS to create a variety of pie and bar charts in Microsoft Word, as they were more suitable to work with and update. Statistics in social science research is what informs and guides how analysis should be done in order to, one, study and compare the issues in phenomena, two, help determine reliable conclusions from scientific observations and finally, to help decide whether a hypothesis will be accepted or rejected (Kerlinger, as cited in Maxwell & Miller, 2008). For this study however, hypothesis was not used and, therefore, the third use of statistics in social science research, as stated above, does not apply to this study.

Commonly expected is that "a quantitative research paradigm involves a basic belief in the need for data in the form of numbers" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 10). However, this research expanded beyond the use of numbers only in order to provide a description of the data in a narrative form.

3.11. Evaluation of the Methodology

If this study was to be done again, the researcher would change the study's research approach from quantitative to mixed methods employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches,

hence, following a pragmatic research paradigm. This would allow for the use of purposive sampling as opposed to simple random sampling in order to identify a smaller sample of key respondents from Parliament at a smaller confidence level. The researcher will also do a bigger pre-test in order to pick up some of the issues that were only detected during the actual data collection process. Finally, the researcher will have more than one statistician to look at the data collection instruments in order to gain a wider opinion on data analysis software and the type of questions posed.

3.12. Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an in-depth discussion of the methodology of the study, bringing in the philosophical assumptions that explained the rationale behind the methodology that was employed.

This study employed the quantitative research approach by way of survey research design, using a survey questionnaire to collect data. All 146 MPs and people in the Windhoek city centre at the time of the research formed the population. The study employed the simple random sampling method for MPs and a combination of purposive, stratified and convenience sampling for members of the public. A 90% confidence level calculated 60 MPs, while the sample size for the population was 200. Using the survey questionnaire was the most effective choice due to the large population of this study. Data were analysed using SPSS software to come up with descriptive statistics for the data and inferential statistics to deduce from the sample data the thoughts and perceptions of the respondents. The next chapter analyses and presents the data from the study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents data on the study whose title is 'The Use of Social Media to Enhance Public Engagement with Namibian Parliamentarians'. The results section of a study is one of the most important sections, as it helps readers gain a deeper and more holistic understanding of how the study turned out (Huck, 2012).

Huck (2012) suggests that social science research findings can be presented in one of three ways. First, it can be reported in the form of text. Second, it can be presented by way of tables and finally, by means of graphs, columns, or charts, herein called figures. For this study, a combination of text and figures was used.

The research objectives of the study were first, to investigate perceptions of MPs on the use of social media for official purposes. Under this objective, the study drew two themes, first, to gather the general information with respect to social media use and familiarity and, second, to determine the perceptions around social media use as an official tool of communication. The objective, therefore, was to explore the feelings, attitudes and behaviours of MPs with respect to social media use.

The second objective was to explore whether social media plays a role in creating a responsive Parliament. For this objective, three themes were drawn, first, to determine the effectiveness of social media as an engagement tool, second, to dissect factors around political communication and democracy using social media. Finally, the study delved into the dynamics of social media use in public engagement.

The third objective was to establish the desired nature of social media engagement between citizens and MPs. Here the study aimed to identify the relationship and establish the level of interest the public had to engage with MPs and vice versa. It was imperative to determine the extent to which the public was enticed to engage and the conditions and environment under which they would be willing to do so.

Under the fourth objective, the study aimed to establish factors which determine the use of social media by MPs and the public. To do these, several themes were derived, including factors that would enable social media use, benefits of social media and challenges of social media.

Data collected was entered into the SPSS, after which it was analysed using descriptive statistics. Data is presented using pie charts, bar graphs and tables with the values expressed as percentages. The study had a response rate of 39 MPs out of the 60 that were randomly sampled and 163 out of the 200 respondents that were sampled from the public. The study was unable to reach the target of respondents as set out at the beginning of the research. However, enough responses were garnered to ensure that there was no bias in the data. Second, the population from the public was not homogenous, therefore, the study obtained a broad and variant response base. Literature suggests that although response rates should be reported in population-based studies, they alone are not enough to determine the quality or validity of a study and that as such, it is important for researchers to report their response rate and the methods used to calculate response rates to help reviewers in assessing the validity and accuracy of findings (Morton, Bandar, Robinson & Atatoa Carr (2012).

On the contrary, other studies argue that there is no direct correlation between response rate and validity, as some studies with low response rates can yield more accurate results than those with higher response rates (Visser et al., as cited in Morton et al., 2012).

The Chapter is divided into two, Part A and Part B, which present data collected from MPs, and members of the public, respectively. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

4.2. PART A: Data from MPs

The section starts by presenting the demographic information of the MPs, followed by the following headings and sub-headings:

- Perceptions of MPs on Social Media and Its Use
    - Social Media Knowledge and Use
    - Perceptions of MPs on the Use of Social Media as a Formal Means of Communication
- Social Media's Role in Creating a Responsive Parliament
    - Effectiveness of Social Media as an Engagement Tool
    - Political Communication and Democracy Through the Use of Social Media
    - Social Media Use in Public Engagement.
- Desired Nature of Social Media Engagement Between MPs and Public
    - Nature of Engagement
- Factors Which Determine Social Media Use
    - Enabling Factors to Social Media Engagement
    - Benefits of Social Media Use for Public Engagement
    - Barriers to Social Media Use for Public Engagement

4.2.1. Demographic Information

Figure 4.1 shows the demographic information of the respondents, which includes age, gender, term in office, political party representation, primary residency and rank or title in role as MPs.

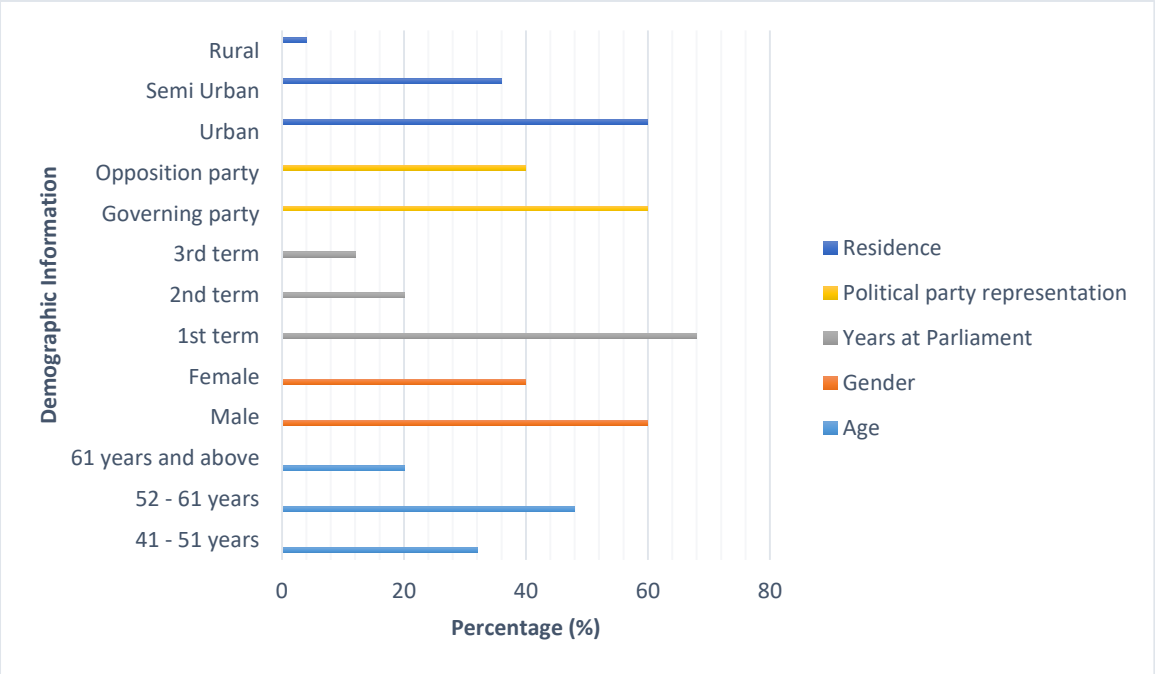

Figure 4.1: Demographic Information

Figure 4.1 shows that 60% of the respondents were male and 40% were female. The majority (48%) of the respondents were between the ages of 52 and 61 years, 32% in the 41-51 years age group and 20% were 62 years and older. The study also wanted to find out the number of years the respondents had been in Parliament. Most of the MPs (68%) were in their first term, second term (20%) and third term (12%). A term in Parliament is five years. Additionally, 60% of the respondents were members of the governing party and 40% were from the opposition parties. Finally, 60% of the respondents indicated they lived in the urban areas, 36% in rural areas while only 4% lived in semi-urban areas.

To determine the title of each MP, the respondents were asked to select the title or rank they occupied. The majority (44%) of the respondents were ordinary members, 24% were committee chairpersons and only 20% were either a chief whip or a deputy chief whip. Party president, minister or deputy minister and presiding officer were each 4%.

4.2.2. Perceptions of MPs on Social Media and its Use

The aim of this section was to determine the perceptions and attitudes of MPs on social media use for engagement. The process was two-fold. To determine the perceptions and attitudes of the respondents about social media use, the research first had to assess the social media knowledge and use of respondents, as they have a bearing on their perceptions. This correlation will be expounded on more in the next chapter.

4.2.2.1. Social Media Knowledge and Use

The respondents were asked to indicate their knowledge of social media and rate their familiarity with online social media sites.

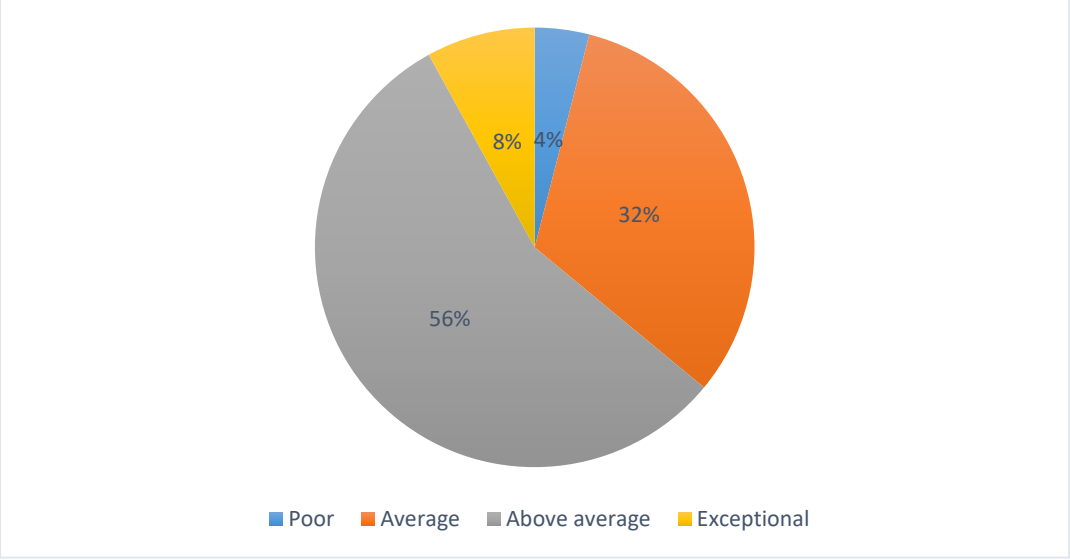

Figure 4.2: General Knowledge of Social Media

Figure 4.2 shows the social media knowledge of respondents. A majority 56% selected above average knowledge of social media, followed by 32% with average knowledge. A further 8% selected exceptional knowledge while only 4% had poor social media knowledge.

The respondents were asked to indicate if they had social media accounts or not. Figure 4.3 highlights the findings.

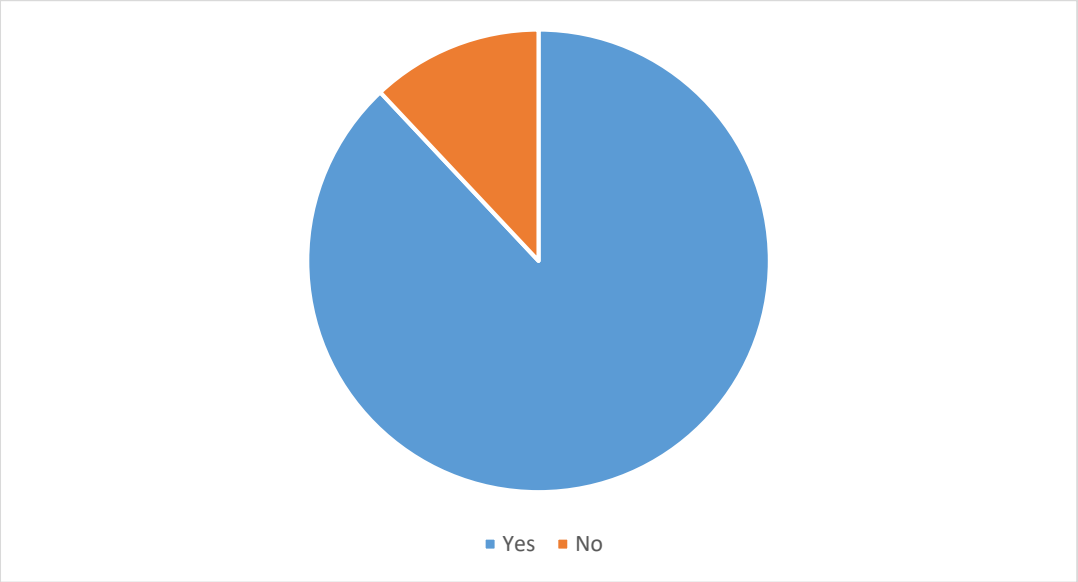

Figure 4.3: MPs with Social Media Accounts

An overwhelming 88% of the respondents indicated that they had social media accounts, while only about 12% indicated they did not have.

The respondents were requested to select the social media site they preferred most. The social media sites identified for this study were Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram.

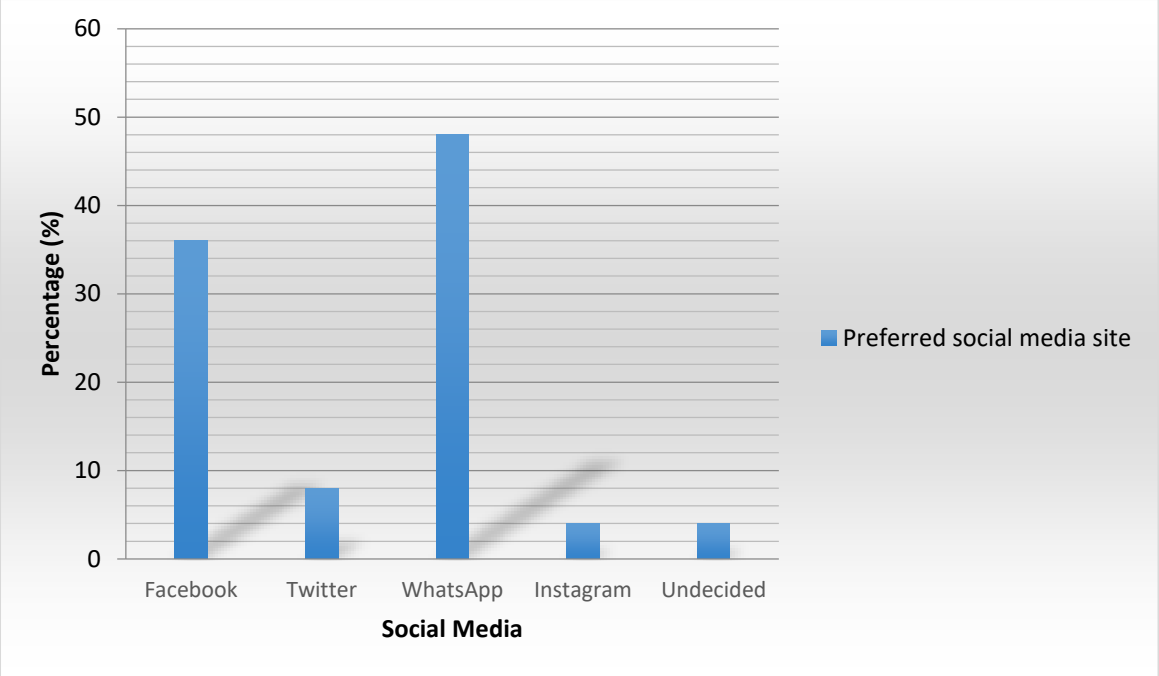

Figure 4.4: Preferred Social Media Site

Figure 4.4 shows that WhatsApp and Facebook were the most preferred, with 48% and 36%, respectively. They were followed by Twitter (8%), Instagram (4%) and about 4% of undecided responses. Although 88% of the respondents had social media accounts, 56% of these respondents had official social media accounts while the remaining 44% indicated that they did not have official social media accounts. Of the respondents who had official social media accounts, 51% were on WhatsApp, 15% on Facebook, 14% on Instagram while 20% said they were on two or more social media platforms, most of which were Facebook and WhatsApp, or Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter.

The study was interested in determining the reasons why respondents used social media and why those who did not use social media opted to do so. Majority (40%) of the responses indicated that it was to connect with the public, 32% claimed it was to connect with family and

friends and 28% claimed they used social media to stay up to date with the latest news and current affairs.

As was revealed in Figure 4.3 above, 12% of the respondents did not have social media accounts. Data revealed that 36% of the respondents identified the inability to navigate social media as a reason, while 24% did not use social due to poor network, and lastly, 40% gave varied reasons, such as a general lack of interest and the fact that some of their electorate were not available on social media platforms due to poor network coverage and unaffordability of data. Another reason given was that they had not been provided with devices with which to use social media. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents said they frequently used social media, 37% indicated that they used social media moderately, 4% claimed to use social media rarely while only 1% of the respondents were undecided on determining their level of social media use.

4.2.2.2. Perceptions on the Use of Social Media as a Formal Means of Communication

The respondents were asked to select one social media characteristic that appealed to them most to determine characteristics of social media that encourage its use. The responses are shown in Figure 4.5.

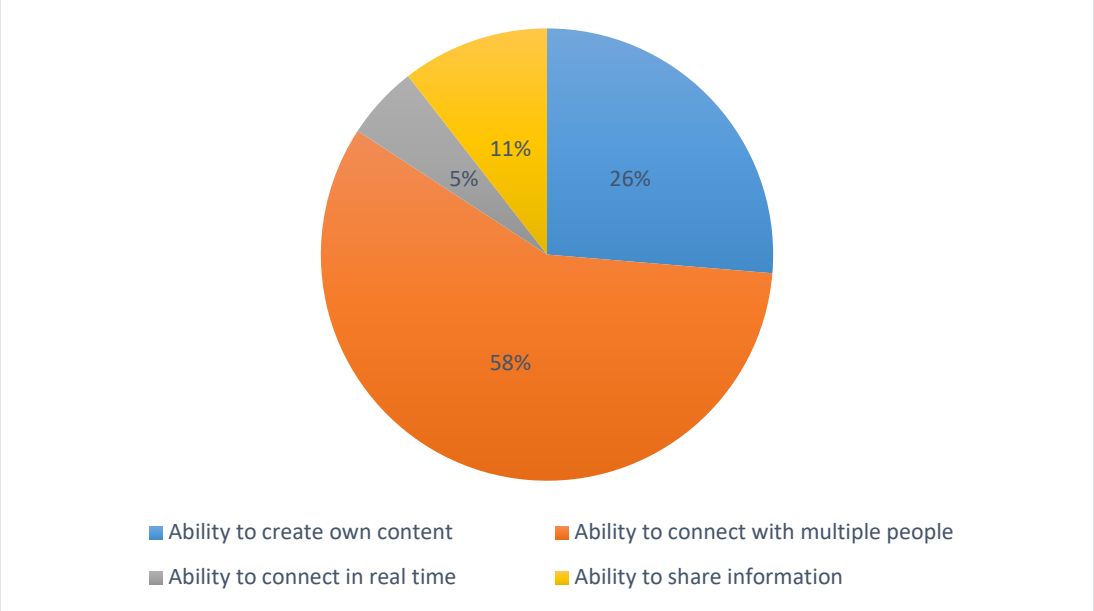

Figure 4.5: Positive Perceptions of Social Media

As indicated in Figure 4.5, the majority (58%) indicated that social media enabled them to connect with multiple people; 26% indicated that it was because social media allowed them to create their own content; 11% selected its ability to share information, while 5% selected social media's ability to connect people in real time.

The negative perceptions surrounding social media use are highlighted in Figure 4.6.

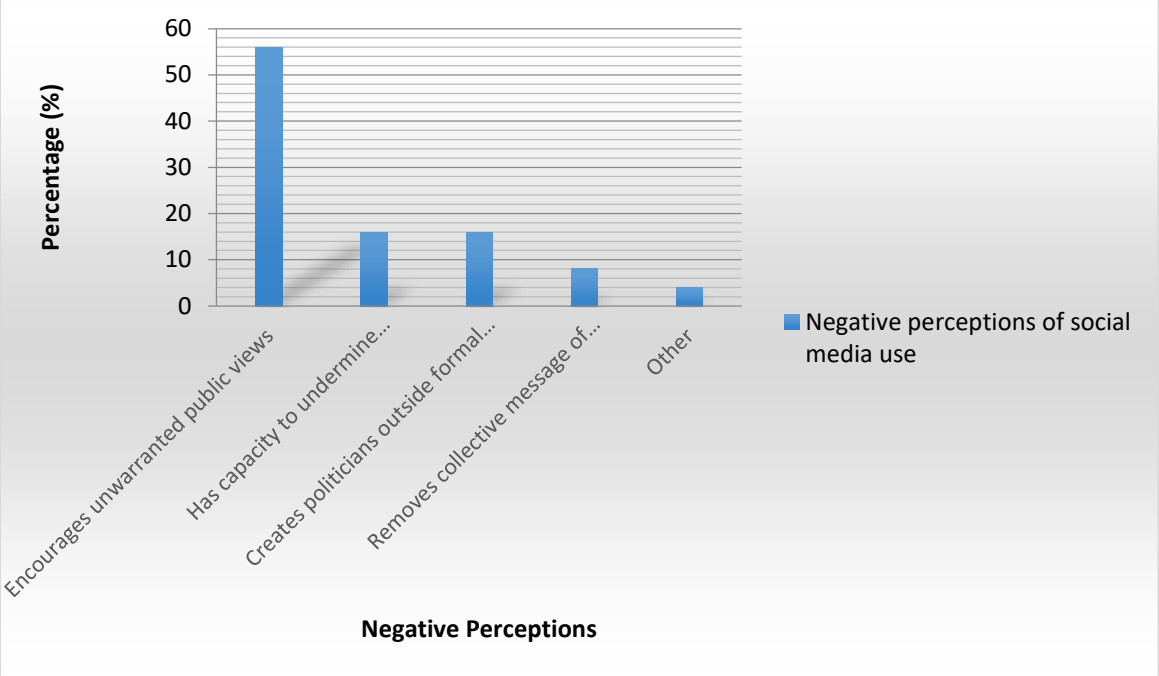

Figure 4.6: Negative Perceptions of Social Media

Figure 4.6 above shows that 56% of the respondents believed social media use encouraged unwarranted public views, 16% claimed it had the capacity to undermine parliamentary deliberations while another 16% claimed it creates politicians outside formal political structures. Another 8% claimed it would remove the collective message of Parliament while another 4% identified other issues.

4.2.3. Social Media's Role in Creating a Responsive Parliament

Data is presented under the following sub-headings: effectiveness of social media as an engagement tool in public engagement; social media use in political communication and democracy; and dynamics of social media use in public engagement.

4.2.3.1. Effectiveness of Social Media as a Public Engagement Tool

The study aimed to explore the difficulty with which respondents employed social media as an engagement tool with the public. The responses are highlighted in Figure 4.7.

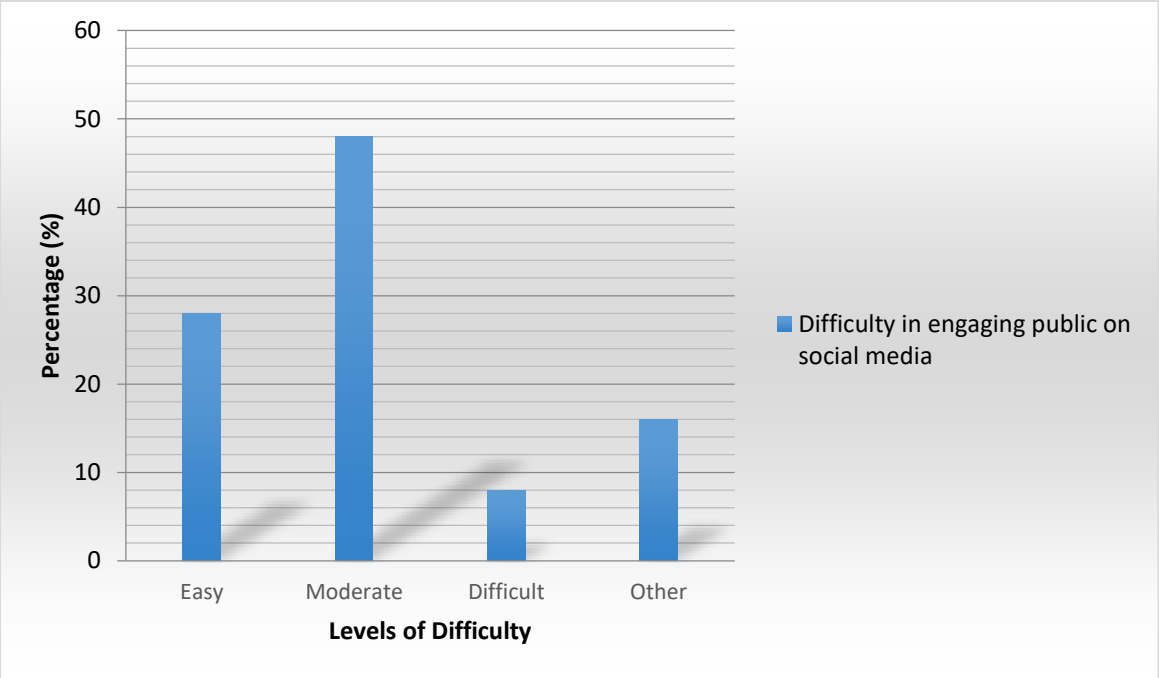

Figure 4.7: Difficulty in Engaging Public on Social Media

As indicated in Figure 4.7 above, a majority (48%) indicated moderate difficulty, followed by 28% who indicated that they used social media with ease, 8% reported difficulty while 16% identified other levels of difficulty, indicating that some social media platforms (Facebook and WhatsApp) were less difficult to navigate compared to others and so it was difficult to select an answer.

The responses on the reasons for difficulties in engaging with the public through social media are shown in Figure 4.8.

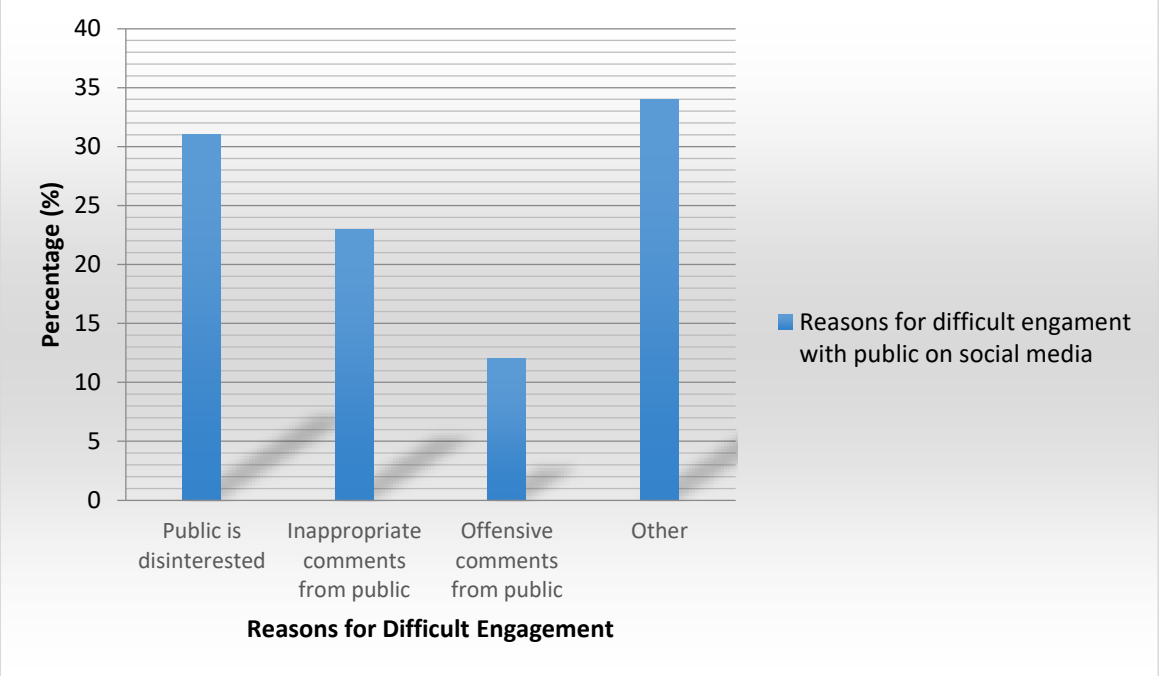

Figure 4.8: Reasons for Difficult Engagement on Social Media

On the reasons for difficulties in engaging with the public through social media, the highest number (31%) of respondents indicated that the public was disinterested, 23% indicated "inappropriate comments from the public", while 12% indicated "offensive comments from the public". Other reasons given by 34% of the respondents included: inability to navigate social media platforms; language difficulties; and the electorate not reachable on social media platforms.

In response to the frequency with which the respondents promoted legislative work on social media, the majority (40%) selected most of the time, 16% all the time, 20% sometimes, while only 4% selected never. The remaining 20% were undecided.

The respondents were asked to rate the importance of social media as a tool for public engagement. A majority (80%) of the respondents claimed social media use to be very important, 12% claimed it was not important while 4% each were either moderate or undecided.

When asked to identify a communication medium most suitable for wide public engagement, the responses were as follows: Forty percent of the respondents indicated social media, 28% indicated traditional media and town hall meetings, respectively, and 4% indicated intermediary media such as SMS and e-mail.

The study aimed to ascertain whether the respondents opted for social media or traditional media. The purpose of this was to identify which communication medium was more favourable. To attain this, the study identified three key components of communication tools and measured the responses of the respondents. The responses on the most preferred communication medium are shown in Figure 4.9.

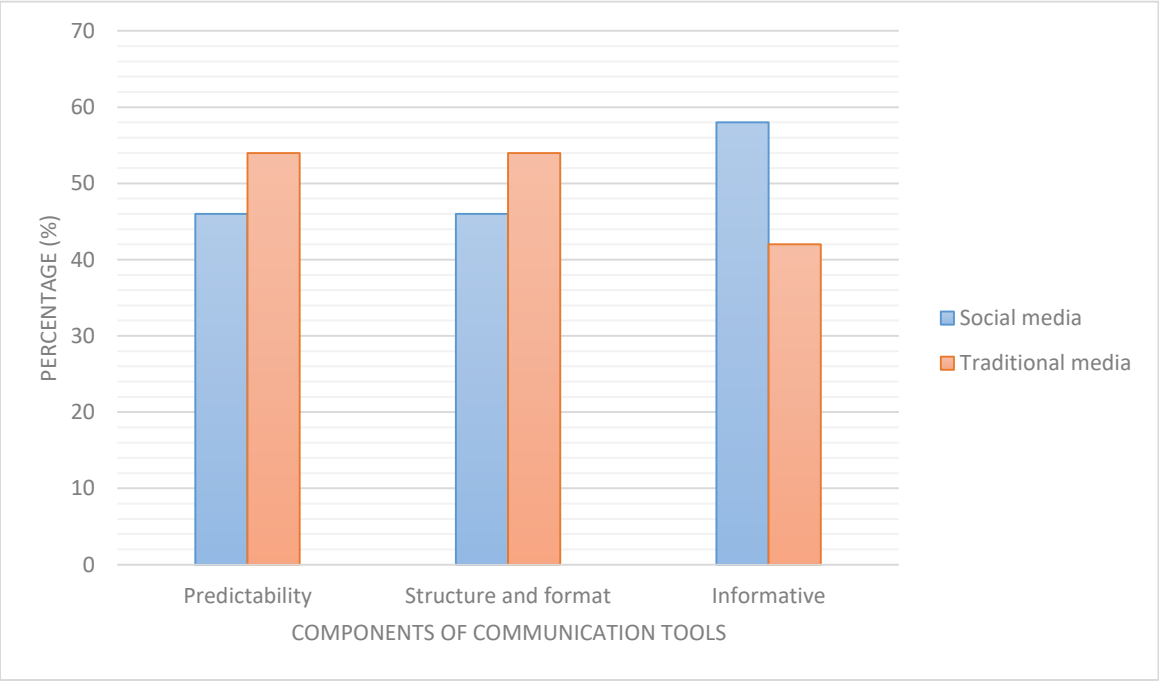

Figure 4.9: Social Media versus Traditional Media

For predictability, 46% selected social media and 54% traditional media. On structure and format, 46% selected social media while 54% selected traditional media. On information, 58% identified social media and 42% traditional media.

4.2.3.2. Political Communication and Democracy Through the Use of Social Media

The study aimed to establish to what extent the respondents agreed or disagreed with the statements about social media that were posed to them. The statements are in relation to social media in political communication, social media and trust in government and social media in relation to good governance.

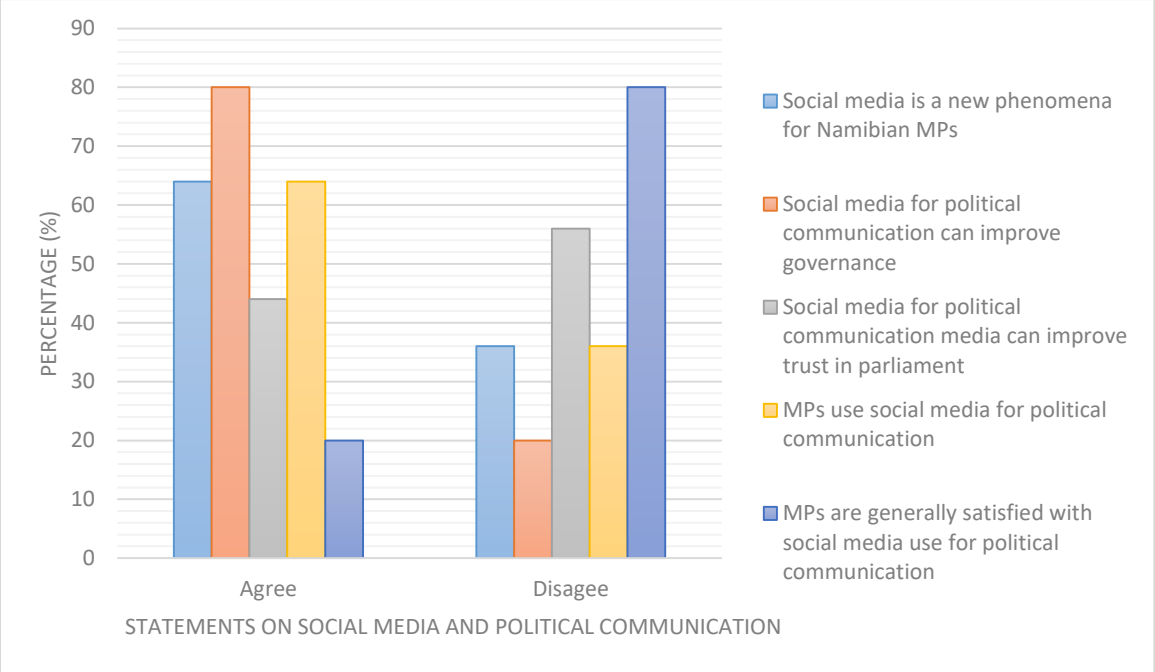

Figure 4.10: Opinion of Respondents on Statements about Social Media

Asked whether social media was a new phenomenon for Namibian MPs, 64% agreed and 36% disagreed. On whether social media could improve governance, 80% agreed and 20% disagreed, while 44% believed social media could improve trust in government and 56%

disagreed. Regarding social media as a vehicle for political communication, 64% and 36% and disagreed. Finally, 80% agreed that they were satisfied with the use of social media for political communication while an overwhelming 20% disagreed.

4.2.3.3. Social Media Use in Public Engagement

The use of social media in public engagement is a theme at the heart of this research and thus it remained a crucial part of this study. The study aimed to explore if respondents agreed, disagreed or were undecided whether social media would increase engagement and participation in the law-making process. An overwhelming 78% of the respondents agreed, 18% disagreed and 4% were undecided.

The study also aimed at determining the views of the respondents on the effectiveness of social media in reaching the youth and marginalised members of society. The results of these views are reflected in Figure 4.11.

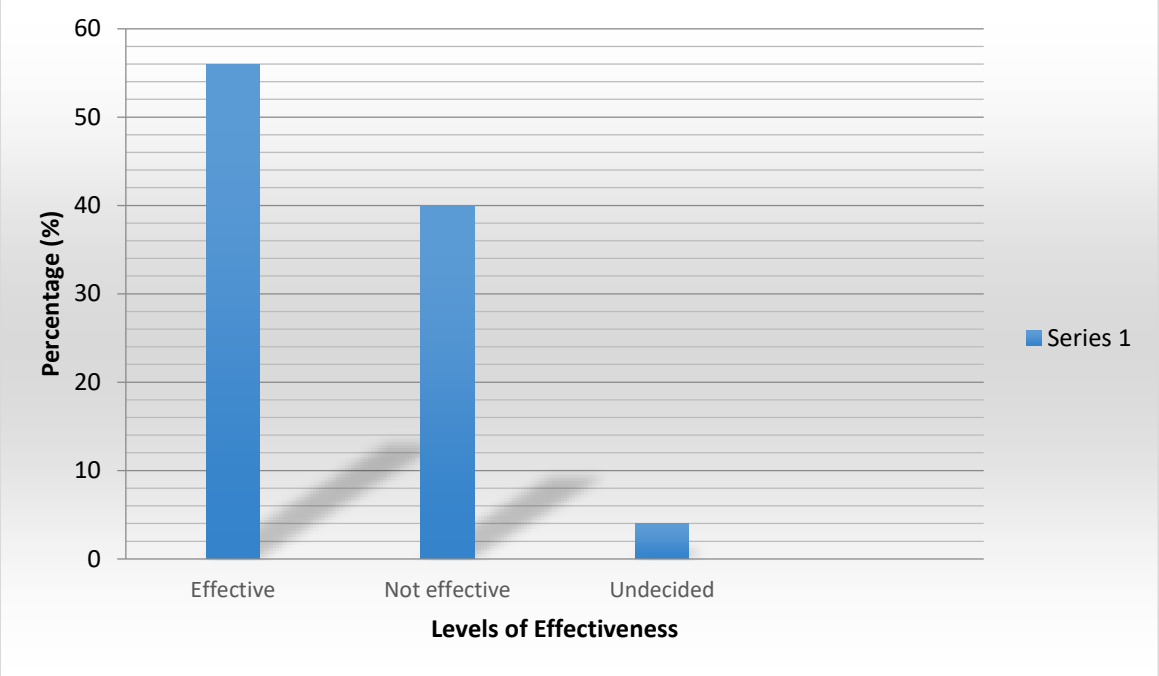

Figure 4.11: Effectiveness of Social Media in Reaching the Youth and Marginalised

Of the total respondents, 56% claimed social media was effective in reaching the youth and the marginalised, 40% said it was not effective and 4% were undecided on the matter.

Figure 4.12 highlights which parliamentary function would be most effective for social media engagement.

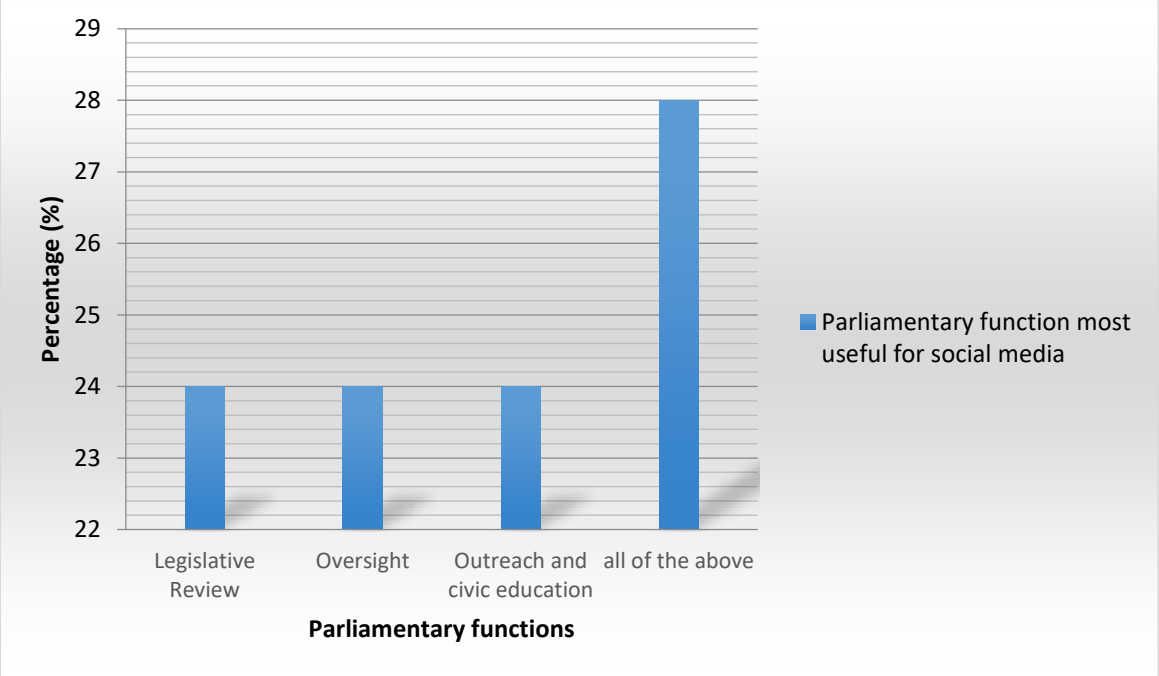

Figure 4.12: Parliamentary Function Most Useful for Social Media Engagement

As shown in Figure 4.12, 24% of the respondents identified legislative review, oversight (24%) and outreach (24%), while 28% selected all three functions.

The respondents were asked to indicate the stage at which they adopted social media use. The study employed this to determine at what stage the respondents started using social media in relation to others in their peer group. Twenty percent of the respondents were among the first to use it, 36% of the respondents started soon thereafter, 24% joined when it became common, 8% were among the last to use it while 12% of the respondents are yet to start using it.

On whether the respondents would be willing to use social media on a trial basis, 76% said they would, 20% said no while about 4% were undecided.

The respondents were asked to determine how their personal values and those of their political parties, as well as their personal communication needs of that of their political party were in line with social media engagement. Figure 4.13 highlights the findings.

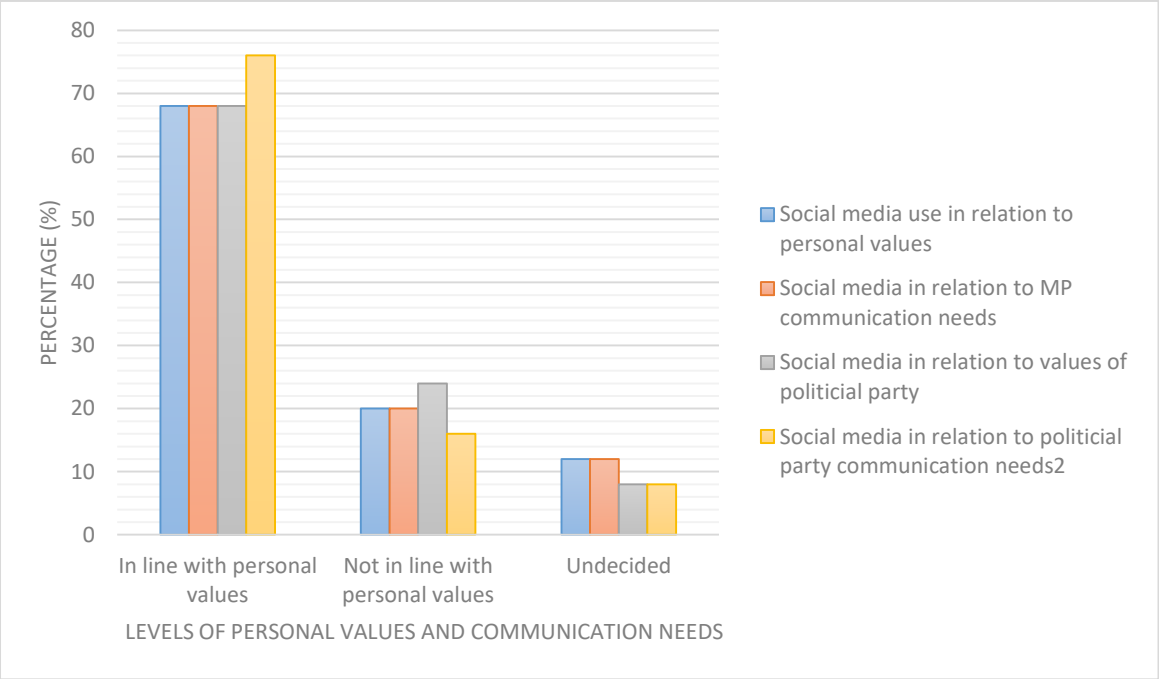

Figure 4.13: Social Media in Relation to Personal Values and Communication Needs

Figure 4.13 shows 68% of MPs selected that social media was in line with their personal values, their communication needs and the values of their political party. The highest was 76% of MPs, who indicated that social media were in line with the communication needs of their political party. Sixteen percent indicated that social media were not in line with their political party's communication needs, 24% indicated that social media were not in relation to the values of their political party while 20% revealed that social media were not in relation to their personal values and 20% revealed that social media were not in relation to their personal communication needs. Of the remainder of the respondents, 8% were undecided on the use of social media in

relation to values of political party and political party communication needs respectively, while 12% were undecided on both the use of social media in relation to personal values and in relation to communication needs of MPs respectively.

4.2.4. Desired Nature of Engagement between Citizens and MPs

The third objective of this study was to establish the nature of engagement that was most appealing to respondents. Data were presented under the sub-heading: nature of engagement.

The study aimed at exploring the level of engagement the respondents sought for specific functions of Parliament. The parliamentary functions identified were participatory democracy, electioneering and campaigning, bills and law-making and the general work of Parliament. Fifty-two percent of MPs selected advanced interaction on participatory democracy, 58% on electioneering and campaigning, 66% on bills and law-making and 76% on the general work of Parliament. On limited interaction, 16% was for participatory democracy, 23% for electioneering, 30% for bills and law-making and 36% for the general work of Parliament. Some MPs preferred no interaction at all. Of these, 8% was on participatory democracy, another 8% was on bills and law-making, 12% was on general work of Parliament, while 8% was on electioneering and campaigning.

The study also gauged the respondents' preference of engagement using social media. Fifty-six percent of the respondents said they prefer to engage through Parliament as an institution, 20% said through their political parties, 20% opted to engage on their own while about 4% did not identify an option.

4.2.5. Factors which Determine the Use of Social Media

The fourth objective of this study was to identify factors that determine the use of social media by respondents of the study. The data were presented under the following themes: enabling factors to social media use, benefits of social media use for public engagement and barriers to social media use for public engagement.

4.2.5.1. Enabling Factors to Social Media Engagement

The study aimed at determining if the respondents would be more encouraged to use social media in the official capacity for public engagement if a guiding framework or policy for MPs was in place. Over three quarters (76%) of the respondents responded that a policy would encourage more use, while 24% indicated that a policy would not make any difference.

On factors that would help create a conducive environment for social media use for MPs, a majority (36%) identified social media training and skills development, 20% social media policy or framework, 20% assistance from Secretariat, 12% more availability of information to share, 8% no reprisal from political and government leaders and 4% political party authorisation.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to indicate whether they received any support from Parliament or their political parties concerning the use social media for public engagement. This researcher did this to explore whether respondents were encouraged or discouraged by the support from Parliament or their political party with respect to social media use. Twenty percent responded that their political parties offered no support for social media use, while 80% agreed that it did. For Parliament, 40% of the respondents indicated that Parliament offered no support when it came to social media use, while the remainder (60%) agreed that it did.

The respondents were asked to what degree their independence from their political parties as well as Parliament from government had any bearing on their use of social media. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents agreed that the independence of MPs from their political parties and of Parliament from government influenced how they shared information on social media. Sixteen percent disagreed that the independence of MPs from their political parties impacted information sharing while 16% disagreed with Parliament and government relationship. The remaining 16% were undecided on whether their independence from their political parties had any bearing on their social media use while 12% were undecided on whether Parliament's independence from government influenced their social media use.

4.2.5.2. Benefits of Social Media Use at Parliament

Figure 4.14 highlights the benefits of social media use at Parliament, according to the respondents.

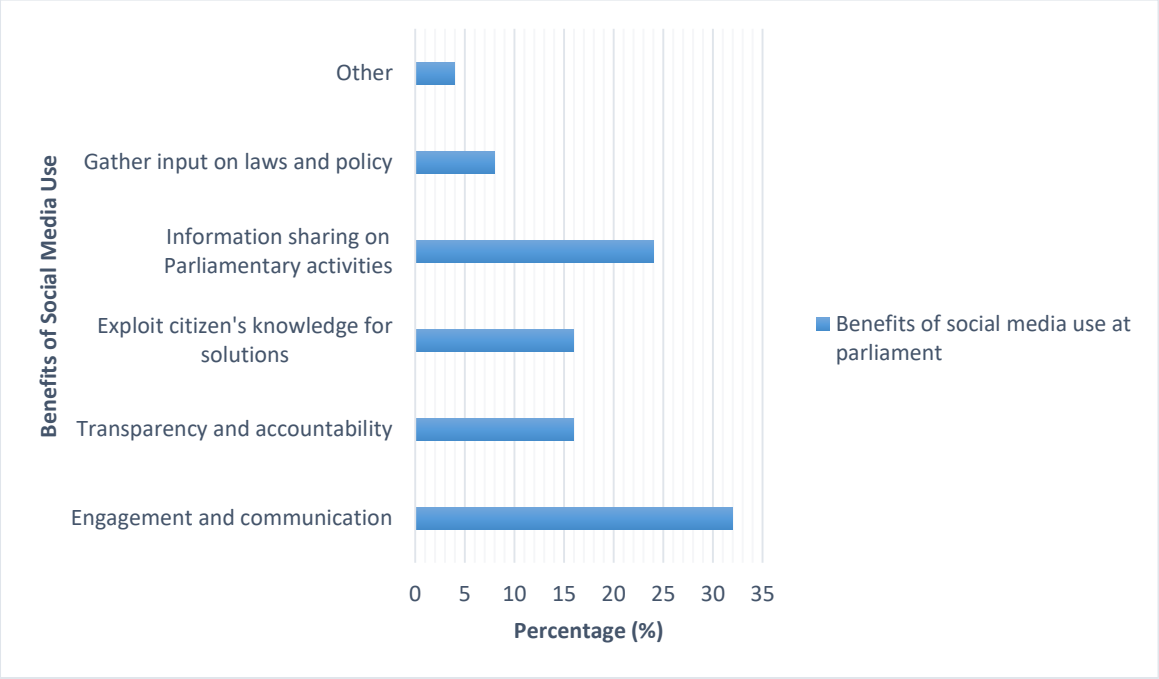

Figure 4.14: Benefits of Social Media Use at Parliament

The study found that a majority (32%) indicated the benefit of engagement and communication, 16% indicated transparency and accountability while another 16% indicated exploitation of citizen's knowledge for solutions. A further 24% indicated the benefit of information-sharing on parliamentary activities, while only 8% the benefit of gathering input on laws and policy. The remaining 4% selected campaigning under other options.

4.2.5.3. Barriers to Social Media Use for Public Engagement

There are several technical barriers that interrupt social media use at Parliament. Respondents, therefore, had to identify the barriers they related to the most. A majority (28%) indicated secure wireless networks, lack of smart devices (24%) and affordability of data (20%). Sixteen percent indicated network coverage, while 4% indicated low bandwidth and another 4% indicated WiFi availability. The remaining 4% indicated barriers due to other unspecified reasons.

4.3. PART B: Data from Members of the Public

The section starts by presenting the demographic information of the public, followed by the following headings:

- Social Media Use and Engagement with MPs
- Desired Nature of Engagement Between Public and MPs
- Role of Parliament in Creating a Responsive Parliament
- Barriers to Social Media Use for Public Engagement

4.3.1. Demographic Information

Figure 4.15 shows the demographic information of members of the public, which includes gender, age and education levels.

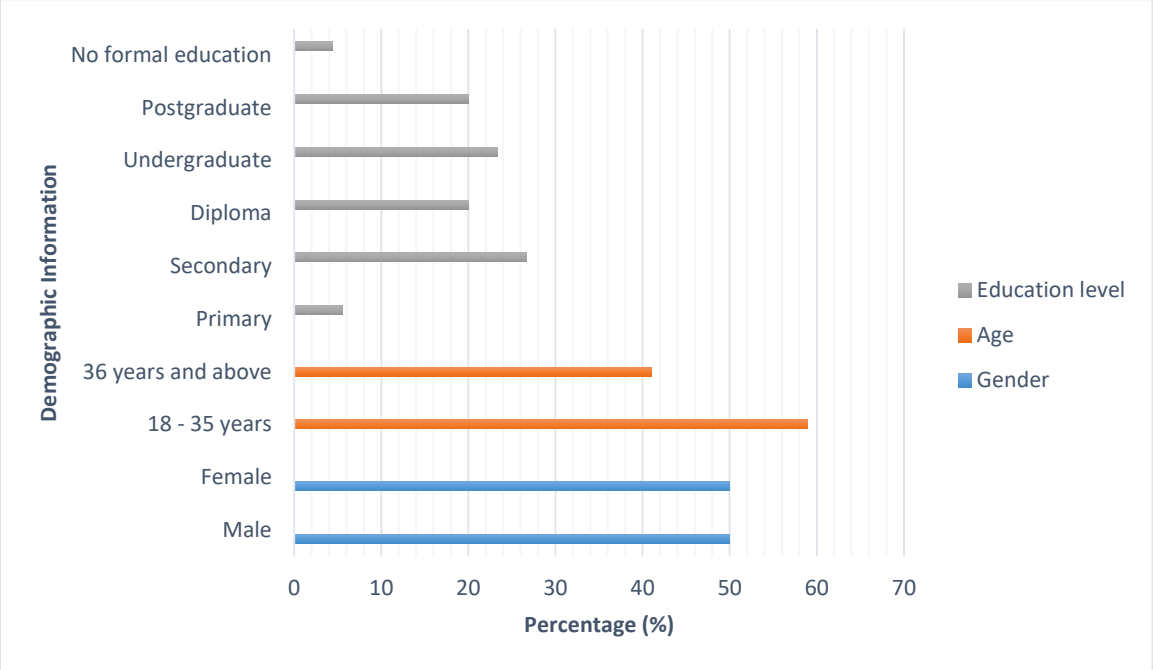

Figure 4.15: Demographic information

There was an equal number of males and females, with 59% of them aged between 18 and 35 years, while 41% were above the age of 35. Education levels varied, with the majority (26.7%) having secondary education, followed by 23.3% undergraduates. Respondents with diplomas and postgraduate qualifications each represented 20% of the total respondents while 5.6% and 4.4% had either primary or no formal education at all, respectively.

The study was also interested in establishing the area of residence and occupation of the respondents, as part of the demographic data. A majority (73.3%) of the respondents were from urban areas, 15.6% from semi-urban areas and 11.1% from rural Namibia. With respect to occupation, the highest number of respondents were civil servants (36.7%), while 28.9% were

unemployed, 14.4% were students, 13.3% were employed by the private sector and 6.7% were self-employed.

4.3.2. Social Media Use and Engagement with MPs

The study aimed at determining the number of respondents with social media accounts. An overwhelming 86.7% said they had social media accounts while only 13.3% did not have.

The respondents were to identify their most preferred social media sites and the reasons why they preferred the sites. The findings were that the majority (53%) preferred WhatsApp, followed by Facebook (35.1%), Twitter (4.1%), and Instagram (7.8%). However, the study found that most respondents had both Facebook and WhatsApp accounts, but when asked to identify the most preferred one, many opted for WhatsApp.

Respondents were to identify the main reasons why they selected their preferred social media platforms. A majority (38.3%) indicated the SNSes' ability to connect them with family and friends, 34.4% indicated the SNSes' ability to update them on news and current affairs, and 9.9% indicated reasons to do with their personal growth. Another 8.4% indicated access to fashion and celebrity news while those who opted for none of the options provided stated that it was just for fun and to stay occupied.

The study also aimed to identify the principle advantages that the respondents selected as the most important with respect to social media use. The findings revealed that a majority (41%) found that social media allowed for public views to be heard, 27% of the respondents was for social media's ability to give an authentic voice, 23% was for its ability to influence developments and politics, 8% was for enabling the creation of own content while the 1% who opted for other options indicated that social media was fun.

The respondents were asked if they followed any of the official Parliament social media pages. A majority (74%) of the respondents claimed that they did not, while only about 26% indicated that they followed Parliament social media pages.

On whether the respondents followed a particular MP or MPs on their social media page or pages, the findings were that 68% of the respondents did not follow any MP's social media pages, while 32% indicated they followed MPs on their social media pages.

The respondents were, therefore, asked to select conditions that would encourage and improve their use of social media for effective engagement with MPs. Figure 4.16 highlights the results.

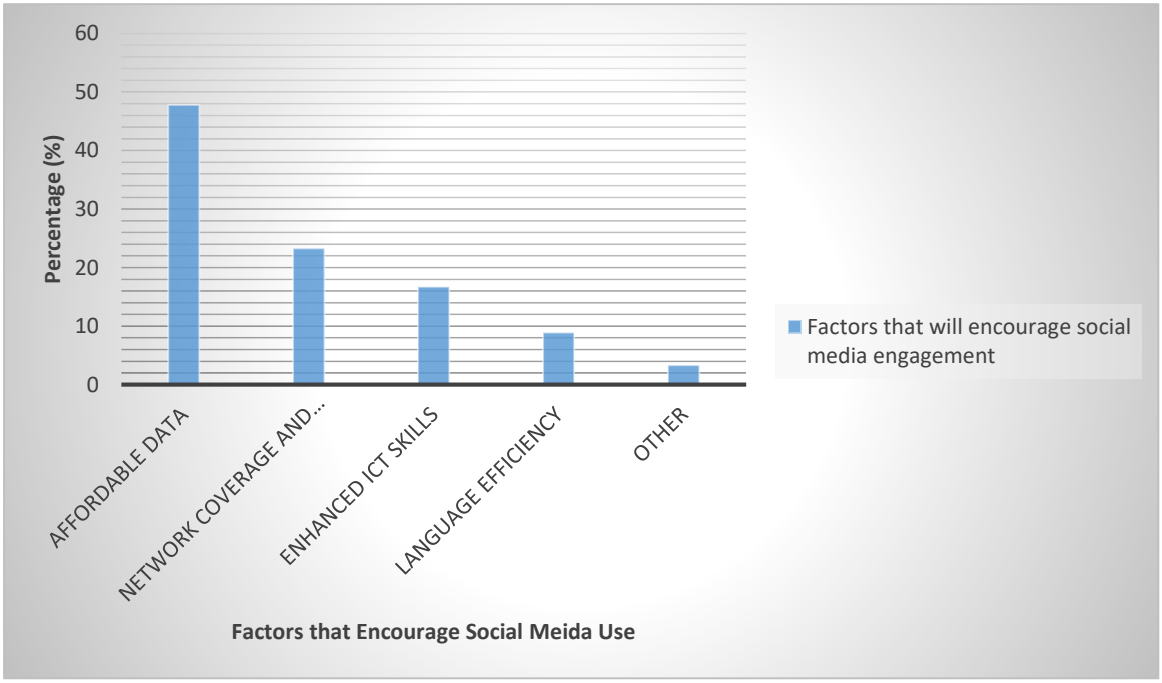

Figure 4.16: Factors that Enable Social Media Engagement (N=163)

A majority (47.8%) identified more affordable data, 23.3% identified better network coverage and bandwidth, 16.7% selected enhancement of their ICT skills to enable them to participate

more, 8.9% went for language efficiency for more improved engagement while 3.3% of respondents identified other factors.

Figure 4.17 shows the degree to which the respondents either strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed with statements relating to social media use at Parliament.

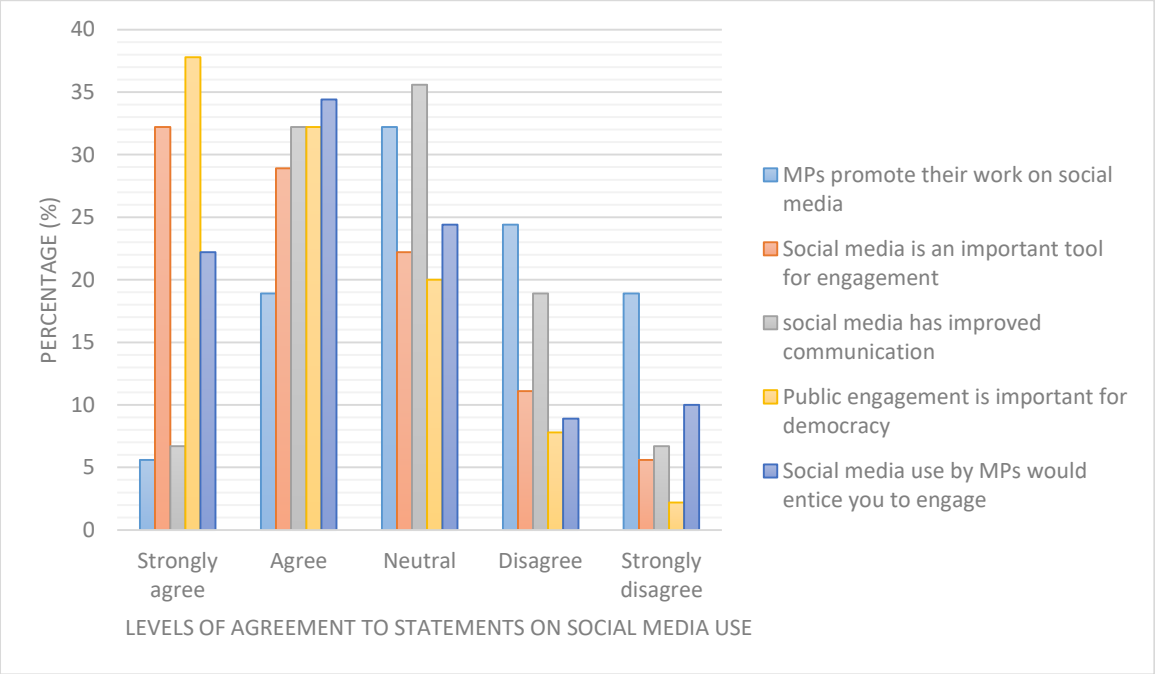

Figure 4.17: Statements Relating to Social Media Use and Engagement at Parliament

On whether MPs promoted their legislative work on social media, only 5.6% of respondents strongly agreed, 18.9% agreed, 32.2% were neutral, 24.4% disagreed and 18.9% strongly disagreed. On whether the social media were an important tool for engagement, 32.2% strongly agreed, 28.9% agreed, 22.2% were neutral, 11.1% disagreed, while 5.6% strongly disagreed. On whether the use of social media had improved communication between MPs and the public, 6.7% strongly agreed, 32.2% agreed, 35.6% were neutral, 18.9% disagreed, while the

remaining 6.7% strongly disagreed. On whether public engagement was important for democracy, 37.8% strongly agreed, 32.2% agreed, 20% were neutral, 7.8% disagreed while only 2.2% strongly disagreed with the statement. The researcher also gauged the respondents' opinions on whether MPs' use of social media would entice them to engage more on social media. Twenty-two percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 34.4% agreed, 24.4% were neutral, 8.9% disagreed while about 10% strongly disagreed.

4.3.3. Desired Nature of Engagement between Public and MPs

As stated in the introduction of this chapter, the third objective of this study was to establish the nature of engagement that was most appealing to respondents. Therefore, the respondents' preferred level of interaction and engagement were explored and the results are presented in Figure 4.18.

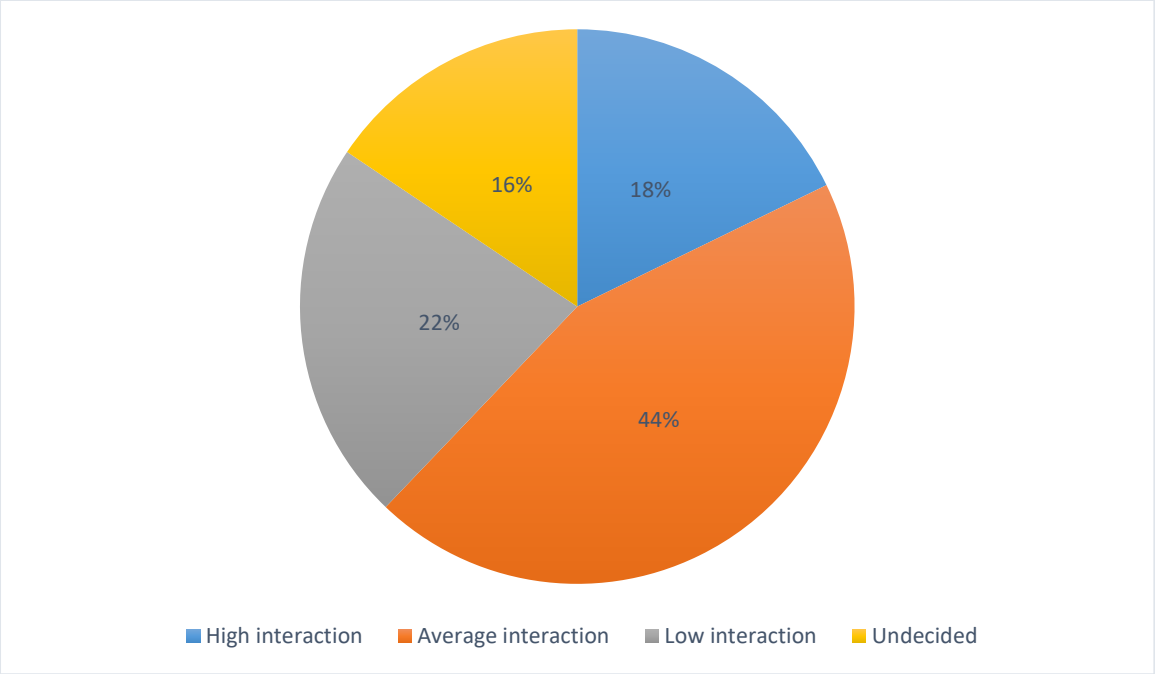

Figure 4.18: Preferred Levels of Engagement

A majority 44% preferred average interaction, 22% preferred low interaction and 18% preferred high interaction. The remaining 16% was undecided.

The respondents were to identify the reasons why they preferred to interact in the way they indicated. A majority (38.2%) of responses showed limited information on the work of Parliament, this was followed by lack of interest (24.8%) , lack of time (23.8%) and 13.2% indicated other reasons, which included lack of interest and limited updates from MPs themselves.

The parliamentary roles and functions of a Parliament were identified and respondents were asked to identify the functions they were keenest to engage on. Figure 4.19 shows the findings.

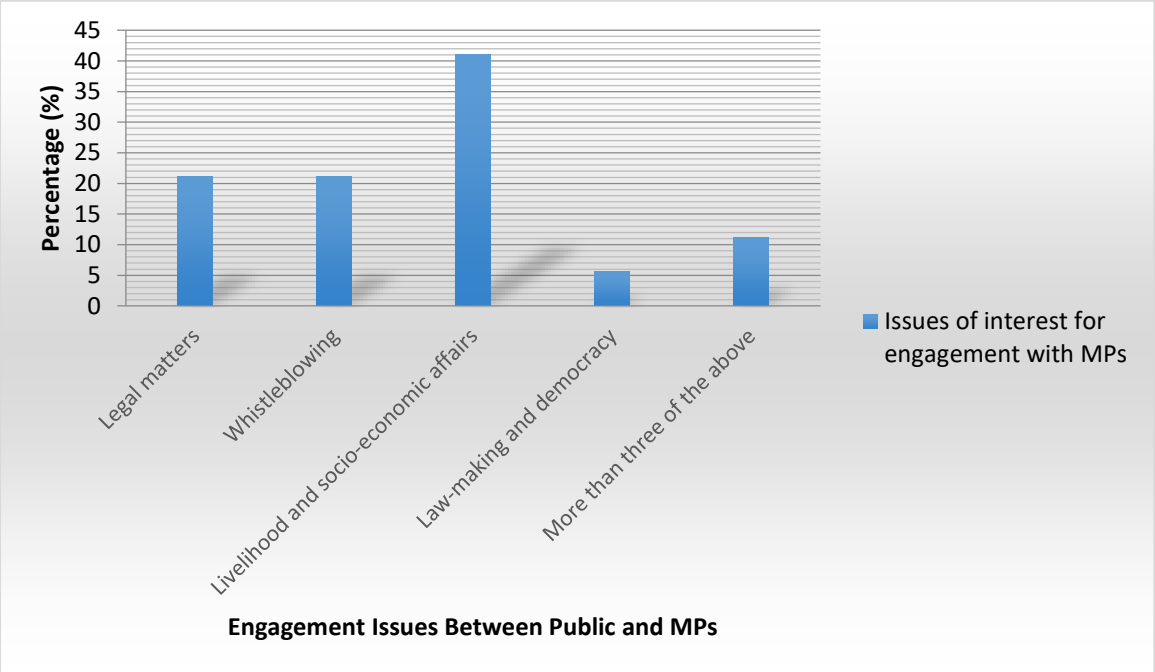

Figure 4.19: Issues of Interest for Engagement with MPs

A majority (41.1%) was interested in discussing issues of livelihood and socio-economic affairs, followed by legal matters and whistleblowing at 21.1% each. Law-making and

democracy registered the lowest score at 5.6%. Finally, 11.1% of the respondents selected either three or more of the issues identified.

The respondents were asked to indicate whom they felt was responsible for spearheading social media engagement from the side of Parliament. The findings were that 40% preferred Parliament staff to engage them on social media while 60% responded that MPs should personally engage them.

As to whose responsibility it was to initiate engagement on social media, 12.2% strongly agreed that it was the responsibility of the public to seek engagement, while an overwhelming 41.1% felt it was the responsibility of MPs. Thirty percent of the respondents agreed that it was the responsibility of the public to seek engagement, while 36.7% said the MPs should do it. Of the remainder, 26.7% was neutral on whether it was up to the public to drive engagement while 17.8% was neutral on whether it was up to the MPs, with 18.9% disagreeing that it was the responsibility of the public to initiate social media engagement, and 12.2% strongly disagreeing to the same.

Furthermore, the study asked the respondents the frequency at which Parliament or MPs should share information. A majority (46.7%) indicated every day, 31.1% indicated several times a week, 18.9% indicated several times a month, 2.2% indicated several times a year and only 1.1% indicated never.

The study also aimed to pit social media against traditional media to establish the most dominant media. Traditional media recorded a majority (47.6%), social media scored 27.8%, town hall meetings recorded 15.6% and intermediary platforms such as SMSes and e-mails recorded 9%.

Figure 4.20 highlights the social media sites respondents prefer to use for engagement with MPs.

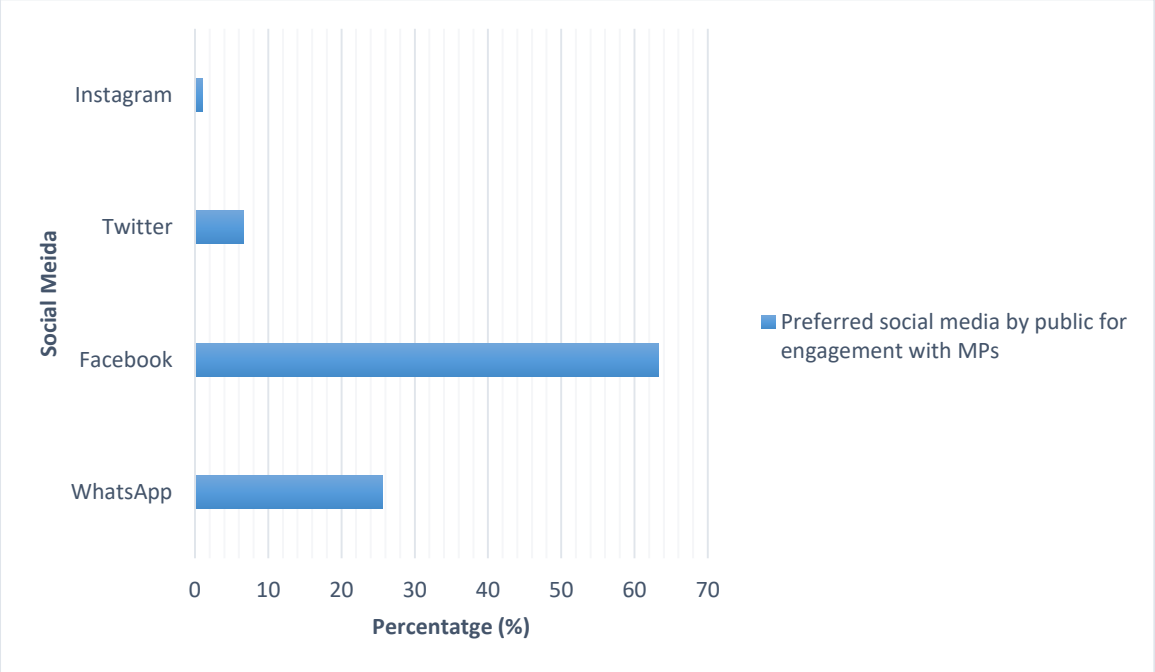

Figure 4.20: Preferred Social Media for Engagement with MPs

A majority (63.3%) of the respondents selected Facebook, 25.6% selected WhatsApp , 6.7% selected Twitter, while 1.1% preferred Instagram.

4.3.4. The Role of Social Media in Creating a Responsive Parliament

The second objective of this study was to explore whether social media could create a responsive Parliament and subsequently, an engaged public. As such, the respondents were presented with statements pertaining to social media as a tool for engagement to which they were to strongly agree, agree, be neutral, disagree or strongly disagree.

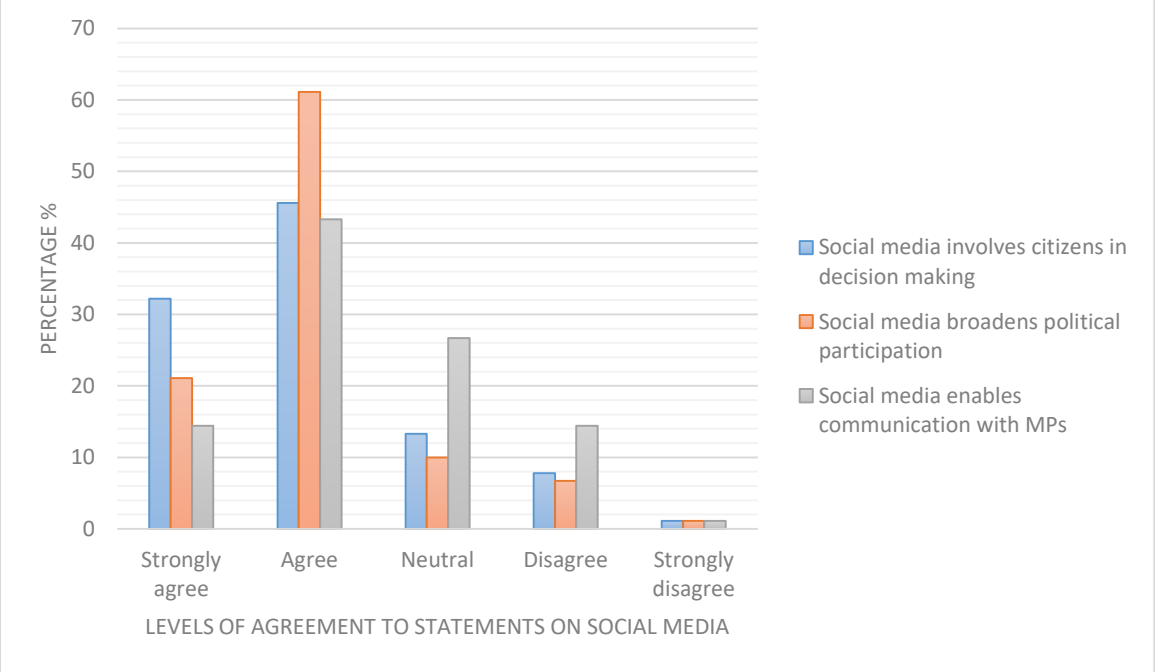

Figure 4.21: Statements on Social Media Use

On whether social media involved citizens in decision making, 32.2% strongly agreed, 45.6% agreed, 13.3% were neutral, 7.8% disagreed and about 1.1% strongly disagreed. The next statement was on whether social media broadened political engagement and participation, to which 21.1% strongly agreed, 61.1% agreed, 10% were neutral, 6.7% disagreed, while only 1.1% strongly disagreed. Finally, on whether social media could enable communication between MPs and the public, 14.4% of the respondents strongly agreed, 43.3% agreed, 26.7% were neutral, 14.4% disagreed and 1.1% strongly disagreed with the statement.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they were active members of political party organisations and whether they had engaged with MPs via social media. Only 23.3% of respondents claimed to be politically active, the majority (55.5%) were not politically active, while 21.1% were undecided. Of the politically active, 35.3% claimed to engage MPs via social media, 21.2% through the internet and other online services such as e-mails, 35% claimed to

have engaged MPs face to face or in town hall meetings, while the remaining 8.5% identified other means such as telephonic conversations.

4.3.5. Barriers to Social Media Engagement

The respondents were to select the barriers that applied to them the most with respect to engaging with MPs on social media. Figure 4.22 indicates the findings.

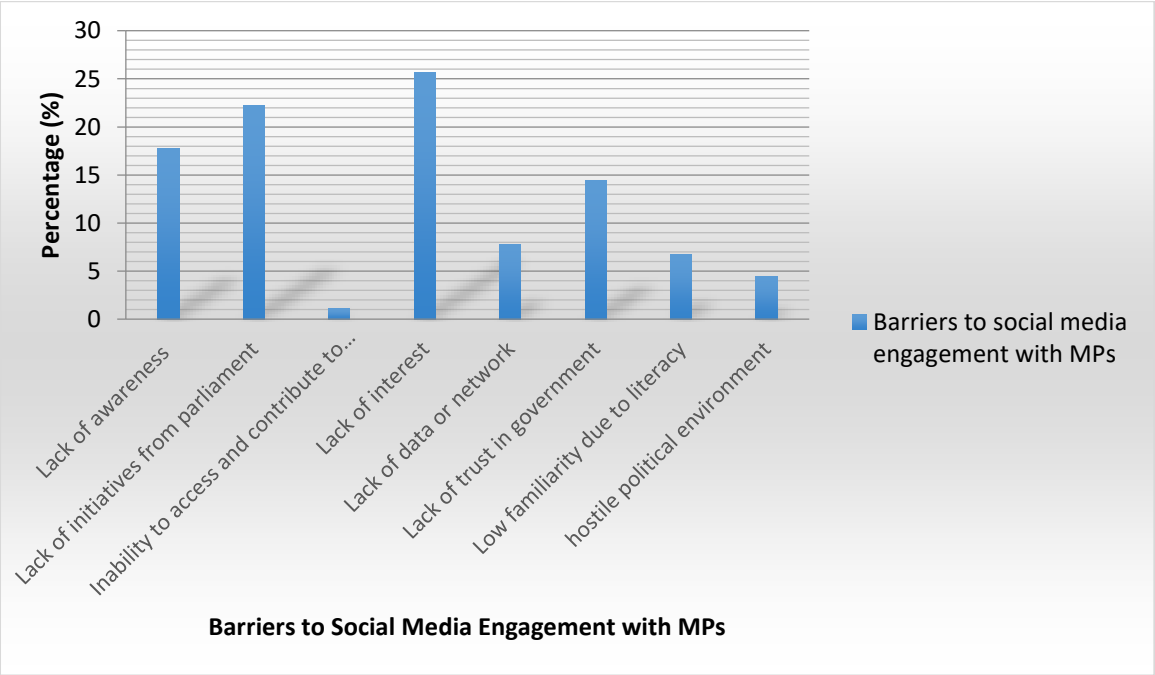

Figure 4.22: Barriers to Social Media Use for Public Engagement

Lack of interest to engage scored the highest at 25.6%, followed by lack of initiatives from Parliament and MPs and then lack of awareness of these social media pages (17.8%) and lack of trust in government and Parliament's online activities (14.4%). The remainder of the barriers all received below 10% each.

4.4. Chapter Summary

The study aimed at establishing the understanding of social media from all respondents of this study, thereby ensuring that more inclusive, holistic and comprehensive data were collected and interpreted that would truly represent the views that were collected.

First, the chapter revealed the findings from the first group of respondents, the MPs. It is arranged from the demographic information, down to the barriers of social media. The same method was applied for the second group of respondents from the public.

These findings are discussed and interpreted in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings on the use of social media to enhance public engagement in the law-making process. This chapter interprets the data presented in Chapter 4 of this study and further attempts to make linkages and comparisons of this data with the literature presented in Chapter 2.

The interpretation of data gives an indication of the way the events are understood (Mouton & Marais, 1996). This chapter is crucial in that the discussion and interpretation that will follow here is what informed and provided support for the conclusions reached in the next and final chapter.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, this study employed a deductive approach, and as with all studies that employ this strategy, there is a clear conceptual framework in place, in the case of this study, the DOI theory. Data interpretation is done according to the theory adopted by the study and this theory is used as a frame of reference for the discussion (Mouton & Marais, 1996). Thus, this chapter discusses findings and makes linkages within the context of the DOI theory and other related literature.

These findings are discussed under the following headings:

- Demographic Information
- Social Media Use and Knowledge
- Perceptions of Social Media as a Formal Engagement Tool
- Social Media's Role in Creating a Responsive Parliament

- Desired Nature of Engagement Between MPs and Public
- Factors Which Determine Social Media Use

5.2. Demographic Information

Klass (2012) states that social science research is based on evidence involving comparisons across demographic categories including age, education and employment. It is the confirmation and linkages of these demographic differences in social indicators that have profound implications for society. As per the proportion of representatives in Parliament, 40% were women and 60% were men. The study made sure that this was reflected in the study to avoid the over- or under-representation of one gender over another. As per the population of Namibia, 59% were in the category of youth, ranging between the ages of 18 and 35 years, while 41% were above the age of 35 (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2011). The youth were an important group for this study. Their importance in this discourse is further alluded to by Vesnic-Alujevic (2013), who claims that political discussions on social media should be focused on involving youth in political processes. More so, in Namibia, most social media users are young people between the ages of 15 and 45 years (Matali, 2017).

Simin and Janković (2014) caution that when looking into diffusion analysis, one must consider the diversity of the society. It is for this reason that the study did a demographic enquiry to determine commonalities of age, title in Parliament, political party affiliation, residence and number of years at Parliament. Homophily, the "degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are similar in certain attributes, such as beliefs, education, social status, and the like" is said to influence communication (Rogers, 1983). Homophily for MPs existed to the extent that the respondents were MPs, they were all employed and had some form of political affiliation.

5.3. **Perceptions of MPs on Social Media and its Use**

5.3.1. Social Media Knowledge and Use

Under this theme, the study aimed to explore the knowledge, familiarity and information that MPs had about social media in order to determine the perceptions that are 'out there' regarding social media. Therefore, it was important that this study, at the onset, establish respondents' social media use, familiarity and knowledge as it would help pre-empt its use for public engagement.

The third characteristic of an innovation is complexity, defined as "the degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand or use" (Rogers, 1983, p. 15). New ideas which are easier and simpler to understand diffuse faster than those that require the potential adopter to learn a new skill in order to understand it. In there lies a level of reluctance and unwillingness to acquire the necessary skills needed. For MPs who may have little to no knowledge and familiarity with social media, this characteristic would be a challenge to overcome in the diffusion process.

The study discovered that there was a very small percentage (4%) of MPs who had poor social media knowledge. This indicates that there is enough knowledge about social media among MPs. The more information and knowledge there are about a particular innovation, the less the unpredictability there is around it, further reducing uncertainty and subsequently increasing diffusion (Rogers, 1983). What these findings reveal from the onset is that there is high probability for social media diffusion from MPs.

On familiarity of social media, 32% of the MPs indicated that they were familiar. Therefore, the data, in relation to the claim by Rogers (1983), inform us that although not very high, there was some level of familiarity with social media use that would make it more susceptible to

adoption. However, compared to knowledge on social media, the data reveal that respondents have far more general knowledge on social media than they are familiar with its use.

As to whether social media was a new phenomenon for Namibian MPs, 64% perceived it to be, and 36% disagreed. Therefore, although most MPs use social media, many of them still perceive it to be new. According to the DOI theory, users who perceive an innovation to be new may still be deciding whether to fully adopt or not. The adoption process is complex, and at times, people may change their minds and discontinue the use of an innovation as time goes by and when more and new information becomes available (Rogers, 1983). The DOI theory suggests that people eventually choose to adopt or reject a concept that is perceived as new based on what is communicated about that concept (Zolkepi & Kamarulzaman, 2011). It can then be argued that although social media use is common among MPs, this study cannot claim that it is fully adopted because a majority (64%) perceives it as new. Therefore, social media use, although not as common, has not reached the stage of full diffusion because with time, users may or may not decide to use it.

Still on the adoption of social media, MPs were asked to indicate the stage at which they adopted social media to determine at what stage MPs started using social media in relation to others in their peer group. This was done to determine if social media was adopted due to its own benefits or because others in the social system had started using it.

The stage at which most of the MPs adopted social media use informed the study how it was accepted. Twenty percent of the respondents were among the first to use it, 36% of the respondents started soon thereafter, 24% joined when it became common, 8% were among the last to use it, while 12% of MPs are yet to start using it. The findings indicate that most MPs is in the early adopters or opinion leaders' category, further indicating that they were generally not opposed to the innovation. Lyytinen and Damsgaard (2001) argue that people adopt

because others have done so, and not because of a particular technological characteristic an innovation may have. The findings of this study refute this claim by Lyytinen and Damsgaard (2001) because the findings indicate that many MPs was among the first or second category to start using social media, and could, therefore, not have imitated this behaviour from others within their peer group. On the other hand, most of the MPs fall in the early adopter category, that is, filled opinion leaders, those with the capacity to influence other members in a social structure through providing information to those with limited knowledge.

To determine the diffusion of social media for this study, it was imperative to identify the number of MPs with social media accounts. An overwhelming 88% of MPs claimed to have social media accounts and 12% did not have, while 86.7% of the public had social media accounts with only 13.3% not having any. Therefore, the claim by Landsbergen (2010) that "social media is growing rapidly …" (p. 134) holds true if one considers the adoption rate of social media both by MPs and the public. These findings also support claims by Matali (2017) that almost every Namibian with internet connection was on social media, thereby substantiating that they found the platforms to be informative in one way or another.

Of the 88% of MPs who had social media accounts, 58% reported that they frequently use the social media, 37% indicated that they used social media moderately, 4% claimed they rarely used social media, while only 1% of the respondents was unsure of their level of social media use.

However, although an overwhelming 88% of MPs had social media accounts, only 56% of those had official accounts in their capacity as MPs. The number is significantly low compared to the number of MPs who had personal social media accounts. Griffith and Leston-Bandeira (2012) claim that the use of social media for official engagement is challenging, hence, its slow

adoption at parliament. A 2011 survey on members of the European Parliament's use of the internet and social media conducted in countries of the European Parliament showed that many MEPs were sceptical about the use of social media for parliament business (Fleishman-Hillard, 2011). The findings of this study also suggest a low level of confidence in social media for official engagement based on the percentage of MPs with official social media accounts. MPs identified unwarranted or offensive views as one major reason they are reluctant to engage as MPs on social media as well as lack of skills to confidently navigate SNSes. McNamara (2012) claims that uncontrolled interaction is a challenge for MPs due to the risks that may come with the creation of a social media account specifically designed for communication with the public, hence, the lower percentage of MPs with official social media accounts. Additionally, taking responsibility for a social media account was also identified as a deterrent.

Certain risks of social media use were discovered in a study done at the Parliament of Australia. Although not directly, the risks, to some extent, relate to the concerns raised by MPs who were respondents in this study. First, they feared that social media use by Parliament would bring the institution of parliament into disrepute. Thus, there exists the possibility of criticism and defamation, which may make MPs very reluctant to engage. In her study, Vesnic-Alujevic (2013) further links MPs' low social media presence to their hesitancy to be directly responsible for online activities.

To create a sense of closeness with citizens, the Namibian Parliament created several social media sites. However, 74% of the public respondents claimed that they did not follow any Parliament social media account while 68% did not follow any MP on their official social media pages because of a lack of interest and unawareness of such pages. In their study, Banday and Mattoo (2013) find that the public was simply not aware of social media accounts;

parliament and MPs lacked initiatives; and the public lacked interest to participate. This could explain why there is a poor following of MPs and parliament social media pages.

Unwin (2012) identifies characteristics of modern ICTs that give them an advantage over other media. They are social media's ability to enable communication with anyone and at any time, creation of content and the ability to access information. Janković (2012, as cited in Simin and Janković, 2014) argues that it is only when the benefits to adopt are obvious, and when a need to adopt exists that an innovation will be adopted. The findings of this study support the arguments of both authors because MPs either identified the characteristics of social media and the benefits or need when asked to determine the reasons why they used social media. The benefits of social media use at Parliament are highlighted in Figure 4.14. The findings reveal that a majority (32%) of respondents indicated social media's ability to enable engagement and communication, followed by 24% who indicated its ability to enable information sharing on parliamentary activities. Other benefits identified were for its ability to allow MPs to exploit citizen's knowledge for solutions and input on laws and policies.

An Inter-Parliamentary Union report indicates that 56% of parliamentarians used new media to engage with the public in 2016, as opposed to only 13% in 2010 (World e-Parliament Report, 2016). This, Power (2012) claims is due to the MPs' interest and aspiration to involve the electorate in the activities of Parliament and to share information on the work of Parliament. A MEP noted that Facebook allowed for dialogue with citizens and if used properly, could be an instrument for engagement (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2013). Based on the findings of these studies, this is an indication that Namibian MPs are at par with other MPs in the world regarding opening up to social media and using it for engagement.

The public had to select the social media site they preferred most. The social media sites identified for this study were Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram. Data from the public revealed that WhatsApp was preferred most by a majority (53%) of the public respondents, followed by Facebook (35.1%), Twitter (4.1%) and finally Instagram (7.8%). For engagement, however, the findings reveal that Facebook was the choice of the majority over WhatsApp for members of the public. Nevertheless, the study found that most respondents had both Facebook and WhatsApp accounts in most of the cases. Surveys reveal that WhatsApp and Facebook are the preferred social media networks of choice in Namibia, followed by Twitter and Instagram (New Era, as cited in Matali, 2017).

Figure 4.4 shows the results from MPs, and again, WhatsApp and Facebook were the most preferred, with 47% and 36%, respectively. They were followed by Twitter (8%), Instagram (4%) and undecided responses (4%). However, studies reveal that Facebook and Twitter, and not Facebook and WhatsApp, are the foremost social media sites MPs prefer to use (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2016; Booysen, 2015). Overall, the findings of this study reveal that social media use is very popular in Namibia and could be a general meeting point for the public and MPs given that they both prefer the same social media sites.

Although it is a small percentage of MPs who do not have social media accounts, the study still wanted to know why these respondents did not have social media accounts. The reasons were varied, and are discussed in greater detail under section 5.6 of this study.

5.3.2. Perceptions of MPs and Public on the Use of Social Media as a Formal Means of Communication

The discussion will now delve into the respondents' perceptions on the use of social media by exploring their attitudes, behaviours, and opinions on the use of social media for public engagement and in relation to other media that came before it.

A study to analyse nurses' perceptions towards the use of a new computerised system was done in Taiwan using the DOI theory. The results indicated that the DOI model accurately described the nurses' behaviour towards the adoption of the new system (Folorunso et al., 2010). Another study in Trinidad found that three of the five characteristics of an innovation, namely, relative advantage, compatibility and observability were linked to the attitude and perception of teachers towards ICT (Albirini, 2006).

The five elements of the DOI theory (Rogers, 1983) on which this study was based are, therefore, useful in that they would be able to explore perceptions and behavioural conditions, as identified in the objectives of this study.

The first characteristic of diffusion is *relative advantage*, defined by Rogers (1983) as the degree to which an idea is perceived as more superior than that which came before it.

For this study, the comparison was drawn between social media and traditional media, which were identified as TV, radio and print in this study. The issue here has to do with perceptions of respondents, and not the real advantages of the innovation. It is the determining of perceptions of the old against the new such as these that informed the study on social media adoption. Research claims that the use of traditional media is declining as more people adopt online media, which Olabamiji (2014), based on his study, associates with the economy and

urban migration. The findings of this study were, however, different from those by Olabamiji (2014). On selecting a communication medium most suitable for wide public engagement, 40% of the MPs' responses indicated social media, followed by 28% each for traditional media and townhall meetings and 4% indicated intermediary media such as SMS and e-mail. Therefore, traditional media, together with townhall meetings amounted to 56% of total responses, which is more than the 40% social media garnered. This study substantiates the dominance of traditional channels of communication over social media by a 16% margin.

Shihomeka (2019) notes that in Ohangwena region, traditional media remains a luxury to some. Further to this, an interesting discovery is that old media may be losing ground not because new media is better, but due to the limited access many have to newspapers and the television.

There have been arguments over which medium between traditional and new media has greater strength in public engagement. The arguments are fuelled by the proliferation of mobile phones and social media. In his study, Shihomeka (2019) concludes that both the old and the new media strengthen engagement as well as participation, and there is no clear case of the old giving way to the new. This is particularly true for Namibia, as the country has a high number of rural and elderly inhabitants (including MPs), who enjoy traditional media, and, on the other hand, most of the youth and urbanites, who are more drawn to new media.

Among the factors identified by Hamajoda (2012) as regressive for social media use is the dominance of traditional channels of communication. This study attempted to separate dominance from preference to determine if in certain cases, social media as a communication tool would be a viable option for MPs, as opposed to the traditional media that has a wide footprint in Namibia.

To address the concern of youth disengagement, several regional councillors in Ohangwena region claimed to have introduced a Facebook page for their constituencies and some were in the process of adding WhatsApp as well in order to reach the youth in their constituencies, especially those from their region but who now reside in other parts of the country. They found these platforms to be interactive. In the same study, youth participants acknowledged that they had created WhatsApp groups for their political parties, as it is where political discussion largely take place. One such WhatsApp group is the Ohangwena Swapo Party group. However, the same study found that young Namibians did not entirely trust social media platforms to air their views (Shihomeka, 2019). These revelations, to an extent, support findings in this study that the social media have potential for damage, as they bring about misgivings in virtual groups.

In another study, Hamajoda (2012) found that MPs above the age of 55 neither select the internet as a communication or engagement tool nor do they use new media-based tools, such as social media, to communicate with the youth. Considering that most of the MPs in this study were between 52 and 61 years old, then the findings in this study are supported by those of Hamajoda (2012).

Vesnic-Alujevic (2013) is also of the same view that online media tools such as social media have remained somewhat out of view because politicians concentrate on traditional media tools, such as television and radio. Another study by Booysen (2015) came to the same conclusion that political parties in South Africa preferred traditional media when it came to engaging with followers, followed by intermediary electronic media such as SMSes or e-mails and then lastly, social media. Contrary to these findings and findings of this study, is the conclusion reached by Olabamiji (2014) that social media have promoted political engagement

among users in Nigeria and that traditional media are declining, as more people adopt for online media.

Literature on the matter is varied. There are claims that youth may prefer to use new media to discuss issues around their livelihood as opposed to attending political events physically. Participatory democracy is generally considered best when done through physical attendance of rallies or town hall meetings. This results in poor attendance by the youth, as these meetings normally take place in the morning hours when most people are at work and are, therefore, typically attended by the elderly (Shihomeka, 2019).

On the same issue, findings from the public reveal that traditional media recorded a majority (47.6%), followed by social media with 27.8% and town hall meetings and intermediary platforms such as SMSes and emails scoring 15.6% and 9%, respectively. The findings from MPs and the public show that social media do not have relative advantage over traditional media, which are the alternative engagement media. These findings are contrary to those of Fox (2012), which revealed that Windhoek residents were divided over traditional and more modern media constructs. However, most interviewees of that study expressed the desire for a more cosmopolitan and reflective media landscape. This, the present study assumes, could be due to the independence and power that social media had in its formative years, something which may have changed with time.

Adding to this, Shihomeka (2019) asserts that the transformation of digital spaces into spheres for engagement between MPs and the public should be welcomed, as traditional media have been waning in recent years. In this digital sphere, there is what is called political digital citizens, defined by Mossberger, Tobert and McNeal (2007) as those who use new media often

to communicate on political issues that are of interest and concern to them (Shihomeka, 2019), and the more citizens enter this space, the more vibrant and responsive elected leaders become.

In addition to substantiating perceptions, the study identified three key components of communication tools and measured the MPs' responses to each, again, pitting social media against traditional media. Rogers (1983) identifies predictability, structure and information as important components for an innovation as they reduce uncertainty and subsequently, increase diffusion. As seen in Figure 4.9, social media scored 46% for predictability and traditional media scored 54%. On structure and format, 46% selected social media, while 54% selected traditional media. On information, 58% identified social media and 42% traditional media. These findings reveal that MPs acknowledged the strengths of social media with respect to availability of information. However, on predictability, structure and format, traditional media came out more superior.

Figure 4.5 investigated positive characterises of social media. A majority (58%) of MPs indicated that social media enabled them to connect with multiple people; 26% indicated that it was because social media allowed them to create their own content; 11% selected its ability to share information, while the remaining 5% selected social media's ability to connect people in real time. For the public, the findings revealed that a majority (41%) found that social media enable public views to be heard, 27% of the respondents was for social media's ability to give an authentic voice, 23% was for its ability to influence development and politics, 8% was that it enabled the creation of own content, while the 1% who opted for other options identified that social media was simply fun. Researchers claim that the benefits of social media include creating space for dialogue and better understanding of public opinion (Duffy & Foley, 2011). Williamson (2013) argues that social media "provide new ways to communicate and engage

with the public, consult on legislation, deliver educational resources and promote transparency" (p. 7), something traditional media may find to be challenging. In political environments where parliaments are far from the people, Griffith and Leston-Bandeira (2012) claim that social media can make parliaments visible and build, foster and sustain relationships between MPs and citizens. Griffith and Leston-Bandeira (2012) further argue that social media provide a direct channel of communication between MPs and the public and can make a lot of information available to the public. Another positive characteristic in literature is from Duffy and Foley (2011), who argue that social media have the capacity to improve public perceptions of Parliament. A study by Booysen (2015) found that although most political parties in South Africa are still familiarising themselves with social media, one thing that remains common across the board is that they can all relate to the great impact social media had during the 2014 national elections, compared to earlier elections in 2009. Most of the public respondents in this study agreed that social media involve citizens in decision making, broaden political engagement by enabling communication between MPs and the public.

5.4. The Role of Social Media in Creating a Responsive Parliament

The discussion in this section covers the following issues, social media's effectiveness as an engagement tool for public engagement, social media use in relation to political communication and democracy and, finally, the undercurrents of social media use in public engagement. The section discusses the findings under the second objective of this study, which is also closely linked to the title of this thesis.

This study aimed to identify the degree to which MPs regarded social media as an important tool for public engagement. Udende (2011) claims that social media play a significant role in creating awareness around the political process through enabling debate, interaction and

problem sharing. However, Landsbergen (2010) opposes these findings by placing doubt on whether social media could be useful in government, and in this case, Parliament. A majority (80%) of the MPs claimed social media use to be very important, followed by 12% who claimed the opposite. The findings indicate that although the percentage of MPs who strongly agree that social media are an important communication tool is small, a fairly good number do agree that they are and, therefore, this casts doubt on the assertion by Landsbergen (2010).

On whether the use of social media had improved communication between MPs and the public, the findings from the public revealed that 45.5% agreed, 28.9% disagreed and 25.6% were undecided. However, an overwhelming 78% of MPs agreed, 18% disagreed and only 4% were undecided.

Fox (2009) argues that there is no evidence to suggest that social media campaigns increase political engagement or that social media use could strengthen representation and communication. This study aimed to explore if respondents agreed, disagreed or were undecided as to whether social media would increase engagement in the law-making process. Fox (2012) further argues that some social media sites may be useful in building relationships only, and not for full political communication. Furthermore, Olabamiji (2014), Booysen (2015) and Hamajoda (2016) all claim that MPs use new media for political campaigning and electioneering, and soon thereafter, abandon these sites. This indicates that MPs use social media when it suits them, and when not, log out indefinitely. Therefore, the ability of social media to create interaction exists, but is determined by how MPs and the public use it.

This study also gauged the views of MPs on social media's role in political engagement and found that 56% agreed that social media was effective in reaching the youth and the

marginalised, 40% said it was not effective and 4% were undecided on the matter. However, this may not always be the case. A study conducted in South Africa, which aimed at determining youth engagement and participation in political and public affairs, surprisingly found that only a few youths participated or showed any interest in political engagement and that the youth are less interested in politics than the generations before them (Mattes & Richardson, 2015). However, this research begs to somewhat differ with this opinion, as more youth are participating actively in Namibian politics, particularly given the high number of youthful MPs in the new NA of 2020 as well as what is anticipated for the NC if one is to consider the surge of youthful independent candidates ready to contest the November 2020 Regional and Local Authority elections from across the country.

On whether the internet brought anything substantive and new to politicians and their relationship with the citizens, Vesnic-Alujevic (2013) doubts the success of social media's ability to change the relationship between electorates and MPs significantly. However, Olabamiji (2014) refutes this claim when he states that social media has improved political communication through promoting political engagement. Magro (2012) supports Olabamiji (2014) and states that social media in and by itself has potential for e-participation and e-government, which Al-Shafi and Weerakkody (2008) claim helps improve democracy. Olabamiji (2014) further argues that social media has positively impacted good governance in Africa. This is because, through social media, wider engagement and access is guaranteed given that new media enables a wider scope of contributors unlike when media power was in the hands of journalists and editors some years ago. Olabamiji (2014) further states that politicians can use this opportunity to solve problems of the electorate, as they start to build up and equally, the electorate can communicate with their MPs, thus bridging the gap between the information-rich and the information-poor and further holding government to account.

This view is shared by Williamson (2013) when he states that social media provides parliaments with new ways to "communicate and engage with the public, consult on legislation, deliver educational resources and promote transparency" (p. 7). In a study done in Nigeria, (Olabamiji, 2014) supports this claim when he argues that new media has rejuvenated political communication. Interactive communication platforms such as social media can enhance interaction between the electorate and lawmakers. Because of this interaction, MPs can sharpen their written, oral and audio-visual communication skills (McNamara et al., 2012; Kingham, 2003; Power, 2012).

According to Davies (2014) "…social media can be used by government to involve citizens in decision-making…social media can also be used to broaden political participation by helping citizens to communicate with their representatives and with each other," (p. 6 - 7). Thus, it can be deduced that literature agrees when it claims that social media offers the possibility of encouraging more active participation on matters of legislation, thereby enriching engagement.

Booysen (2015) states that young people's frequent use of social media prompts political parties to use social media for both party advancements and democracy in general. As such, the use of social media to enhance mutual communication and citizen representation is becoming more evident. Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) claim that the internet has influenced information flow and contributed to citizen involvement.

The networks that can be created through social media are not only between the public and their MPs, but between like-minded citizens and MPs as well.

Findings of this study reveal that 80% of the MPs is satisfied with the use of social media for political communication and engagement. Literature on these issues is varied, but the

sentiments in each are shared. Research (OECD, 2004; Sanford & Rose, 2007; Saebo, Rose & Flak, 2008; Loukis, Macintosh & Charalabidis, 2011, as cited in Charalabidis & Loukis, 2012) found that social media is believed to have widened public engagement in government. Udende (2011) also argues that social media plays a significant role in creating awareness around the political process through enabling debate, interaction and problem-sharing. Hence, the findings of this study are in line with others in literature.

In their research on the usage of mobile social media for youth protest in Chile, Sey and Ortoleva (2014) found that many people on the internet using new media did so for entertainment, chatting and blogging. For Namibia, Keulder (2006) tried to measure political participation and engagement among youth in Windhoek. The study found that youth preferred entertainment over news and current affairs. Furthermore, the study revealed that educated youth would use the internet more for information purposes whereas the less educated would opt for entertainment. Olabamiji (2014) supports this claim when he states that it is the well-informed and politically well-aware people that use the internet and other online services and, therefore, social media does not bring in new unengaged people, but the same people who are engaged through other platforms. Davies (2014) agrees when he claims that some experts are sceptical about the effects of social media in engaging the marginalised, citing that evidence suggest that those who use social media for political engagement are the same people who are already involved in politics and that social media may be less effective in engaging the marginalised. This study was thus interested in determining which members of the public were active members of political party organisations and whether they had engaged with MPs via social media as part of this affiliation. A small group of 23.3% of the public claimed to be politically active and of these, 35.3% claimed to have engaged MPs via social media or other media of communication. This is a significantly low number of politically active respondents

from the public who engaged MPs via social media and thus, the findings of this study are contrary to the claims by Olabamiji (2014) and Davies (2014).

5.5. Nature for Engagement

The findings of this section address the issues on the nature of engagement between MPs and the public raised in the third objective of this study. Kang and Gearhart (2010) identify different types of citizen engagement in African literature, one of which is through websites, the rest being through involvement in projects and finally, by way of voting, petitioning or attending hearings.

To begin this discussion, the study will first highlight the findings of Figure 4.18 that looked at the preferred level of engagement that the public seek for interaction with MPs. It was imperative to determine this in order to understand the dynamics of the relationship between the public and MPs. The responses were on a scale of low, average and high interaction. Low interaction indicated the least amount of interaction and signified that engagement would be at the bare minimum with very little to no real interest to engage with MPs. This was followed by average interaction, which indicated that the public wanted some level of engagement, slightly more than the low interaction, but nothing too overwhelming. This signified increased interest to participate, albeit at an average level. Lastly, was high interaction, which indicated a high interest for engagement, one which would require continuous updates and interaction with limited space for inactivity. The highest selection was for average interaction with 44%, followed by low interaction with 22% and 18% high interaction. A total 38.2% of the public indicated that their choice for level of interaction was determined by limited information on the work of Parliament. Other reasons included a lack of interest and time as well as limited updates from MPs themselves. Studies have revealed that time for engagement, no desire to be

actively involved and self-interest to become politically engaged as factors that inform social media usage (Fox, 2009). Furthermore, most of the public respondents indicated a need for MPs and Parliament to share information several times a week, but that would not require much engagement. However, the majority MPs opted for advanced interaction on all their parliamentary functions.

Parliamentary functions vary, and it may not be for all functions of Parliament that MPs may want to engage in via social media. It would be important to determine the functions most suitable for social media engagement to further encourage engagement by focusing on certain functions. MPs were asked to indicate which of their parliamentary functions they would be most interested in for engagement. The parliamentary functions identified were law-making, review and oversight.

Figure 4.12 reveals that responses on legislative review, oversight and outreach were tied at 28% while most MPs opted to engage on all matters. As previously stated, the findings reveal that MPs are interested in engaging extensively on all matters. For the public, however, issues of livelihood and socio-economic issues were most prevalent (41.1%). These findings are like a study by Hamajoda (2016) in West Africa that investigated the specific parliamentary functions in relation to the needs of the public. Hamajoda (2016) focused on law-making, representation and oversight, and based on these, asked key questions to garner more specified views and practices of parliamentarians in relation to new media channels. The West African study found that the public is generally most concerned about issues that concern them and not in the overall system of law-making. The findings by Hamajoda (2016) are confirmed in the findings of this study when it found that the Namibian public are more interested in issues of

livelihood and socio-economic affairs. Legal matters and whistleblowing were tied at second place, while law-making and democracy received the least score.

According to Griffith and Leston-Bandeira (2012), the relationship between parliament and citizens exist on several levels. The first relationship is on an individual representative basis, followed by political party groupings and finally through Parliament as an institution (Griffith & Leston-Bandeira, 2012).

In his study, Shihomeka (2019) also aimed to qualify the type and level of engagement that was stimulated from cell phone use as well as answer some pertinent questions pertaining to the issues of interest of youth as was done by this study with social media specifically. The author opines that many studies have been conducted about political engagement and social media. However, he claims that they were found lacking, as their focus was mainly on governments and political leaders engage citizens, neglecting that citizens too have their own initiatives on how they choose to participate (Shihomeka, 2019). Hence, this study found it imperative to include the public to determine aspects that may have been neglected in other studies.

Robert and Namusonge (2015) claim that citizens are interested in seeing MPs use digital tools to improve communication and address their issues. Booysen (2015) also places MPs at the centre of championing engagement and participation efforts with citizens.

The liberties, as outlined by Unwin (2012), have impacted the communication process between governments and the electorate, enabling politicians and MPs to engage and speak to the people without a third party and for people to share any information affecting them with their MPs. Landsbergen (2010) substantiates this claim when he argues that:

> *Social media …offers citizens access to people. It offers a way to create tighter, social networks that support trust in government. The less that government is seen as a "faceless" website, and more as individuals who have a name, have a reputation, and can give a commitment about what can and will be done, the easier it will be to see government as something working on their behalf* (p. 136).

However, others claim that parliaments, as institutions of government, should spearhead and mobilise the actual use of new media to engage and entice citizens with an interest in politics and governance (Vesnic-Alujevic, 2013). The study, therefore, asked the pubic to indicate whom they felt was responsible for spearheading social media engagement. Most of the public felt that it was the responsibility of MPs themselves and not staff of Parliament. Additionally, the public felt that the onus was not on them to seek engagement with MPs, but that it was on the MPs to reach out to them. Contrary to this, 56% of MPs preferred to engage the public through Parliament, 20% through their political parties and 20% preferred to engage individually. The responses to this question, therefore, show a mismatch in the way MPs desired to communicate as opposed to what the public required.

5.6. Factors which Determine Social Media Use

This section discusses the enabling and disabling factors that influence social media use between MPs and the public.

Negative perceptions relating to using social media as a formal means of communication have been recorded, including the ability to undermine deliberations, encourage populist rhetoric and reduce responsible collective action (Davies, 2014). This study aimed to determine if this

was true for Namibia. A majority (56%) of MPs were of the opinion that social media did encourage unwarranted public views, 16% claimed it had the capacity to undermine parliamentary deliberations and to create politicians outside of formal political structures respectively. Another 8% claimed that it would remove the collective message of Parliament while another 4% identified other issues. Therefore, the study by Davies (2014) has some relevance to the Namibian situation, more so on social media's ability to encourage unwarranted public views.

Surendra (as cited by Afunde, 2015) conducted a quantitative study that examined the components as mentioned by Rogers (1995). The researcher was interested in determining the adoption of ICT by respondents at a college and found that Rogers' diffusion and innovation factors can predict the adoption of innovation.

Furthermore, the attributes of innovation as stated by Rogers (1983) are relevant to the adoption of social media use at Parliament in that, a study on ICT adoption in schools (Iipinge, 2010) found that the attributes of innovations in relation to the findings of the study were successful in determining the degree of ICT adoption as well as the perception of the tutors towards ICT in the teaching of science.

Following, this study will reveal how social media use fared in relation to the diffusion of innovation attributes discussed in Chapter 2.

Under the first characteristics, relative advantage, it was found that social media had not convincingly taken over traditional media as a formal means of communication. However, the potential to do so was there provided some of the issues raised are addressed.

The second characteristic of the DOI Theory is compatibility, defined by Rogers (1983) as the match between the innovation and the values and needs of users. Although social media may be regarded as a positive innovation for public engagement, it would do very little for MPs if it goes against their values or those of their political parties. Hence, the study aimed to explore to what extent that was the case. For most of the cases, social media as a communication medium was in line with MPs 'personal values and communication needs as well as those of their respective political parties. Hence, it can be said that social media use is compatible with MPs' values and communication needs.

Trialability is the fourth element of diffusion and is aimed at determining if an innovation may be experimented with (Rogers, 1983). A majority (76%) of MPs did indicate that they would be willing to use social media for engagement with their electorate on a trial basis. If an innovation's success can be tested, then it is generally adopted faster. One key influence for adoption is the openness of a society to accept and welcome innovation (Simin & Janković, 2014).

As was revealed in Figure 4.3, 12% of MPs did not have social media accounts. The data revealed that 36% of MPs identified the inability to navigate social media as a reason, while 24% did not use social due to poor network, and lastly, 40% gave varying reasons, such as a general lack of interest and the fact that some of their electorate were not available on social media platforms due to poor network coverage and unaffordability of data. Another reason given was that they had not been provided with devices with which to use social media.

The third characteristic of the DOI theory is *complexity,* or the degree to which something is believed to be "difficult to understand or use" (Rogers, 1983, p. 15). On determining the difficulty with which MPs engage the public using social media, Figure 4.7 indicates a majority

(48%) did so with moderate difficulty, followed by 28% who indicated it was with ease and 8% with difficulty. An additional 16% claimed that some social media sites, such as Facebook and WhatsApp were less difficult to use for engagement compared to others and so, to provide a definite answer was tricky. On the reasons why some of the MPs had difficulty in engaging the youth on social media, the highest number (31%) of MPs indicated that the public was disinterested, 23% said the public made inappropriate comments, 12% said the public made offensive comments while 34% gave varying reasons which included inability to navigate social media platforms, language difficulties and because their electorate are not reachable on social media sites. For this study however, only 8.9% of MPs identified language as a barrier. It was important to determine the reasons for MPs' difficult use of social media as it would inform their use of social media. About 80% indicated that they used social media with different levels of difficulty, ranging from moderate to extreme levels of difficulty. The DOI theory further expounds that new ideas which are simpler to understand and use are adopted faster than those that are not. Therefore, minimal complexity is important for adoption to take place. Iipinge (2010) claimed in his study that also employed the DOI theory that tutors needed training to maximise confidence in employing the innovation to address the issue of complexity. Reasons for the difficulty of MPs to adopt social media as a formal communication tool vary. In her study, Vesnic-Alujevic (2013) mentions a few, among them the issue of language. Members of the European Parliament suggested the need for a second language to English to include all citizens. The issue of language was anticipated to be a significant barrier to social media use in this study, given that the country has about 14 languages, low literacy rate and English, a foreign language, as the national language. Surprisingly however, the data from this research is different to Europe, which has many different national languages.

The fifth DOI element is *observability*, or how results of an innovation are noticeable by others (Rogers, 1983). This propelled the study to explore the views of the MPs on how their peers used social media because the more visible the results of the innovation, the more likely others would also use it. The findings on the frequency with which MPs regarded their peers to promote legislative work on social media indicates that a small number (16%) of MPs perceived their peers to use social media exceptionally well for engagement, with a larger number (40%) opting for fairly well. This was important to determine as it influences two things, the rate at which others start using social media themselves for engagement and the type of information that may be 'out there' about the innovation. However, the findings revealed a vast contrast with the findings of the public on the same issue. Only 5.6% of respondents from the public strongly agreed and 18.9% agreed while 24.4% and 18.9% disagreed and strongly disagreed. The remainder were undecided. This indicates that the public did not agree that MPs promoted their work on social media, while MPs believed they, in fact, do. Now, would the use of social media for engagement by MPs entice the public more interaction from the part of the public? The findings were that yes (56.4%), more social media use targeted at engaging the public would enhance interaction from the public. These findings are supported by others who maintain that most people prefer their elected representatives to do the political decision-making on their behalf as they opt to contribute in the political decision-making process only minimally due to time constraints (Fox, 2009). Furthermore, Iipinge (2010) claimed in his study that also employed the DOI theory that tutors would first have to see the benefit of the innovation, then encourage its use. This illustration highlights the DOI theory's relevance as each innovation characteristic would classify the adoption level of the tutors.

On the issue of trust, research claims that trust is central to diffusion and is linked to perception. It will, therefore, remain a reoccurring theme that influences adoption and use (Folorunso et

al., 2010). Folorunso et al. (2010) argue that diverse motivations and attitudes affect the decision to trust social media or not. As such, this study was interested in determining how levels of trust in government can be improved through interaction on social media. Forty-four percent of the MPs stated that social media could improve trust in government while a lack of trust in government was identified as a barrier to online engagement in this study.

IPU (2016) states that adoption of social media is slow among individual MPs and that parliaments find it challenging to keep track of which members are using social platforms and how due to the absence of any official parliamentary ICT or communications function. As such, Olabamiji (2014) opines that if parliaments are serious about public engagement and participation, they must formulate a regulatory framework within which to operate. Williamson (2013) supports this claim by stating that developing new strategies and policies for parliament to support new media is important.

The findings of this study revealed that MPs would be more encouraged to use social media in their official capacity for public engagement if there was a guiding framework or policy for MPs in place. Hence, the absence of such a policy or framework can be considered a barrier to social media use by MPs. Such a policy could address issues such as code of conduct, security policies, authorisation to dismiss information and parliamentary protocol, and issues which appear restrictive when dealing with a media that requires quick and open responses (Williamson, 2013).

This study also found that a majority identified the need for a social media training and skills development initiative. Lack of new media skills and knowledge results in reduced use of social

media and thus makes users feel unsafe to engage in online debates and thus become unwilling to take part in online discussions (Shihomeka, 2019). Hence, as this study found, capacity building and skills development is an important aspect to consider when embarking on social media campaigns.

The study also found that MPs required assistance from the Secretariat. Additionally, the availability of more information to share, no reprisal from political and government leaders for their use of social media and in the least, some form of political party authorisation. These findings are confirmed in a study by Hamajoda (2012) that revealed that legislators need to have all information at hand for them to participate confidently on social media networks. Findings of this study are confirmed by Williamson (2013) who states that MPs need training and support to use social media. Vesnic-Alujevic (2013) identified time constraints a challenge in engaging with their electorates on social media, however, this did not come up as a challenge for MPs in this study.

A study by Magro (2012) proposed that governments create departments that will manage social media, e-participation and e-government channels in order to analyse data and provide support. Social media in the Namibian Parliament does not have a dedicated department, and is a function performed by Information Officers. Namibia scored 2.2 out of a possible 4 on the overall e-readiness index in 2014 (Republic of Namibia, 2014 att). However, e-governance readiness level in Namibia does not correspond to the level of citizens' engagement and participation in politics and decision-making. Shihomeka (2019) illustrates this point by referring to three African countries, Kenya, Algeria, and Tunisia, which rank high in e-readiness but low in e-participation, meaning that although these governments have in place

measure for engagement, the public does not participate as much as one would expect and so citizens lose out on an opportunity to contribute to nation building.

Furthermore, the Namibian Parliament has such departments, but they do not manage the online activities of MPs nor do they analyse data or offer much support. MPs were asked to indicate whether they received any support from Parliament or their political parties with respect to using social media for public engagement. The findings of this study reveal that political parties and parliament did offer some support to MPs for social media use.

Hamajoda (2016) revealed six key challenges of social media engagement, top of which was poor network connection. The second challenge identified from the study was lack of knowledge and digital skills. The author further argues that new media users' baseline should be broadened through improved computer literacy in Nigeria, otherwise it would remain a tool for the elite (Hamajoda, 2016). With respect to technical barriers, this study found several barriers that impact the use of social media. The issue of poor network and unaffordability of data is a re-occurring one for most studies in Africa. A majority (47.8%) of respondents from the public identified the unaffordability of data, followed by poor network coverage in rural areas, bandwidth and poor ICT skills as factors that must be addressed in order for them to be more present on SNSes. Hence, Hamajoda (2012) ascertains that skills, improved connection and public's access to the internet could enable more engagement between MPs and the public. As far back as 2012, the issue of affordability was raised by Fox (2012), who argued that it limited access to media and ICT. However, even back then, low-income respondents indicated that they would exhaust all practices to stay engaged and the study did not record a participant who had no form of media engagement (Fox, 2012).

It was, however, expected then that this concern would be addressed when prices fall after the laying and operationalisation of the cable link to a large extent, this has proven to be true, according to the Index on affordability for Namibia under section 1.8 of this thesis.

A majority (28%) of MPs indicated lack of secure wireless networks. Similar findings on security were also found in South Africa after political party representatives raised concerns over Facebook and its potential to get hacked (Booysen, 2015). According to Udende (2011) connectivity has a great potential for risk. Risk contributes to uncertainty and uncertainty influences diffusion, which slows down adoption (Rogers, 1983).

On to what degree MPs' independence from their political parties as well as parliament from government had any bearing on their use of social media, the findings revealed the majority (68%) of MPs agreed that their independence from their political party and that of parliament from government does impact or influence how they shared information on social media. The findings, therefore, show that MPs were to a certain extent influenced by their proximity to their political powers. It, therefore, is important to maintain separation of powers to avoid the encroachment of the executive on Parliament and of political parties on their representatives in the legislature. According to Griffith and Leston-Bandeira (2012), the independence of the legislature from government and of individual members from government impacts how Parliament communicates with the public. It was, therefore, important for this study to determine if this was true for Namibia. Furthermore, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (2009) states that MPs must be free to represent the people without fear of reprisal from political powers or Parliament as an institution.

Another barrier, perhaps not mentioned elsewhere, is from Shihomeka (2019), who states that villages in his study had limited power supply. As Such, mobile devices on which social media

would be accessed from would go days without being charged. Others, in more remote areas, would be charged by their fellow community members to charge their phones on solar panels. These findings inform this study that in developing countries like Namibia, the cost of data and network coverage are part of the barriers to social media engagement due to other running costs perhaps not experienced in other parts of the world.

The study in Ohangwena region by Shihomeka (2019) had several parallels to the present study. One such parallel is the issue of affordability, which Shihomeka (2019) characterised as the high unemployment rate among the young Namibians. Another issue was the low public and political literacy level in Ohangwena as well as the already-mentioned digital divide. Findings from a study by Shihomeka (2019) also found that network connectivity and the proximity of shops from where to acquire data, devices or parts was a challenge. Thus, people have to walk to particular points to gain connectivity, resulting in interrupted use of social media. The Republic of Namibia, as cited by Fox (2012), agrees with these findings when he claims that poverty and limited media access is rampant in rural Namibia and as a result, impacts media use.

Other challenges identified in the Ohangwena region (Shihomeka, 2019), but not identified by the present study, include cultural hierarchies observed at community meetings that create barriers to engagement, access to proper road infrastructures as a development accelerator and weak representation of youth at decision-making level.

5.7. Chapter Summary

The chapter started by discussing the findings as presented in Chapter 4. Social media knowledge and use was an important starting point for discussing the findings of this study, and so, that is what this study did. Based on the literature, the discussion indicates that social media use has been on the rise and has gained a wide footprint among MPs and the public. How they will influence the public, operations of Parliament and communication is a different matter altogether.

Next, the researcher presented a discussion on perceptions of social media based on the DOI component of relative advantage. The literature on this is that the dominance of traditional media could be regarded as a barrier to social media engagement. Studies revealed that traditional media was dominant in other parts of Africa, including Nigeria and South Africa, while in Europe, MEPs were sceptical about social media use, with some even suggesting that it may only be useful for crisis communication. The only time during this study that social media trumped traditional media was on its capacity for high information content.

What was agreed on across the board, however, is that engagement is important and must take place, and social media is a possible vehicle for this engagement, provided that the environment is made more conducive for all parties concerned.

The discussion also uncovered that the barriers to social media engagement were not unique to Namibia, and that similar findings were recorded in other studies. However, in the case of Namibia, this becomes less worrying as government has put in place regulatory bodies for ICT in the hope of connecting more people and narrowing the digital divide. In the next and final chapter, the study will provide a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the research findings and interpreted the data by linking them to the literature and theory employed by this study. In this final chapter, the researcher presents a summary of those findings, provides conclusions and gives recommendations.

The aim of the concluding chapter is to revisit the research objectives of the study, formulate findings and offer specific conclusions in relation to the research objectives. This is done to remind the reader of the overall aim of the research and the objectives that the researcher set out to meet those aims as well as to achieve cyclical closure (Biggam, 2017).

The summary of the key findings, which are arranged according to the themes, are derived from the research objectives. They are: social media use and knowledge, perceptions of social media as a formal engagement tool, social media's role in creating a responsive Parliament, desired nature of engagement between MPs and public and, finally, factors that determine social media use.

This is followed by the conclusions that the study reached. The conclusions are arranged according to the objectives of this study, which were to: investigate the perceptions of social media use as a tool for public engagement; explore whether social media can play a vital role in creating a responsive Parliament; establish the desired nature of social media engagement between citizens and MPs and finally, identify factors which determine the use of social media by MPs and the public.

Following the conclusions are recommendations, which are presented based upon findings uncovered from this study. Importantly, the possible areas of further research on this subject are highlighted. This is followed by the final conclusion, which reflects on the entire research process that was undertaken. By employing this rounded and holistic approach, the researcher hopes to achieve cyclical closure.

6.2. Summary of Findings

The summary of findings section in the concluding chapter is not a repeat of findings, but a highlight of significant points (Babbie, 2004). As such, significant findings the study uncovered are discussed under this section.

6.2.1. Social Media Use and Knowledge

The first objective of the study was to investigate the perceptions of MPs on the use of social media as a formal means of communication. Under this objective, a sub-theme emerged, which aimed to explore the knowledge, familiarity and information that MPs had about social media. Literature reviewed reveals that people choose to adopt or reject a concept that is perceived as new based on what is communicated about that concept. The literature further also revealed that for as long as people perceive the innovation to be new, the diffusion process must be considered as on-going. The study discovered that most MPs and the public had exceptional social media knowledge, although many regarded it as a new phenomenon. However, far less MPs were familiar with social media use, indicating that the information spread about social media and its use was positive enough to warrant that most people in both sets of the population opted to use it. The literature revealed that Facebook and Twitter were the foremost social media sites MPs preferred to use, however, in this study, Facebook and WhatsApp, followed by Twitter were the most popular social media sites. The study also found that a large group of

MPs was in the first or second category among their peers to adopt social media, indicating that they had done so due to the benefits of the innovation and not because others had done so. The study found that for both populations, there was an overwhelming social media presence and use, substantiating literature that indicated that social media use was growing rapidly. However, for MPs, far less MPs had official social media accounts, indicating their unwillingness to engage formally due to various challenges highlighted in the literature, such as limiting uncontrolled interaction and unwarranted public views. Additionally, the study found that a very low number of public members followed Parliament social media pages, due to lack of interest and not being aware of the existence of such pages.

The study found that most respondents both from the public and from MPs used social media. However, the study further determined that the use was not necessarily for engagement, but more for personal purposes, as a significantly low number of MPs had dedicated official social media accounts for this purpose.

6.2.2. Perceptions of Social Media as a Formal Engagement Tool

According to the literature reviewed in this study, the five constructs of the DOI theory can successfully explore perceptions and behaviour of respondents to innovation. For this study, the researcher, being informed by the theory, was able to explore the perceptions and attitudes of respondents in relation to social media engagement, using the five DOI constructs. With respect to relative advantage, which is considered the degree to which an idea is perceived as more superior then that which came before it, the study found that both populations preferred traditional media such as TV and radio, together with town hall meetings over social media to engage with each other. The study found that those MPs aged between 52 and 61 rarely selected the internet as engagement tools, thereby substantiating that age did impact social media

perceptions. The study also found that social media was only able to trump traditional media on the information component, while on predictability, structure and format, it was traditional media that had the relative advantage.

6.2.3. Social Media's Role in Creating a Responsive Parliament

The second objective of the study was to explore whether social media could play a vital role in creating a responsive Parliament. Findings under this discussion covered three critical issues in attempting to determine social media's role in enabling debate, interaction and problem sharing. This was done through measuring social media's effectiveness as an engagement tool for public engagement, social media use in relation to political communication and democracy and finally, the undercurrents of social media use in public engagement. The findings reveal that with respect to its effectiveness for public engagement, there was a general consensus that social media was an important and useful medium for a responsive Parliament. However, on whether it was effective in reaching the marginalised or useful in political communication, the findings revealed a different outcome. The study was interested in determining whether the people who engaged MPs on social media were the same people already engaging MPs on other platforms and not necessarily new people. This was important in order to verify if those who use social media for political engagement are the same as those who are already actively involved in politics. The study found that social media engagement included a relatively small number of people separate from those already politically involved.

6.2.4. Desired Nature of Engagement between MPs and Public

The third objective of the study was aimed at establishing the desired nature of social media engagement between citizens and MPs. The study found that there was a discrepancy in the way MPs desired to engage with the public. The study found that many MPs preferred

advanced interaction on all levels, while the public either opted for low or average interaction due to limited information on the work of Parliament, lack of interest and of time. The study also found that the public was interested in getting updates from MPs frequently, but not to engage as frequently. However, the study revealed that most of the MPs opted for advanced interaction on all their parliamentary functions. Further to this, the study found that while MPs were keener to engage on their roles as MPs, the public was more interested to engage on livelihood and socio-economic matters. The study found that the public felt that it was the responsibility of MPs themselves and not staff of Parliament to engage them, while MPs preferred to engage the public mainly through Parliament.

6.2.5. Factors which Determine Social Media Use

The fourth objective of this study was to identify factors which determine the use of social media by MPs and the public. The study found that MPs believed social media did encourage unwarranted public views, undermine parliamentary deliberations and create politicians outside official parliamentary measures. This, the study found, resulted in the lack of official online social media pages for MPs. The study also found that with respect to another DOI component, social media use was compatible to the values and communication needs of MPs and their political parties. Additionally, the study revealed that MPs were willing to use social media for engagement with their electorate on a trial basis. On why respondents did not have social media accounts, the study found that the inability to navigate social media, poor network, and unaffordability of data were leading contributing factors for both sets of respondents. The study also found that with respect to complexity, most MPs indicated experiencing moderate levels of difficulty in using social media for engagement. The study also found that MPs felt

that the public was disinterested and made inappropriate and offensive comments. Contrary to findings in other studies, this study did not find language to be a barrier. With respect to observability, the study found that MPs regard their peers to be using social media fairly well for engagement, while the findings from the public revealed a contrary view.

6.3. Conclusions

Craswell and Poore (2012) state that the conclusions of a thesis allow the researcher to reflect on the completed work and then communicate what the important and significant findings are. The overall aim of this research was to explore whether social media could be used to enhance public engagement with Namibian MPs. This section informs whether the objectives have been met or not.

6.3.1. To Investigate MPs' Perceptions on the Use of Social Media for Public Engagement

Based on the results of this research, it can be concluded that social media has still not attained dominance and preference over traditional media as an engagement tool for MPs and the public. Although the respondents did agree to the benefits of social media as an engagement medium, traditional media remain the preferred medium of communication and, hence, have relative advantage over social media. However, the study concludes that there is a large degree of openness to social media engagement and, given more time, the diffusion of social media for public engagement is likely to occur. Thus, the research objective was met and the perceptions of MPs on the use of social media to enhance public engagement was successfully determined.

6.3.2. To Explore whether Social Media could Create a Responsive Parliament

The findings of this study are split on whether social media could create a responsive parliament based on the three critical areas that were employed to explore this. As such, the study concludes that social media does, in fact, hold the necessary hallmarks of an effective engagement tool and if managed properly and more strategically, could create a responsive Parliament. Therefore, the research objective was met.

6.3.3. To Establish Desired Nature of Social Media Engagement between Citizens and MPs

Based on the findings, this study concludes that there is a different expectation from the MPs and the public on how engagement must be attained using social media. Levels of engagement, issues of engagement and manner of engagement all indicate that the public's desired nature of engagement is different from what and how the MPs prefer to engage. The study was able to establish the desired nature of engagement from both populations and it can, therefore, be concluded that the research objective was met.

6.3.4. Identify Factors Which Determine the Use of Social Media by MPs and the Public

The study concludes that the main barriers that hinder and determine social media use are the absence of a policy or framework, unaffordable data, skills training, general lack of interest in the work of parliament and poor network. The possible factors that would enable social media use identified were more support from Parliament staff and availability of information to share. The study further found that the use of social media for engagement was perceived as difficult or complex under the DOI theory. This informed the study that in the long run, the full adoption of social media use would be met with difficulty. The study also found that another component

of the DOI theory, which is observability, was low from the view point of the public, although among themselves, they held a different opinion. With respect to trialability, the study found that MPs were keen to use social media engagement on a trial basis.

6.4. Recommendations

Recommendations are derived from the results of the research work and are meant to advise on what the researcher would want to see happen next. There are two types of recommendations: recommendations emanating from the findings and suggestions for future research (Biggam, 2017). This study will provide recommendations for both.

Based on the conclusions reached, the study recommends the following:

- **Formulation of a social media policy** - the Namibian Parliament and MICT to formulate a social media use policy or manual specifically for MPs and Parliament, different from the one currently in place that only has relevance to Public Relations Officers and Information and Communication staff of the Public Service because of the unique position Parliamentarians find themselves in in relation to their function of representation. A further call would be for the envisaged policy to lay out a specific engagement strategy for Parliament. This will help in managing the adoption of social media in their use to engage the public and seek input from the community. The issue identified by this study, which informed this recommendation, is that there is no formal policy for social media use for MPs in place currently. MPs indicated that the absence of such a framework does hinder their social media use to some degree.
- **Social media skills training** - Further to a policy or manual for social media use, the study recommends that social media skills training and etiquette be provided for MPs.

The issue identified by this study, which informed this recommendation, is that poor social media engagement was found to be a result of a lack of skills to navigate and use social media effectively. The enhanced confidence and assurance from such a capacity-building exercise will enhance social media use and improve the quality of engagement.

- **Assessment of the National ICT Policy and the Regulatory Authority** - The study also recommends that the Namibian government relooks at the effectiveness of the National ICT Policy and the regulatory authority with respect to their role in narrowing the digital divide and bringing about development through ICT expansion and inclusion. The issue of unaffordability of data and poor network coverage was recurring and most Namibians, especially the unemployed and those from rural areas, indicated that they are unable to engage as much as they would want to. The issues identified by this study which informed this recommendation are:
- **Social media trial programme** - The study also recommends that Parliament and MPs engage on a social media engagement trial programme to identify all issues pertaining to the Namibian situation before fully formalising its use. The issue identified by this study which informed this recommendation is based on one of the five characteristics of an innovation, namely, trialability. Under this construct, it was revealed that the ability to initially test out social media formally would enhance future use.
- **Social media campaign** - Finally, the study recommends that Parliament, together with MPs, embark on an aggressive social media campaign to sensitise the public on its social media initiatives and further identify ways to incorporate WhatsApp in its social media platforms as it was found to be among the leading social media platforms together with Facebook. The issue identified by this study, which informed this recommendation, is the lack of knowledge about social media engagement by MPs and

the public. Additionally, it was found that there was a lack of knowledge and interest from the public on Parliament's social media pages and a social media campaign would address this issue.

- **Impact assessment of social media use** - Finally, the study recommends that the Namibian situation on the use of social media for a responsive parliament be explored further in context, considering Namibia's marginalised communities and how social media and the internet have affected their own development and inclusion in the national discourse. The issue identified by this study, which informed this recommendation, is based on the overall findings of the study, and more specifically, because the views garnered are that social media does not do much for the marginalised and, as such, there is a need to explore social media in relation to Parliament and government more holistically.

6.5. Areas for Further Research

The study was also limited in determining the different issues from the two Houses of Parliament, namely, National Council and National Assembly exclusively because the findings looked at the findings collectively to represent the Namibian Parliament. This may prove important if one considers the different roles and composition of each House. A possible research area would be a study on social media use for the National Council due to its unique role of regional representation.

Social media use for public engagement is still a new phenomenon in Namibia, and even more so challenging due to unaffordable data and poor network coverage. Due to this, there may be a need for a Namibian study on the effectiveness of using social media to reach the youth, the marginalised and the disengaged.

Future studies in the media and ICT fields may be interested in exploring a suitable research that will identify in which category of adopters in the DOI theory studies in these fields may have to focus on. Future studies may also wish to explore the future of engagement in the time of Covid-19 and how virtual meetings may look like in a country like Namibia.

Finally, future research may consider determining how the dynamics of social media management could affect MPs' willingness or unwillingness to be directly responsible for their online activities and help address this issue.

6.6. Final Conclusion

An investigation into the use of social media touches on Namibia's readiness and ability to fully benefit from the fourth industrial revolution, as alluded to in the country's national documents, Vision 2030 and the National Development Plans. Although various studies have been conducted in political engagement, social media and e-governance, for Namibia, such a study seeking to determine social media use engagement with MPs had not been explored.

Some studies dissected in this thesis found that digital media has a positive effect on public engagement, but a majority remain inconclusive with respect to youth and marginalised communities.

The overall take-away of this research is that there is a window for social media to nurture a transition that will ensure that engagement, and further, participation are realised. However, there is still much more to be done in e-governance initiatives in Africa that are meant to meet the needs of citizens.

First, the chapter presented a summary of the key findings according to themes derived from the objectives of the study. Under these themes, several matters were raised, including that

most MPs and the public had a lot of knowledge about social media, that social media was only able to trump traditional media in certain aspects, while traditional media held the relative advantage. Overall, the research was able to meet all the objectives it set out to determine.

Based on the conclusions reached, the study made several recommendations, chief among them was the need for social media skills training and the formulation of a social media policy that would govern and regulate social media use at Parliament. Because of the unique composition and role of the two Houses of Parliament, the study posits that a study be done that would exclusively look at social media use in each House separately.

With the outbreak of the global pandemic, Covid–19, which changed the way people convene, it is best that political leaders, such as MPs, seriously consider virtual platforms to convene and hold meaningful and fruitful deliberations with the public. This could be challenging for the elderly, who normally attend meetings, an issue that future studies may wish to explore.

Active engagement of citizens using social media can strengthen engagement in areas of development. This is precisely the gap this study aimed to fill, which is to serve as a basis for studies in public and political engagement through social media in Namibia in future.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

UNAM
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: FHSS /319/2017 Date: 10 October, 2017

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee (UREC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy And Guidelines. Ethical Approval Is Given In Respect Of Undertakings Contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee sitting with the Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Title of Project: The Use Of Social Media To Enhance Community Engagement With Namibian Parliamentarians

Researcher: Pamela Mate

Student Number: 200423142

Supervisor(s): Prof. Cathrine Nengomasha (Main) Ms. Martha Mosha (Co)

Faculty: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Take note of the following:

(a) Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the UREC. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
(b) Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the UREC.
(c) The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the UREC (through the Chairperson of the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by UREC.
(d) The UREC retains the right to:
(i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
(ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research;

UREC wishes you the best in your research.

Prof. P. Odonkor: UREC Chairperson

Ms. P. Claassen: UREC Secretary

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Office of the Speaker

Private Bag 13323
Windhoek
Republic of Namibia

Tel: (+264-61) 288 2506
Fax: (+264-61) 231 626

Ref:

23rd May 2019

Ms. Pamela Mate
Senior Information Officer of the National Council
Parliament Buildings
WINDHOEK

Dear Ms. Pamela Mate,

ACADEMIC RESEARCH WITH THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The above-mentioned subject bears reference.

Thank you for your letter dated today, on the subject of seeking permission to undertake academic research on "The Use of Social Media to Enhance Community Engagement with Namibian Parliamentarians", which will involve interviewing both Parliamentarians and staff.

I whole-heartily welcome this academic undertaking especially because it augurs with our initiative of shifting towards *e-Parliament*.

Kindly liaise with the Office of the Chief Whip in the National Assembly, that could assist you with accessing different Parliamentarians for your research work. I also hope the output of your research could contribute towards strengthening the work of Parliament.

With best wishes,

APPENDIX C: RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER NATIONAL COUNCIL

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM
2/6/1/4

TO: Ms. Pamela Mate
Information and Research Division

FROM: Mr. Tousy Namiseb
Secretary

NATIONAL COUNCIL
2019 -05- 15
SECRETARY

DATE: 14 May 2019

SUBJECT: **REQUEST FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH TO BE CONDUCTED WITH NATIONAL COUNCIL MPs**

This internal memo is to inform you that the Steering Committee has granted permission on your request to conduct an academic research.

I thank you

APPENDIX D: RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER CITY OF WINDHOEK

Department of Human Capital
& Corporate Services
☒ 59
Corner of 5378 Independence Avenue and Garten Street
WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA
Tel: (+264) 61 290 2911 • Fax: (+264) 61 290 3212 • www.cityofwindhoek.org.na

ENQ: Mr. MA Nikanor
DATE: 07 June 2019

PHONE: 09 264 61 290 2630
FAX: 09 264 61 290 3212
EMAIL: ark@windhoekcc.org.na

RE: THE USE OF NEW MEDIA TO ENHANCE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMEMENT WITH NAMIBIAN PARLIAMENTARIANS" AT THE CITY OF WINDHOEK – MS. PAMELA MATE (STUDENT NO: 200423142)

This letter serves as confirmation that Ms. Pamela Mate a student pursuing a Masters of Arts: Media Studies at University of Namibia has been granted permission to conduct her research on the above subject within the City of Windhoek.

The research, which is in partial fulfilment of the studies, aims to focus on the use of new media to enhance public participation and engagement with Namibian Parliamentarians.

Respondents to the study are therefore requested to render Ms. Mate their cooperation and assistance. Should there be any queries, please feel free to contact the Human Resources Development Division on the above contact details

Yours Sincerely

ARCHIE NIKANOR
MANAGER: ORGANIZATIONAL & HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

CITY OF WINDHOEK
2019 -06- 07
NAME: M.A Nikanor
SIGNATURE:

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: *The Use of Social Media to Enhance Public Engagement with Namibian Parliamentarians.*

Researcher: Pamela Mate

National Council: Parliament of the Republic of Namibia

Research and Information Directorate

Telephone: 061 208 3556

Cell: 081 166 8897

E-mail: pamelamate@ymail.com

1.3 Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to determine how social media can be optimised to enhance communication between MPs and the public. As this study has not yet been done in Namibia, the information derived from this study can inform policy and practice and recommendations thereof may be incorporated in the Social Media Use policy and Communication Plan of government in future. Overall, it may improve communication and engagement between the legislature and the public.

All response will be treated with confidentiality. Participation is voluntary; however, you are encouraged to participate. Confidentiality, anonymity and privacy will be adhered to as the names, contact details and other personal details of respondents will not me mentioned or required. If at any point during the data collection procedure, a respondent feels uncomfortable or unable to continue, they are free to discontinue with the questionnaire without any negative consequences.

For any questions or further clarifications with any aspect regarding this research, please feel free to contact me or my research supervisors, in the Department of Information & Communication Studies, University of Namibia: Professor Cathrine T. Nengomasha e-mail: cnengomasha@unam.na Tel: +264 61 202 3641 0r Ms. Martha Mosha, e-mail: mmosha@unam.na Tel: +264 61 202 4872.

If you agree to participate in this study, may you please indicate your consent by signing this form?

Name	**Signature**	**Date**

APPENDIX F: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Questionnaire for the Members of Parliament

My name is Pamela Mate and I am a student in the Department of Information & Communication Studies (DICS), studying towards a Masters of Arts in Media Studies at the University of Namibia (UNAM). I am conducting a study titled "*The Use of Social Media to Enhance Public Engagement with Namibian Parliamentarians".* This research project is undertaken in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts.

You have been selected to voluntary participate in this study, hence, you are requested to fill in this questionnaire. You are not requested to provide your personal details for confidentiality reasons. The information you are giving will be used solely for academic purposes. You are required to sign a consent form, to show that you understand the purpose of this study and you have voluntarily agreed to take part.

Demographic Information

Please cross [X] the boxes that best represent your response where applicable.

1. Gender

MALE	
FEMALE	
OTHER	

2. Age

Less than 40 years	
41 - 51 years	
51 – 61 years	
Over 61 years	

3. Years of service at Parliament

First term	
Second term	
Third Term	
Fourth Term and more	

4. House of Parliament

National Council	
National Assembly	

5. Title (Mark where applicable)

Presiding Officer	
Deputy / Vice Presiding Officer	
Minister / Deputy Minister	
Political Party President/Vice President	
Chief Whip / Deputy Chief Whip	
Committee Chairperson	
Ordinary Member / Back Bencher	
Presidential Appointee / Other	

6. Political Representation

Governing Party	
Opposition Party	

7. Official Residency

Urban	
Semi - Urban	
Rural	

Social Media Usage

Please cross [X] the boxes that best represent your response where applicable.

8. How much do you know about social media?

0 – 25%		25% - 50%		50% - 75%		75% - 100%	

9. Do you have a social media (e. g. Facebook, twitter etc.) account?

Yes	
No	

10. If your answer is ‘No’, why?

No smart phone	
No network	
No data	
Inability to navigate social media platform	
Other, please specify _____	

11. If your answer is '*Yes',* how often do you use social media?

Rarely		moderatel y		frequently		Neve r	

12. Identify ONLY two (2) of the most important characteristics of social media?

I am able to create my own content	
I am able to connect with multiple people	
I am able to connect in real time	
I am able to share information	

13. Rate your familiarity and comfortability with social media use?

Poor	Average	Above average	Exceptional	None

14. Would you communicate and engage via social media with your constituents?

Yes	No	Undecided

15. Do you have an official social media (e. g. Facebook, Twitter etc.) account in your capacity as MP?

Yes	
No	

16. If you answered 'No' to Question 15, give a reason why?

No smart phone	
No network/data	
Inability to navigate social media platform	
Other, please specify _____	

17. If you answered “Yes” to Question 15, please identify the social media sites you are on.

WhatsApp	
Facebook	
Twitter	
Linked In	
Snap Chat	
Instagram	
Other, please specify _____	

18. For what reasons do you mainly visit your social media account/s?

Connect with friends and family	
Connect with the general public/electorate	

Seek opportunities towards personal goals	
Stay up to date with latest news and current affairs	
Other, please specify. _____	

19. If you marked to "*Connect with the general public/electorate*" in Question 18 above, select the level of difficulty to engage with the public in your work as MP.

Easy		Moderate		Difficult	

20. If you marked '*Difficult'*, in Question 19 above, select a reason why. .

The public is disinterested	
The public makes inappropriate comments / ask inappropriate questions	

The public make offensive comments	
Other, please specify	

21. To your knowledge, are there MPs that promote their legislative work on social media?

Yes		No		Undecided	

22. If you answered 'Yes' to Question 21 above, how often do the MPs promote their work on social media?

All the time	
Most of the time	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

23. Have you been provided with devices/data by Parliament to enable access to social media?

Yes		No		Undecided	

24. Who would you prefer to spearhead social media use at Parliament?

Parliament through the Secretariat		Individual MPs	

25. Is there support and encouragement from Parliament or your political party to engage and communicate with the public on social media?

Parliament	**Yes**		**No**		**Undecided**	
Political Party	**Yes**		**No**		**Undecided**	

Social Media for Public Engagement

Please cross [X] the boxes that best represent your response where applicable.

26. In your opinion, is social media an effective tool for engagement between MPs and the public?

YES		NO		UNDECIDED	

27. How important is social media as a tool for engagement between MPs and the public?

Very Important	
Important	
Moderate	
Not important	
Undecided	

28. Which social media platform is better suited for MPs to engage and communicate with the public? You can select more than one.

Facebook	
Twitter	
WhatsApp	
Instagram	
Undecided	
Other/s, please specify	

29. Select a reason below that informed your answer to Question 27 above?

Reaches more people	
Reliable	
Trustworthy and Safe	
Easy to use	

Other, please specify

30. Which communication mode is better suited for wide communication and engagement between MPs and the public?

Social Media	
Town Hall Meetings	
Intermediary media such as SMS and E-mail	
Traditional Media such as TV, News Papers and Radio	

31. Select the statement/s that you **agree or disagree** with. You may select more than 1 answer.

STATEMENT	**Agree**	**Disagree**
Social media is still a new phenomenon in Namibia, especially for use by MPs		
The use of social media for political communication can help improve governance.		
The use of social media for political communication can help improve trust in parliament.		

I have peers in Parliament who use Social media for active political communication and engagement.		
My peers in Parliament who use social media for political communication and engagement have only positive things to say about social media.		

32. Mark with [X] which media characteristic applies most for which type of media.

Characteristic	**Social Media**	**Traditional Media**
Predictable		
Structure and Format		
Informative		

33. Is there a need for MPs to engage the public via social media and will engagement enhance public engagement in law making?

Yes		No		Undecided	

Social Media Perceptions

Please cross [X] the boxes that best represent your response where applicable.

34. Select the negative perception/s that applies to you most relating to the use of social media as a formal means of communication by MPs.

Encourage unwarranted public views	
Has the capacity to undermine serious parliamentary deliberation	
Creates politicians outside formal political structures	
Removes the collective message of parliament	
Other, please specify	

35. Do you regard social media more superior than traditional media in reaching the youth, the marginalised and the disengaged?

Yes		No		Undecided	

36. Do you regard social media superior to traditional media in reaching ordinary Namibians?

Yes		No		Undecided	

37. Rate the information you have received from your peers about social media use for public engagement.

Negative		Neither positive nor negative		Positive		Undecided		Non-existent	

38. How do you rate yourself in terms of social media use at Parliament? (Select ONLY one)

I know a lot about social media and was amongst the first amongst my peers to use it.	
I may not have been the first amongst my peers to use social media but I started soon after.	
I started using social media when it became very common amongst my peers.	
I consider myself amongst the last group of people who started using social media.	
I am yet to adopt social media use.	

39. Is social media use to engage with the public and enhance public participation in law making in line with your personal values, customs and norms?

Yes		No		Undecided	

40. Is social media use to engage with the public and enhance public participation in law making in line with your communication and public engagement or strategy needs?

Yes		No		Undecided	

41. Is social media use to engage with the public and enhance public participation in law making in line with the values, customs and norms of your political party?

Yes		No		Undecided	

42. Is social media use to engage with the public and enhance public participation in law making in line with the communication needs or strategy of your political party?

Yes		No		Undecided	

43. How difficult do you experience or perceive social media engagement to be?

No difficulty	With minimal difficulties	With difficulty	With a lot of difficulty

44. If you have not used social media to engage with the public, would you be willing to on a trial or limited basis?

Yes		No		Undecided	

45. Would you be more inclined to use social media to engage with the public and enhance public participation in law making if there was a guiding framework or policy in place?

Yes		No		Makes no difference	

46. Based on your personal observations, is the impact of social media use to engage with the public and enhance public participation in law making visible?

Yes		No		Undecided	

47. If your answer was ‘Yes’ to Question 45 above, please explain how?

……

……

……

…….

48. With 1 being the strongest and 4 the weakest, rate the strength of social media use by MPs to engage with the public and enhance public participation in law making.

1 – very weak	2 - weak	3 - moderate	4 - strong	5 – very strong

49. In which parliamentary function would social media use to engage with the public and enhance public participation in law-making be most useful and effective? You may select more than once.

Legislative Review	
Oversight	
Law making	
Outreach and civic education	
Other, please specify.	

50. Rate the type and level of engagement and interaction you would prefer with the public via social media. Mark wherever applicable. You may select more than once.

Type of Engagement and Interaction	**Level of Engagement and interaction**		
	Advanced Interaction and engagement	Limited Interaction and engagement	No Interaction or engagement
To strengthen participatory democracy			
Electioneering / Campaigning			
Gain input on Bills etc. from public			

Information Sharing on general work of Parliament			
Information Sharing on particular activities of Parliament			
Information Sharing on work of your Committee			
Gather citizens' opinions and views			

51. Please identify on what level you most prefer to have social media engagement with the public.

Through Parliament as an institution	
Through political party groupings	
Individual representative basis	
None	

52. Is there support and encouragement from Parliament or your Political Party to engage and communicate with the public on social media?

Body	**Yes**	**No**
Political Party		
Parliament		

Select the response which reflects your opinion on the statements in nos. 52 and 54.

53. The degree and nature of the independence of Parliament from the government has impacted the means and extent to which Parliament and MPs provide citizens with information

Agree		Disagree		Undecided	

54. The degree and nature of the independence of MPs from their political parties has impacted the means and extent to which MPs provide citizens with information.

Agree		Disagree		Undecided	

55. Select ONLY two (2) from the list below which you consider the most benefits from social media use at Parliament level.

Citizen engagement and interactive communication	
Promote transparency and accountability	
Co-production of public services with public	
Exploit citizen's knowledge and expertise to gain solutions to challenges	
Information sharing on activities at Parliament	
Change parliament interaction with the public and social interaction patterns. Gather input on law and policy from public	

Other, please specify:

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the statements in questions 55 –57. Mark your choice with an X.

56. In a modern democracy, social media can be used by governments to involve citizens in decision-making.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

57. Social media can be used to broaden political participation by helping citizens communicate with their representatives and with each other.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

58. Social media in its current form is compatible to create communication between me and lawmakers.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Barriers and Enablers to Social Media Use

Please cross [X] the boxes that best represent your response where applicable.

59. Please identify the technical barriers that exist with regards to social media use by MPs? Mark all appropriate boxes.

Lack of smart devices	
Data	
Low bandwidth	
Network coverage	

Network coverage in area of operation	
Wifi availability	
Secure wireless networks	
Other, please specify	

60. What conditions would encourage you to either start or continue using social media to communicate with the public in your role as MP?

Assistance from Secretariat	
Social media training and skills development	
Framework or Policy to guide use	
Availability of Information to share	

Political party authorisation	
No reprisal from political/ government leaders	
Other, please specify	

61. Comments or recommendations

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your participation

APPENDIX G: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MEMBERS OF PUBLIC

Questionnaire for the Members of the Public

My name is Pamela Mate, a Masters of Arts in Media Studies student at the Department of Information and Communication Studies, University of Namibia. I am conducting a study titled: *"The Use of Social Media to Enhance Public Engagement with Namibian Parliamentarians."* This research project is undertaken in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts, and the information garnered through your assistance will be solely used for academic purposes. You have been selected to voluntary participate in this study, and you are therefore, requested to fill in this questionnaire. You are not requested to provide your personal details for confidentiality reasons. You are requested to sign a consent form, as proof that you understand the purpose of this study and voluntarily agree to take part.

Please cross [X] the options that best represent your response where applicable.

Section A

Demographic Information

1. **Gender**

Male	
Female	

2. **Age**

15 - 35	
36 and above	

3. **Education Level**

Primary	
Secondary	
Diploma/Certificate	
Undergraduate	
Postgraduate	
No formal education	

4. **Occupation**

Unemployed	
Self-employed	
Civil Servant	
Student/learner	

Private Sector	

5. **Primary Residency**

Urban	
Semi-Urban	
Rural	
Other, please specify:	

Section B

Social Media Usage

6. Do you have a social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp etc.) account?

Yes	
No	

If you answered 'Yes' to Question 6 above, skip to Question 8

7. If your answer to Question 6 above is 'No', provide a reason.

No smart phone	

No network/data	
Inability to navigate social media platform	
Other, please specify	

8. Please identify the social media sites you are on.

WhatsApp	
Facebook	
Twitter	
Instagram	
Other, please specify:	

9. How often are you on social media?

Several times a day	
Once a day	
Several times a week	

Several times a month	
Can’t remember the last time I was on social media	

10. For what reasons do you mainly visit your social media account/s? (Multiple answers possible).

Connect with friends and family	
Stay up to date with news and current affairs	
Opportunities towards personal goals	
Stay up to date with latest celebrity events	
Other, please specify:	

11. Do you follow the official Parliament social media accounts?

Yes	
No	

If you answered 'NO' to Question 12 above, skip to Question 14

12. If you selected 'YES' to Question 12 above, how satisfied are you with the feedback and information shared by Parliament on these social media account/s?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

14. Do you follow any MPs on social media?

Yes	
No	

If you answered 'NO' to Question 14 above, skip to Question 16

15. If you selected 'Yes' to Question 14 above, how satisfied are you with the feedback and information shared by MPs on these social media account/s?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Using the following responses, please circle the number next to the statement that best describes your opinion.

5	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

16.	MPs promote their legislative work on social media often.	5	4	3	2	1
17.	Social media as a communication tool is an important tool for MPs to engage with the public.	5	4	3	2	1
18.	The introduction of social media and e-government has improved communication between government and the public.	5	4	3	2	1
19.	Public engagement is an important component in the democratic process.	5	4	3	2	1
20.	The use of social media by MPs to promote their work would encourage you to engage with them on social media?	5	4	3	2	1

If you selected 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree' in Question 20, skip to Question 22

21. At what level would you be interested to engage and interact?

Low Interaction	Average Interaction	High Interaction	Unsure

If you DID NOT select 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree' in Question 20, skip to Question 23

22. Please select a reason for your answer in Question 20.

No time	No interest	Limited information on Parliament	Other, please specify:

23. On what issues would you be interested to interact and communicate with MPs and Parliament? (Multiple answers possible)

Legal matters / Human rights issues	
Whistleblowing / Corruption issues	
Socio-economic Affairs - Issues on education, health, employment i.e.	
Targeted issues that concern your livelihood	
General issues on lawmaking and democracy	
Other, please specify	

24. How often should the public be informed of the events/activities of parliament?

Everyday	
Several times a week	
Several times a month	
Several times a year	
Never	

25. In a modern democracy, social media can be used by governments to involve citizens in decision-making.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

26. Social media can be used to broaden political participation by helping citizens to communicate with their representatives and with each other.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

27. Social media in its current form is able to create communication between me and lawmakers.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

28. Select ONE advantage of using social media to engage with MPs.

Social media gives ability for authentic voice to be heard, without influences from traditional media (i. e TV / Radio)	
Social media can be used to influence developments and politics	
Social media gives an opportunity for the views of the public to be heard.	
Social media enables one to create own content for a particular cause	
Other, please specify;	

29. Would you be more interested in the content posted by Parliament staff on activities of law making, or content posted by the MPs themselves for the same purpose?

Content posted by parliament staff	
Content posted by MP	

30. Select the most effective means for MPs to communicate and promote the work of parliament through social media. (Select only ONE).

Social Media	
Public Notices in Print Media	
TV press briefings and coverage	
Town Hall meetings	

Radio Announcements	
Other, please specify _____	

If you did NOT select 'Social Media' in Question 30, skip to Question 32

31. Please specify the ONE social media MPs can use to communicate and promote the work of parliament.

WhatsApp	
Facebook	
Twitter	
Linked In	
Snap Chat	
Instagram	
Other, please specify _____	

32. It is the responsibility of Parliament and MPs to seek different avenues to communicate with the public.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

33. It is the responsibility of the public to seek different avenues to communicate with the MPs.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

34. Are you an active member of a political party, youth or community group?

YES		NO		UNDECIDED	

If you selected 'No' in Question 34, skip to Question 36

35. If you selected 'Yes' to Question 34 above, have you previously engaged with MPs or with parliament as a member of your political party, youth or community group through social media?

YES		NO		UNDECIDED	

If you selected 'No' in Question 35, skip to Question 37

36. If you selected 'Yes' to Questions 34 and 35 above, on what platforms did you participate or engage with MPs or parliament through your political party, youth or community? (Multiple answers possible).

Social Media	
Internet and other online services	
Town Hall meetings	
Face to Face	
Other, please specify:	

37. Select ONE communication medium you prefer to gain information and engagement with MPs?

Face to Face	
Social media	
Television and Radio	
Emails and SMS	
Other, please specify:	

Section C

Barriers / Enablers to Social Media Engagement

38. What challenges negatively impact communication and public engagement between MPs and the public on social media? (Multiple answers possible).

Lack of awareness of social media pages	

Lack of initiatives from parliament and MPs	
Ability to access and contribute to these social media	
Lack of interest to participate	
Lack of data and network coverage	
General lack of trust in government and parliament	
Lack of interest in government online activities	
Low familiarity of social media usage due to literacy and skills	
Hostile political environment	
Other, please specify:	

39. Identify the factors that would encourage you to interact and engage with MPs on social media. (Multiple answers possible).

Affordable data	
Issues of network coverage and bandwidth	
Enhanced ICT skills to navigate Social Media	
Language efficiency	
Other, please specify:	

40. Please give some comments or recommendations on how social media can be used to enhance public participation in the law making process.

_____

_____

Thank you for your participation

APPENDIX H: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

EDITING CERTIFICATE

I, Ms Nkazana Sarah Mwanandimai, confirm that I have edited
the language and references of a
Master's thesis
by

Pamela Mate

titled

The use of social media to enhance community engagement with Namibian parliamentarians

NB: The author has the prerogative to accept, delete, or change amendments made by the editor before submission. The editor will not be responsible for any errors made after submitting the document.

Signed: 

Date: 30 October 2020

Ms Nkazana Sarah Mwanandimai, email: nkazana.mwana@gmail.com; Cell: +264 81 325 0360
Member: Professional Editors' Guild (SA)