AN EVALUATION OF THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN A PUBLIC INSTITUTION

BY

SURESHINEE GOVENDER

A Thesis Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Technology: Public Relations Management.**

Faculty of Informatics and Design
Cape Peninsula University of Technology
2020

Supervisor: Dr Trust Matsilele

Co-supervisor: Dr Joseph Olusegun Adebayo

Declaration

I, **Sureshinee Govender**, with this declare that the work contained in this thesis represent my own, original, unaided work, and the thesis has not been previously published or submitted at this or any other higher education institution for academic examination towards any qualification. The content represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the **Cape Peninsula University of Technology**.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made. Any literature date or work is done by others and cited within this thesis has been acknowledged and listed in the reference section.

S Govender
Signed

9th December 2020
Date

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank:

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my son, Sahir Singh. I can only attempt to be an example for you, which demonstrates why it is essential that once one starts something, one sees it through to completion, regardless of the hurdles one has to jump over. In life, it is inevitable there will always be curveballs thrown your way. It is how you respond that matters most, so catch the ball and run to the finish line with everything you have.

Your support and encouragement during this time will be returned to you tenfold when it is your turn.

Abstract

This study investigates the use of social media for public engagement purposes by South Africa's parliament. While the use of social media by corporations and individuals for business and activism purposes has received an extensive scholarship, there remains a gap when it comes to an understanding of its uses by arms of the state in promoting public engagement. Therefore, this study becomes one of the seminal works on how South Africa's state components are appropriating social media for public engagement purposes. This qualitative study used a Twitter sample of six months between November 2018 and April 2019 to understand this developing trend. Critically, this qualitative study sought to understand three things: the uses, effect, and nature of public engagement mediated via South Africa's parliament Twitter handle. The researcher sought to test the effect, if at all, of integrating social media by the parliament in its public engagement exercise. The preferred design for this study was netnography as it allowed the researcher to harvest social media data with no ethical dilemmas. Social media handles of public officials and governments are considered public property; hence the researcher was within the acceptable norms by harvesting data for this study. Public relations' stakeholder models were employed as preferred theoretical lenses. The study found that there existed some inconsistency with regards to messaging when it comes to the use of social media. This inconsistency was further bolstered by the fact that the parliament, though using interactive technology, still operated in a top-down monologue approach as there was no engagement in the real sense. The parliament Twitter handle acts in the same way traditional television or newspaper operated by passing information without necessarily engaging with the audience.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Glossary

Terms/Acronyms/Abbreviations	Definition/Explanations
4IR	The Fourth Industrial Revolution
API's	Application programming interfaces
Chairperson	Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces
CTA	Call to Action
CTR	Click-through rate
ESKOM	South African electricity public utility
Ethnography	It is a branch of anthropology and the systematic study of individual cultures
Hashtag	Symbol (#) before a relevant keyword or phrase in the tweet to categorise those Tweets and help show more easily in Twitter searches
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
Netnography	Online research conducted through observation and content analysis
Parliament	Parliament of the Republic of South Africa
SMA's	Social Media Analytics
Speaker	Speaker of the National Assembly
TOS	Terms of Service
Twitter	A service for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent messages. People post tweets, which may contain photographs, videos, links and up to 280 characters of text
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
URL Shortner	A discontinued URL shortening service offered by Google.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. BACKGROUND

This thesis is twofold. Firstly, it investigates how the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa uses social media as a communicative tool with its citizenry, and secondly, to establish effectiveness, Twitter specifically, as a communication tool between Parliament and its citizens. Parliament of the Republic of South Africa writes new laws, amends laws that need to be changed, and discards old rules no longer relevant. Chapter four in the Constitution of South Africa (1996: 31,37) mandates the legislature to facilitate public involvement in the legislative and other processes of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces to ensure active citizen engagement and legislative and policy-making processes.

Therefore, the legislature must provide access or opportunities for citizens to participate in South Africa's democracy. Former president Thabo Mbeki in his 2003-State of the Nation Address, spoke of "two South African societies," indicating the pervasiveness of the deeply divided state between those who have access to the country's resources and those who remain poor and marginalised. The triple challenges of poverty, inequality, and unemployment exacerbate this situation. Thus, Parliament must ensure access to state resources to be able to communicate, participate, and engage in decision-making processes.

This reality of "two South African societies" influenced the degree to which citizens took advantage of the opportunities for participation, as reflected in a study by De Villiers (2001). A large percentage of South Africans are unable to participate in democratic processes due to multiple reasons such as low education levels, geographic isolation, and constraints of time and money.

Against this scenario, technology, to some extent, can bridge the gap and allow citizens to engage and interact with Parliament (Gigler and Bailur, 2014). Technology has advanced from the read-only web, Web 1.0, where the internet's use was solely to search websites to access information, to the use of Web 2.0 social media, which allows for users to be able to read - write so they can interact and contribute content (Getting, 2007). Social media's utility derives from its interactive and dialogical potential, allowing citizens to contribute towards policy formulation, democratic discourse, and governance.

Due to the large geographical area of the country, not all citizens can access Parliament physically. Unlike traditional media, social media such as Twitter attempts to reach a wider

audience and can provide such access. Social media allows for geo-targeted messaging to specific audiences in specific locations (Adam, 2019). The Parliament has become more active in cyberspace. It uses social media to bridge the gap by attempting to communicate and engage using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Social media has the potential to offset existing inequalities in representation among groups and act as a "weapon of the weak" (Van Der Graaf et al., 2015). Social media also has the potential to deepen engagement amongst South Africans, thereby strengthening democracy.

Concerning the use of social media within South Africa's information and communication technology (ICT) landscape, social media adoption figures are on an upward trajectory. Some 87% of South African households have a mobile phone, while mobile data traffic increased by 67.3% between 2016 and 2017 (Independent Communications Authority of South Africa, 2018). Twitter was used by 8 million South Africans in 2017, up from 7.7 million in 2016. The difference between Facebook and Twitter from Goldstuck (2017), is that Twitter is South Africans' social platform of choice for engaging in public discourse. It is precisely half the size of Facebook, but its users get access to vastly more personalities, news sources, and opinions – and can become opinion-makers themselves" (Goldstuck, 2017).

One of the compelling factors about the use of Twitter is that it is short. Originally it was 140 characters; however, in 2017, it doubled to 280 characters (Matsilele, 2019). It is, therefore, simpler and faster to communicate and is much more responsive. Twitter uses hashtags, written with a # symbol. The hashtag indexes keywords or topics. This function allows people to follow issues they have an interest in easily. Hashtags help to spread messages widely and unlike Facebook, where the messages reach only friends. Twitter also gets to more people faster (Todd, 2015; Mutsvairo, 2016).

IPSOS undertook a survey commissioned by Parliament to assess its communication efforts in (2015). They found little awareness of Parliament among 38 000 participants. 90% of those polled said they received no information about Parliament. Almost 18% of those surveyed said they would like to receive information via mobile (Ipsos, 2015). On the website Internet Users Statistics for Africa, South Africa has over 58 million people, with 31 million people having access to the internet. It is almost 54% of the population as of 31st March 2019, which Parliament could have access to via social media.

Observation by the researcher in July 2019 showed that Parliament's official Twitter profile, @ParliamentofRSA, had 548 000 followers. Social media derives its effectiveness from its interactive and dialogical potential, allowing citizens to contribute towards policy formulation

and participate in democratic discourse and governance. Therefore, Parliament can use this utility to its benefit.

This research analysed digital access to Parliament as the potential is enormous if one considers how mobile technology in South Africa has increased. Social media is a valuable way to re-engage public interest in democratic institutions and to strengthen representation. In particular, social media has been presented as a highly effective way for citizens to influence political decisions compared with traditional consultation methods (Duffy and Foley 2011).

1.2.   STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

With the proliferation and improved access to social media tools in sub-Saharan Africa, there is a need to investigate how governments or Parliaments use social media as a communicative tool with their citizenry. Social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs have considerably impacted the communication process. Blankenheim (2009) avers that the growth in social media tools has led to cutbacks and sometimes outright liquidation by traditional media outlets.

This scenario has impacted the process of parliamentary communication, as social media presents extraordinary opportunities for two-way symmetrical communication between the Parliament and the population and possesses challenges that hitherto did not exist. Social media offer a myriad of options for local governments. The open, dialogical nature of social media removes many communication barriers that these governments have experienced in the past (Bertot and Jaeger, 2010). One of the core problems revolve around exactly that dynamic, i.e., what can Parliament do to adapt to this change, and how can the public utilize this new medium to connect with Parliament?

This question becomes pertinent because studies on social media have focused on widely seminal publicised cases such as the *"Arab Spring Uprising"* (Wolfsfeld et al., 2013). Furthermore, Shehabat (2013) investigated whether the *"Arab Spring"* would have happened had there been no social media networks. He noticed the transformation in the utilisation of social media networks from activists to promote freedom, dignity, and social justice to become a space of political separatism where the challenges for power and authority were played out. The role of social media in the evolution of the *"Arab Spring Revolutions"* in 2010 and 2011 was further magnified by Castells (2012), Khamis et al. (2011), Campbell (2011), Howard, and Muzammil (2013).

South Africa is one of the most developed economy economies in Africa, with advanced infrastructure ranking at 12 out of 47 countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa region. For this reason, South Africa is therefore of interest, considering its paradoxes around unemployment, inequality, and poverty (2020 Index of Economic Freedom). Therefore, this study seeks to understand how Parliament is using social media as a critical part of its communication strategy and how, in turn, citizens are interacting and engaging with Parliament through this platform.

Also, Parliament is required to engage with stakeholders in South Africa to collect inputs and submissions on any draft bill as part of its legislative and law-making processes. Apart from organised formations, it must be able to contact, engage with, and increase participation by individuals. De Villiers (2001). It poses a problem as the institution must extend itself to communities all over the country. Due to the scattered nature of where some of these communities are located, it may not always be physically possible to have "face to face" engagement. Thus, social media can enhance public participation amongst these communities through various platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc. Parliament should make more regular use of such social media to disseminate information.

The researcher has noted the interactive potential of social media and its potential to strengthen democracy by enhancing dialogue between the citizens and Parliament. It was seen in the successful navigation of the social media landscape by former President of the United States, Barack Obama, during his 2008 election campaign. Social media communications served as a critical element in his communications strategy. The same social media tools were at the centerpiece of his successor, Donald Trump. He employed his Twitter to offer counter-narratives to those proffered by the influential mainstream media outlets. Further, many public administrations make use of Facebook, Twitter, and similar platforms. One such example is the European Union, which aims to create a feeling of European identity among its citizens through social media Kaplan (, 2015).

Kaplan and Heinlein (2010) found that an establishment had nothing to lose but its shackles and that organisations can engage in quick and uninterrupted contact with stakeholders at a minimal cost. Duffy and Foley (2011) argue that social media provide a potentially valuable avenue for community engagement in the parliamentary process. However, what is not known (has not been studied) is whether South Africa's Parliament's current use of social media enhances democratic debate or replicates one-way monologist communication that defines traditional media.

1.3. PURPOSE OF STUDY

The study's purpose was to assess how the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa uses social media for public engagement purposes. The research's focus was to understand whether Twitter specifically enhances two-way dialogic communication between Parliament and the citizens.

1.4. OBJECTIVES

a)   To understand how Parliament is using social media as a tool for public engagement
b)   To examine social media dialogical interaction between Parliament and the citizens
c)   To assess the possibilities and limitations of using social media, Twitter specifically, as a public engagement tool.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

It is a non-statistical hypothesis. It seeks to analyse content on Parliament's Twitter account and whether Twitter is an excellent platform to be used as a communication tool to a broad audience. To better understand this, I worked with the underlying assumption that parliamentary tweets are promotional or informational and not geared towards enhancing public participation. However, this study will validate whether public participation is taking place and if so, the extent of it.

To this end, this research will focus on the following key research questions:

a)   Does Parliament use social media/Twitter as a tool of engagement? If so, to what extent?
b)   What is tweeted, and what are the likely responses to it? Is there a retweet? If yes, what is the nature of the content, and what is the subsequent effect of the tweet? Are the recipient/s snowballing the tweet?
c)   What are the possibilities of using social media? What are the limitations of using social media, and how does it affect the work of Parliament?

Questions	Objectives	Method
Does Parliament use social media/Twitter as a tool of engagement? If so, to what extent?	To understand how parliament is using social media/Twitter as a tool for public engagement	Netnography- Observation and content analysis of tweets
• What is being tweeted and, what are the likely responses to these tweets? • Is there a retweet? If yes, what is the nature of the content, and what is the subsequent effect of the tweet? • Are the recipient/s snowballing the tweet?	To examine social media dialogical interaction between parliament and the citizens.	Netnography- Observation and content analysis of tweets
What are the possibilities of using social media? What are the limitations of using social media, and how does it affect the work of Parliament?	To assess the possibilities and limitations of using social media as a public engagement tool.	Netnography- Observation and content analysis of tweets

Table 1: Objective and Methodology Used to Respond through online research by Observation and Analysis

The table depicts the relationship between the research questions, the study's objectives, and the research methodology used. It reflects questions that helped me obtain insight into each of the research goals and adequately respond to the primary purpose of the study, demonstrating clear links between the research objectives and instruments used for data collection**.**

1.6   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant because the results can be shared with the legislative sector comprising nine provincial legislatures in South Africa and Parliament. Also, these findings may have significance for Government and Parliament in future planning and be used as

research to develop a best practice model to communicate and engage with the citizens using Twitter effectively.

1.7   LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The study's primary goal was to assess how the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa uses social media for public engagement purposes. However, caution must be exercised when making generalisations based on this research's findings, as limitations apply.

The researcher noted the following limitations of the research:

a)   The study is limited to the use of Twitter by Parliament as a communication tool and does not include any other social media platforms or traditional communication tools

b)   The study covers six months from 1st November 2018 to 30th April 2019, the last six months of the 5th Democratic Parliament.

c)   Parliament utilises South Africa's 11 official languages to communicate with the citizenry via printed publications and at public hearings, however its online communication (website), and social media communication on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, is done in English. This could be viewed as a limiting factor as not all South Africans read and speak English. This is a potential area in which further research can be conducted.

1.8   THESIS CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis consists of five main chapters.
A social media presence is a trademark of a vibrant and transparent communications
strategy, and, to that end, social media offers a particular utility to local government public relations. Social media tools can improve the interactivity between a government and the public, and they reach populations that do not consume traditional media as frequently as others (Bertot et al., 2010).

Chapter 1 contextualised the research study and presented the background for the study, explains the research problem, purpose of study, objectives, research questions (illustrated in a tabular form to highlight the relationship between the goals, questions, and method), the significance of the study and limitations the research.

Chapter 2 analyses existing literature on social media use in government communication and its potential to increase and enhance public interaction and engagement. It further discusses

Grunig's two-way symmetrical model, which uses two-way communication to negotiate with the public, resolve conflict, and promote mutual understanding between an organisation and its stakeholders. Further, his Excellence Theory underpinning a two-way symmetrical model of collaboration and public participation is focussed on ensuring that an organisation's decisions are mutually beneficial between itself and its audiences.

This chapter shows how they serve as a conceptual framework for this research.

Chapter 3 identifies the research design, justifies the choice of a qualitative methodology, describes in detail the strategies that were employed in the process of data collection and analysis, including sampling procedures, data collection methods, data processing, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the significant findings of the research conducted. It also evaluates the implications of the use of Twitter, what was communicated, how it was received, and the reaction or response to the tweets by the citizens engaging with Parliament.

Chapter 5 draws conclusions based on the findings and recaptures critical issues that have emerged from this study. It also provides suggestions and recommendations to improve Twitter's use as a communicating tool by Parliament with its citizens.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter studies the linkage and significance of the usage of social media for public engagement purposes. There have been studies on social media (Khan, 2017, Mickoleit, 2014; Kaplan, 2015, Hofmann et al. 2013, Darwish, 2017). However, most of these studies are in North Africa, Western Europe, and North America.

Mutsvairo (2016) illustrates that social networks like Twitter and Facebook have become essential spaces for discord communication, the mobilisation of activists, and conduits to influence mainstream media agendas. This is more evident in countries such as Zimbabwe, where traditional media outlets' ability to serve as platforms of critique are reduced through political repression; social networks are crucial (Mutsvairo and Muneri, 2019; Matsilele and Ruhanya, 2020). An example of traditional media not being able to keep up with social media is the student protests in 2015 in South Africa, detailed by Bosch (2017) and Bosch and Mutsvairo (2017). Social media also can disrupt dominant hetero-normative narratives, which in many African societies are state-sponsored and culturally sanctioned (Mpofu and Matsilele, 2020; Bosch, Wasserman and Chuma, 2018). The #FMF hashtag demonstrated the hashtag's power in constituting and linking a particular public, where publics are being formed, re-formed and coordinated via dynamic networks of communication and social connectivity organised primarily around issues events rather than pre-existing social groups.

Mutsvairo and Karam (2018) recognise that people are taking it upon themselves to empower each other politically with the arrival of online technologies. Politicians are capitalizing on social media use to the fullest extent, such as Tanzanian President John Magufuli. His hashtag #WhatWouldMagufuliDo that trended worldwide on Twitter and Facebook highlighted Africa's importance in global politics and showed social media's power as citizens. People outside of Tanzania reacted to his campaign on zero tolerance for corruption. They also did not find convincing evidence to indicate that the internet facilitates more significant participation in the democratic process. Some governments have realised social media's potential to promote active citizen political engagement and have opted to regulate and restrain these digital spaces. Bosch and Mutsvairo (2017) estimated that up to 7.4 million South Africans have access to Twitter, while 8.28 million subscribe to YouTube. Yet, proponents of technology do not talk about the high accessibility costs, limiting political participation in an unequal country such as South Africa. Nearly half of 58 million citizens live in poverty.

Bornman (2015) indicated that in the sub-Saharan Africa region, South Africa is viewed as one of the most information-integrated societies. This is largely because of the extensive ownership of cell phones, amongst other digital gadgets. Whilst Information Communication Technology (ICT) access has been accentuated, research further indicates that the role of demographic, socio-economic and cultural factors such as ethnicity, income, education and gender should also be considered as influencers in the digital divide. The term 'digital divide' was coined in the 1990s to describe the disparities in access to ICT, framing it as a matter of having, or not having access to ICTs (Compaine, 2001).

Mutsvairo and Ragnedda (2019) go on to classify that it is not the pretentious access to the Internet itself (first level of digital divide) that determines digital inequalities, but rather the impetuses, expertise, and purpose of use (second level of digital divide) that influence online inequalities. The discussion is that it is not a matter of having access or not, as they introduce and discuss the third level of the digital divide, which is seen as the social and cultural benefits derived from accessing and using the internet. They go on to emphasize how social and digital inequalities are inevitably intertwined. The third level of digital divide focuses on the social consequences of internet usage, and it moves away the focus from the digital arena, by addressing it as a social issue. As such, South Africa was described in chapter two, as a country with vast inequalities – one that has two South African societies.

Robinson et al (2015) claim digital inequality is as important as other forms of inequality. Their contention is that one cannot understand the social backdrop of the current century without acknowledging and understanding digital inequalities. Mutsvairo and Ragnedda (2019), further highlight the first level and second level digital disparities. The first level disparity of access is linked to digital engagement gaps, cracks between content consumers (public) and producers (as in this study around Parliament), and unequal forms of participation in a high-tech economy. Robinson et al (2015) go on to say that first level digital disparities are still evident in developed countries such as the United States.

Second-level digital inequalities relate to skills, involvement, and effectiveness affect an even larger section of the populace, even those who are considered 'users'. As the internet is weaved into everyday life, various forms of disadvantage themselves, emerge. Even in countries with great numbers of smartphone users, basic access to digital resources, and the skills to use them effectively, still evade many economically disadvantaged or traditionally understated segments of the population. Although the move towards digital communication is occurring rapidly, the manifestation of clear digital inequalities cutting across pre -existing offline sections such as participation or types of engagement, are brought to the fore.

Gillwald, (2017) articulated that the mobile broadband environment which assured improved economic and social welfare and political participation within African nations, is dependent on the cost and affordability of the masses. Those with the rights and skills, will be online for the time they need to be, to harness the potential of the Internet. However, digital inequality between those with access to broadband services and the means to utilize them, and those marginalized from them, increases. Although there has been an improved access that mobile phones offer, the high cost of that access across the continent, often resulting from policy induced constraints on competition and ineffectual regulation of operators, places a greater burden on low income households. Research ICT Africa found that on average, mobile users across 14 countries in Africa, spent on average of between 11 percent and 27 percent of their income on mobile communications as compared to the standard of two percent to three percent of income in developed economies.

Gillwald also found that in South Africa there is insufficient government funding accessible to either compensate for the gaps in the support and access networks, or to construct a distinct independent government network. South Africa's broadband policy acknowledges the extensiveness of private and public networks. The policy proposed that instead of financing a major capital expenditure, the public sector should share demand for broadband in order to facilitate the competitive procurement of high quality networks.

There have been comprehensive studies of social media's enabling capacity in democratic processes (Mare, 2015; Bosch, 2013; Hyde-Clarke and Steenkamp, 2014; Ndlovu, 2013; Ndlovu and Mbenga, 2013; Walton and Leukes, 2013; Chuma, 2006; Duncan, 2014). Social media platforms are utilised by almost every category of people — political parties, civil society and non-governmental organisations, activists, and community-based and faith organisations. Also, social media is now a tool in the hands of 'ordinary people' to engage in forms of activism, to gather political information, to connect and enrol with interest groups, to take part, share in discussions of a political nature and to spread knowledge and also challenge hegemonies (Bosch, 2013; Steenkamp and Hyde-Clarke, 2014; Ndlovu and Mbenga, 2013; Munro, 2015; Matsilele and Ruhanya, 2020).

For example, in his study, Mare (2018) found that social media has also inconsistently created communication hierarchies and participation, thereby entrenching existing power structures. These power structures are further augmented by the fact that there are current inequalities between the connected predominantly urban population and the disconnected who are the rural population. These hierarchies, Mare argues, instead of promoting transparency or the

work of politicians, social media such as Facebook creates a new breed of celebrity status politicians who are more accessible and visible online yet often inaccessible offline.

One advantage that has come as a result of social media is its democratic potential. Digital platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp have equipped users in democratic and autocratic settings to communicate political activities like posting, retweeting, quoting, or replying to tweets about politics (Bosch, Mare, and Ncube, 2019). The digital tools also allow for engagement with politicians and political parties, thereby creating an opportunity to participate in political debate (Cohen and Kahne, 2012; Kamau, 2017; Mare, 2018). Unlike traditional media, digital media platforms enable individuals to bypass traditional gatekeepers, transferring political power to ordinary citizens and giving them a voice and potential influence through their capacity to reach sizeable audiences easily and quickly (Kamau, 2017). A critical benefit of social media is its ability to initiate political conversations.

The secondary benefit of social media, closely tied to democratisation, is political communication and mobilisation. Writing on this, Matsilele and Ruhanya's study (2020) focusing on Zimbabwe looked at how social media is being appropriated for political communication and mobilisation campaigns drawing the attention of people to protest actions against their government. These social media campaigns that are easier to reach, funding, and education occur at a fraction of traditional media costs. As such, the researchers found that Facebook and Twitter were instrumental tools for disseminating information and mobilisation of followers for the #ThisFlag campaign, and the #Tajamuka protest movement in Zimbabwe highlighted the excesses of the state and mechanisms through which citizens fought back.

Thus, these and other studies with echoes on social usage for public engagement will inform one of this study's goals of filling the gap in literature and e-governance and understanding how nations are migrating from analogue to the virtual sphere. The literature review section consists of two sections: the first section will deal with social media, and the second section will deal with public engagement. The researcher will undertake a review of the literature on stakeholder engagement, two-way symmetrical communication, and social media as a communication tool to engage with stakeholders to understand the area of research better.

2.2   WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA

Williams and Gulati (2007) suggest that the term social media appears to derive its origin from a combination of "social network" and "media", with the social network being "a set of people, organisations, or other social entities connected by a set of socially meaningful relationships." The term social media denotes social network sites and other services, both commercial and

non-commercial, that build on the technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Social media are "social" because they enable users to realise various social forms like cognition, communication, and cooperation (Fuchs, 2014). Although this research primarily focuses on Twitter, it generically uses this term with the buzzword social media.

The concept of "network" is important to understand how social media is constituted. This leads Hinton and Hjorth (2013) to state that social networking sites are spaces that enable the interface between people and social media. In a lay sense, the "Internet" itself is synonymous with social networking sites (Matsilele, 2019). What therefore is social media? Boyd and Ellison (2007) have defined social media as electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content. There have been different definitions, but most follow this trend with minor modifications, such as Cann et al. (2011), who defined social media as "internet services where the online content is generated by the users of the service" who are interconnected.

Social media and Web 2.0 define activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and content creation. Social media tools use the "wisdom of the crowds" to collaboratively connect online information. Through social media, people or groups can create, organise, edit, comment on, combine, and share content. Social Media and Web 2.0 use many technologies and forms such as web feeds, blogs, wikis, photo-sharing, video-sharing, podcasts, social networking, social bookmarking, mashups, widgets, virtual worlds, microblogs and more" (Bryer, 2011).

Duffy and Foley, 2011) argue that social media provide a potentially valuable avenue for community engagement in the parliamentary process. The online consultation, in particular, offers an appealing medium for people to express their views without making unreasonable demands on their time. Social Media has the potential to offset existing inequalities in representation among interest groups and act as a "weapon of the weak" by providing a technological infrastructure that allows even groups with limited resources to create content and interact across the globe. Companies use a broad range of different social media platforms even if they lose ground to traditional membership groups when the actual volume of Twitter and Facebook use is assessed. According to Van der Graaf, Otjes, and Rasmussen (2016), social media lend themselves to mass communication and mobilization.

Social media is any form of online publication or presence that allows end-users to engage in multi-directional conversations in or around the content on a website. Other definitions of social media emphasise its interactivity: unlike the passive nature of the "old" media such as

newspapers and television, social media is a two-way street, which allows individuals to move "fluidly and flexibly between the role of audience and author. Social media can take many different forms, including internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, and podcasts, according to Duffy and Foley (2011).

However, more recently, social media includes new applications such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. Social media platforms are no longer merely social platforms: they have become vital business strategy elements (McCarthy and Krishna, 2011:88). It is useful because it can create, organise, edit, comment on, combine, and share content instantaneously.

Williamson (2013) describes social media as platform-agnostic. This means that accessibility is not limited to one device but accessible via several internet tools such as computers, smartphones, and tablet devices. It is also accessible through gaming consoles and new generation smart televisions, making it easier for people to connect and engage with people who would not usually think about engaging their parliament or making submissions on legislation. Williamson further claims that social media is an interactive medium and provides a bidirectional involvement; however, it is still used as a one-directional channel by many parliaments. He says that what the public engages with is interaction, conversation, stories, entertainment, and personal: how you interact with others affects the way they will perceive you, your popularity, and how you are trusted.

While an emerging body of research demonstrates the positive impact of social media on citizens' political engagement, more research is needed to establish whether the new media genuinely deepens or widens political engagement or merely amplifies those already prominent voices in the parliamentary system (Fox, 2009).

2.3 STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

There is no standard description of citizen engagement (Shark, 2015). This is generally distinguished from previous forms of e-government web applications by the higher degree of interactivity and co-production of content by government and citizens (Mergel, 2012; Mossberger, Wu, and Crawford, 2013). According to Shark (2015:85), some of the main features of engagement include "creating meaningful dialogue," "two-way communications," and "meaningful participation."

In creating meaningful dialogue and two-way communications between an organisation and its stakeholders, who are key people, organisations must know and engage their stakeholders to remain relevant (Steyn and Puth, 2000). When an organisation becomes aware of potential

problems in the relationship with an organisation and actively communicate it, they are as knowledgeable or active publics (Grunig and Repper, in Grunig, 1992).

Freeman's stakeholder approach to understanding the organisation's environment has broadened management's view of their roles and responsibilities. As in the King III Report (2009), organisations should consult with their stakeholders and engage with them on issues that affect them. The King III Report (2009) principles imply that the board should take into account the legitimate interests of stakeholders in its decisions. King III does not apply for business only but all entities that are operating in South Africa.

Further, organisations should identify mechanisms and processes which promote enhanced levels of constructive stakeholder engagement. The two-way symmetrical approach should be adopted between an organisation and its stakeholders. It is vital, considering that stakeholders can affect the organisation from achieving its strategy and long term sustained growth. Stakeholder management is mutually beneficial according to Steyn and Puth (2000) However, a survey by Lusoli et al. (2006) confirms that whilst the net has a potential to deepen public engagement with our representatives and parliamentary institutions currently it attracts only a small minority of voters who are generally already politically active and privileged.

Habermas (1962, cited in Loader and Mercea, 2011) was the first to theorise the importance of a centralised public sphere where citizens gather freely to discuss the day's issues rationally. Media is central to this endeavour, as citizens can only debate meaningfully and contribute if they are well-informed. The mass media had a monopoly over this function (Benkler, 2006); however, anyone with a mobile device can participate and contribute to the process. A study by Zungu (2006) found minimal public participation in the KZN Legislature in particular and in government in general.

Today though, public engagement is made easier through the internet, particularly social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, making a network of political activism in which citizens engage in public debate in a virtual public sphere (Steenkamp and Hyde-Clarke, 2014). Bosch and Mutsvairo (2017) found that Twitter played a crucial role in disseminating information to participants and garnering support for protest activities. The increased distribution and popularity of social media networking sites like Twitter have led to their extensive use by citizens as a conduit for the manifestation of civic participation and engagement. Further, citizen journalism on Twitter also played a role in informing citizens about events, subsequently setting mainstream news media agendas (Bosch, 2017), which in a way has seen them characterised as public spheres of sorts.

A sphere comprises of all spaces, physical or virtual, as well as a mix of formal and informal institutions that existed in a bounded Westphalian nation-state (Fraser, 2007). The public sphere is a sphere of public political communication and a sphere free from state censorship and private ownership (Habermas, 1991). This sphere should be free from state censorship and corporate ownership so that there are open debate and public opinion, which is arrived at without coercion and manipulation (Fuchs, 2014). In modern societies, this sphere represents a theatre in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk (Fraser, 1990).

According to Habermas, the political public sphere comprises the institutional communicative spaces, universally accessible, that facilitated the formation of discussion and public opinion via the unfettered flow of relevant information and ideas. In other words, this sphere was characterised by universal accessibility because all citizens could voluntarily participate in discussions based on a rational-critical debate. It also guaranteed free access and freedoms of assembly, association, and expression (Fuchs, 2014).

Few researchers have criticised the Habermasian ideal as it does not consider limitations of access connected with social inequalities of gender, race, and class. The Habermasian model is a sphere that is free from state censorship and private ownership.
Fraser (1990) argues that a single public sphere is not desirable, as it would end up representing only the views of the dominant sections of society and thus lose the diversity and strength of multiple subaltern publics.

2.4   SOCIAL MEDIA IN A GOVERNMENT CONTEXT

Governments have a threefold media strategy: push, pull, and networking (Mergel, 2012). Governments often guide these strategies with social media policies and guidelines for proper use of using social media. However, very few recognise the difference between these strategies, utilise the full capacity and types of social media, and actively measure the impact of their digital interactions Khasawneh et al. (2011).

However, the widespread recognition of social media technology's potential for achieving public outcomes does not match the understanding about the utilisation of specific tools for particular purposes (Lee and Elser, 2010). At the same time, there has been little research to understand how and why these tools are becoming integrated into the public sector, and it is not clear how successful and effective they are (Mergel, 2012). The government's use of social media applications can be called an extension of the current digitisation efforts of government services as a new wave of the e-Government era, Bertot et al. (2010). Unlike offline communication channels, social media offer the opportunity to interact directly with the public.

Still, previous research indicates that governments do not make extensive use of this potential, Hofmann et al. (2013).

Darwish (2017) sets out the multiple uses of social media in government such as informational, promotional, interactional, participatory, and collaborative. Using social media in e-government could enable citizens to access information provided by their governments over social media, thus reducing the effort to search for needed information (Camacho and Kumar, 2012). Social media is an almost real-time communications channel that governments can take advantage of by providing current information, such as news and events, instead of the citizen physically traveling to a government office to get information. By doing such, social media will open the dialogues between the government and its citizens, which started by disseminating information to the public via social media and by listening to citizen's opinions and feedback on such information (Mishaal and Abu-Shanab, 2015; Mergel, 2012; Mossberger, Wu and Crawford 2013).

Social media is a platform for increased transparency by providing information that stakeholders are always looking for, allowing citizens to know what is happening inside these entities. Allison, (2010), further states that social media is a catalyst for increasing publicity and can be a vocal activist instead of a silent philanthropist. Social media enables people to share the content, participate with their ideas and opinions, promote democratisation, and publish their generated content and publicize it (Dareen and Abu- Shanab, 2015).

More importantly, social networks can provide a new platform for communications between citizens and government officials or deliberation and discussion among citizens. By investigating social media ideas, governments can gather diverse viewpoints and different types of expertise from citizens to craft more effective policy solutions (Noveck, 2009). Governments can use social media to obtain surveys to get feedback from citizens before making decisions, then pass this information to different government agencies for actions to be considered and taken. More importantly, it is a collaborative tool to connect with a diverse range of stakeholders, which helps the government engage with stakeholders using the right channel and disseminate information to the public and engage them to participate in a political discussion.

2.5 THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON GOVERNMENT

Governments benefit considerably from the use of these communications and engagement channels. Governments use them to improve the effectiveness of public service delivery (both in general and when they encounter a crisis), generate information and data, and build trust-based relationships that help restore confidence in the local government (Mahajan-Cusack,

2016). At the local government level, studies indicate that citizens who engage online with governments and utilise their website content demonstrate higher rates of civic engagement and interactive participation in community affairs than do citizens who are not accessing government via online channels (Kang and Gearhart, 2010). Studies have also shown that social media use for civic engagement increases trust (Warren et al., 2014). These findings indicate a strong case for the government to create a social media presence that seeks to engage in citizen participation and increase organisational transparency actively.

2.6 CITIZEN'S PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC VALUE

Social media create an opportunity for the government to explore collaborative technology to reach its citizens. This notion implies that the government must make public value through the use of technology. The emphasis is that citizens articulate their preferences and opinions. Government adopts tools to increase its capacity to deliver based on the needs of citizens, and ultimately public value is created (United Nations, 2003). The United Nations report provides feedback from the survey that indicates more governments use ICT for consultation rather than decision-making. There are "kinds of public value" associated with the use of social media by the government. Mafihlo (2015) found that authors such as Yu (2008) and Meynhardt (2009) reinforce the notion that the use of technology in government is to produce public value.

These public values are the government's ability to improve its efficiency by using automated collaborative tools to engage timeously and respond to citizen's demands (Landsbergen, 2010). Further public engagement is the practice of enabling participation and involving citizens in the processes of government. Public engagement is the cornerstone of public value where the belief is that there should be deliberation and on-going dialogue between the government and the public they serve (Coats and Passmore, 2008). The creation of public value is the process of involving the public in decision-making because citizens can engage and understand dilemmas faced by both politicians and public managers.

Social media provides the government with innovative ways to facilitate engagement between government and citizens as it is collaborative and participatory. It provides a platform for citizens to form human networks by connecting and developing communities of interests, sharing information, achieving common goals, and ultimately engaging government (Bertot et al. (2011); Bryer (2010); Landsbergen (2010). The second form of collaboration involves establishing partnerships and alliances with citizens to accomplish jointly defined public goals that entrench policy changes that are informed by citizen's inputs and critical feedback (Stewart, 2009). At the centre of social media, consultation is an information exchange intended to elicit a response rather than simply transfer information. Consultation is about the government dishing out information and its two-way consultation process between itself and

citizens where the government actively listens to citizens' view, suggestions, and insights. Therefore, consultation inevitably leads to participation where citizens contribute to the policy-making processes of government.

Social media provides an opportunity for the government to be transparent, vital to informed decision-making, public engagement, trust in the public service, and the curbing of corruption (Armstrong, 2011; McDermott, 2010). Transparency reinforces accountability and fulfills three objectives, firstly allowing citizens and key role players to see how government functions and how it develops processes for holding its executives, officials, and public institutions accountable for the decisions they make. Secondly, it provides a channel for deliberation between policy-makers and citizens before implementing decisions. Lastly, it encourages accountability and provides the public with a platform to monitor and evaluate government officials' performance and for government to be answerable for its implementation (Coglianese, 2009). More importantly, the government can use social media tools to demonstrate accountability by publishing public policy information such as budget and expenditure information online for public consultation and comment. Social media can be used for general feedback, service evaluation, request for service information, and community outreach and collaboration about issues (Demchak and Friis, 2000; Karunasena and Deng, 2012; Landsbergen, 2010).

One of the three sources of public value for citizens is trust. It is augmented by citizens' perception of a capable, trustworthy government and is citizen-centric (Mayer and Davis and Schoorman, 1995). Relationship trust is further developed by continuous engagement and collaboration between government and citizens that result in the government being open and accountable for services delivered and value created in the process. Social media provides a platform to establish trust.

2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For this study, the researcher employs the models of public relations and the stakeholder theory investigating how it relates to stakeholder engagement. This study's four models are the press agentry/publicity, the general information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical model (Grunig, 1984). Freeman and Reed (1983) distinguish two types of stakeholders. The narrow definition includes those groups who are vital to the organisation's success and survival, and the broad definition consists of any group or individual who can affect or be affected by the organisation.

Stakeholder theory essentially looks at where an organisation places its stakeholders, be it both internal and external stakeholders. Steyn and Puth (2000) found that diverse groups have

varying degrees of power, depending on the organisation's dependency on the stakeholder group, the degree of contact the group has to political processes, and their access to mass media. Due to limited resources, managers pay attention to the most powerful stakeholder groups first. Issues are therefore sorted based on the perceived importance of the stakeholder group that is behind the issue.

The researcher used Grunig's (1984) models to understand stakeholder engagement and to appreciate this study's objectives further. There are four models of public relations, which are:

a)   The Press agentry/publicity model is one-way communication using persuasion and manipulation to influence audiences to respond or act as the organisation desires.

b)   The Public Information model is also one-way communication. The model uses press releases and other one-way communication techniques such as newsletters and advertorials to distribute and disseminate information about the organisation. The public relations practitioner is often seen as a journalist in the organisation.

c)   The One-way asymmetrical model uses persuasion and manipulation to influence audiences to behave as the organisation desires. It does not use research to determine how the public feels about the organisation.

d)   The Two- way symmetrical model is a form of two-way communication that uses communication to negotiate with the public, resolve conflict and promote mutual and respect between an organisation and its publics.

Further, Grunig's Excellence Theory explains that the two-way symmetrical model of collaboration and participation is focussed on ensuring that an organisation's decisions are mutually beneficial between itself and its audiences.   Grunig's symmetrical communication model's outcome embraces negotiation between an organisation and its publics, and promotes mutual understanding. In Grunig's, Furnishing the Edifice, 2006:156), the roots for this model "represented a deviation from the concept of attitudes held by one person and research on how to develop messages to change the mindsets (perspectives) of a person. The symmetrical model proposed that individuals, organisations, and publics should use communication to adjust their ideas and behaviour to others rather than control how others think and behave. This study will look at how this is done using social media (Twitter to reach and engage the audiences).

Grunig's theory contests public relations professionals to implement components of his approach in an industry where most people view public relations professionals' work as entirely securing media coverage as a primary task and goal. Grunig's theory tests public relations practitioners in the practical setting to move deeper into their field to increase the value of public relations as a whole to an organisation. The two-way symmetrical model is possible to

achieve in the field and can ultimately result in stronger relationships between an organisation and its publics, which we strive to build as public relations professionals. These relationships lead to stronger reputation for the organisations we represent in our communities because both the organisation and its audiences are provided with a voice in processes.

The two-way symmetrical model for communication maintains both the organisation's best interests and its audiences' best interests at the forefront in the fairest and balanced way possible and promotes reciprocal discourse. Through this model's use, both the organisation and its audiences can collaborate to both grow and strengthen an overall organisation, leading it to greater success (Grunig, 1992).

In public relations, the use of social media is seen as being transformative as it enables two-way and more symmetrical interaction between organisations and their publics identified as "best practice' in Excellence theory (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2002). Social media facilitates relational and dialogic models of communication (Hon and Grunig, 1999; Kent and Taylor, 2002; Ledingham 2006.) With the shift in social media, the monologue has given dialogue (Solis, 2008). Further, Cornelissen (2011) states that social media create new ways of reaching and engaging with stakeholders. The development of new media provides an organisation with the opportunity to relate its significance, tell its story and provide key messages to its stakeholders or the general public in an interactive way, which he says is a real advance compared with traditional media.

Other research to test administrative responsiveness in citizen involvement in the public domain (Yang and Callahan, 2007) have not identified optimal ways for public agencies to develop the requisite combination of stakeholders to achieve successful outcomes. Therefore, this potentially limits the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement. Thus, stakeholder theory, together with the two-way symmetrical model, will be the theoretical guide for this study.

2.8   CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The researcher set out to understand the meaning of social media to ordinary citizens and the reasons for non-responsive or limited responses to social media posts by parliament. The researcher wanted to determine the prohibiting factors that restrict or prohibit an individual who follows parliament from responding to a Tweet or Facebook post and therefore read many articles on the subject in South Africa and some African countries. The reading of the Models of Public Relations, Excellence Theory, and various scholars on social media, stakeholder management, and public engagement provided me with a better understanding of the social media environment dynamics.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The study was mostly interpretivist and adopted a qualitative research methodology technique. Qualitative research is primarily exploratory research used to understand underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations while quantitative research design is suitable when we want to count and measure variables. This type of research provides insights into the problem or develops ideas or hypotheses for a potential quantitative study (Kumar, 2014).

Qualitative research is also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions and delves deeper into the problem. Qualitative data collection methods vary using unstructured or semi-structured techniques. Standard methods include focus groups (group discussions), individual interviews, and participation or observations. The sample is typically small, and respondents are selected to fulfill a given quota (DeFranzo, 2011). Due to time constraints and the data volume, the researcher used a sample from the sampling frame.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Mouton (2009) defines the research design as the "plan or blueprint" of the research. Du Plooy (2002) notes that "designs are flexible and often responsive to the demands and circumstances of the research problem." This research was conducted using virtual Ethnography and accomplished through the methodology of Netnography. Netnography is online research conducted through observation and content analysis, i.e., in this study, online interaction between state actors and citizenry around tweets by Parliament.

Ethnographers are interested in studying culture and often engage in fieldwork to immerse themselves in the culture they are studying. In the same way that virtual ethnographers explore online communities and culture on the World Wide Web, this research took the same path. This methodology proved to be an efficient means of gathering data without introducing threats to reliability that can occur with other data collection methods.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative design aims to explore areas where limited or no prior information exists and to describe behaviours, themes, trends, attitudes, needs, or relations that apply to the units analysed. The method used to analyse data obtained via a qualitative design usually centres on content analysis, a systematic analysis of written, verbal, and audio-visual materials. As an example, a study can be conducted on who sends the messages, the recipients, the media, the intention, and the actual content of messages. This can then be used to identify and describe interpersonal communication patterns. These observation descriptions can either be used to confirm established theories. If prior information does not exist, they can be used to formulate new theoretical concepts representing the categories and the relationships observed (Kumar, 2014).

Qualitative research is primarily exploratory research used to understand fundamental reasons, opinions, and motivations. This type of research provides insights into the problem or develops ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) indicated that content analysis is a widely used qualitative research technique and not a single method. They demonstrate three precise strategies that are conventional, directed, or summative. The three approaches are used to understand meaning from the content of text data and, therefore, they comply with the "true to life" or naturalistic model. However, the main differences among the approaches are coding schemes, origins of codes, and threats to trustworthiness. A comprehensive content analysis encompasses counting and contrasts of keywords or content, followed by interpreting the underlying context.

Flick (2014) describes qualitative data analysis as the sorting and clarification of language or visual material to make statements about implied and apparent dimensions and constructions of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it. Meaning-making can refer to subjective or social meanings. Qualitative data analysis is also applied to discover and describe issues in structures and processes in routines and practices. Qualitative research is also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions and delves deeper into the problem. Unlike qualitative research, quantitative research is used to quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into usable statistics. It quantifies attitudes, opinions, behaviours, and other variables and generalizes results from a larger sample population. It uses measurable data to formulate facts and uncover patterns in research (Kumar, 2004).

A qualitative research method was appropriate for this descriptive, exploratory study of public relations, social media, and engagement. Therefore, the researcher used qualitative research methods and adopted a content analysis research technique to collect and analyse data of the

institutional feeds. The intention of doing this was to make replicable valid inferences by interpreting coding textual material, in this case, tweets. This study covers four main areas, i.e., firstly the analysis of the use of Twitter by the institution; secondly, the use of Twitter as a communication medium; thirdly, the response to tweets made over six months and finally, Parliament's point of view through a detailed review at the engagement between the institution and their users/stakeholders (undertaken as part of this research). The period selected for this study was from 1st November 2018 to 30th April 2019. This selection was deliberate because, during these six months, the country's focus was on Parliament's performance, as the term of office for the fifth democratic parliament came to an end.

The research considered all institutional tweets made by the institution, specifically concerning the "likes" received, retweets, tags, number of comments, and responses/nonresponses by their stakeholders to these tweets during these six months. The research sought to categorise each of these segments as part of the results. The Speaker and Chairperson of Parliament have their Twitter accounts, and those tweets were not considered. For this study, only the institutional tweets were considered as these covered both the Speaker and Chairperson offices and were the official Twitter account.

3.3.1. Sample

The collection of data from a sample in a cross-sectional design means that the research is conducted in a short period, such as one day or a few weeks. The researcher analysed the content of tweets posted on Parliament's official Twitter account over 26 weeks from 1st November 2018 to 30th April 2019.

The sample consisted of 1183 tweets posted over this period as follows**:**

MONTH	NUMBER OF TWEETS
November 2018	610
December 2018	160
January 2019	108
February 2019	93
March 2019	201
April 2019	11

Table 2: Tweets posted by month

The researcher randomly selected one tweet per week on a Monday.

The above table indicates the number of tweets by Parliament in the month indicated. The disparity can be attributed to the activities of Parliament in a particular month. The tweets are

related to events and media releases emanating from committee meetings and plenary sittings. The researcher cross referenced press releases and events on the website against the information on the twitter analytics report.

In November 2018 the high number of tweets related to the various events Parliament held, such as the National Council of Province's "Taking Parliament to the People" program, a two-day Legacy Summit hosted by the South African Legislative Sector, an NCOP Oversight Program, 16 Days of No Activism of Violence against Women and Children, and President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed the NCOP sitting. There were live information tweets from these events which elevated the number of tweets for the month. Media releases from committee meetings held during the month were also tweeted.

The drastic decline in tweets for December is due to the portfolio and select committee meetings closing for recess in the first week of December. Tweets were on the NCOP and NA plenary sittings. NCOP and NA committee meetings resumed at the end of January, however tweets focussed predominantly on the preparations and build up to the State of the Nation Address. In February 2019 there were 93 tweets which focused mainly on the State of the Nation Address. In March, tweets focussed on media releases from committee meetings and activities of the Speaker of the National Assembly, and Chairperson of the NCOP. Parliament went into recess for the elections from 26th March 2019 to 20th June 2019, contributing to the sharp decline in tweets for the month of April. There were 11 press releases issued in April which were tweeted.

3.3.2 Description of the research site

The official Twitter feed of Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, @ParliamentofRSA, was researched. The profile description reads as follows: "We pass laws, oversee executive action, and facilitate public participation." Almost daily, tweets are posted on the work of Parliament. At the time of my research, there were 548 000 followers. The Twitter account started in December 2011.

3.3.3 Role of the Researcher

The researcher undertook an exploratory study on existing content on the World Wide Web and had the responsibility of being objective and impartial to the contents from both the sender and receiver. The researcher was a complete observer (covert), and the research was conducted via observations that took place in settings that were not controlled by her.

3.4   DATA COLLECTION

The researcher collected data in this study by observing tweets already posted in the public domain, i.e., on the Twitter account of Parliament. The researcher received the Twitter analytics for the period under assessment from the website administrator at Parliament.

3.4.1   Observation

Observation is one way of collecting primary data. It is purposeful, systematic, and a particular form of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it occurs.

The researcher adopted the virtual Ethnography method by observing what is being tweeted in the virtual space. In some instances, this method has been termed differently by various researchers and different disciplines. Robert Kozinets coined one term that has become particularly popular. He combined the words' internet' and 'ethnography' to develop 'Netnography' (Kozinets, 2006). Other terms used to describe Ethnographic research online are digital ethnography, online ethnography, and cyber ethnography.

Kozinet's provides a concise definition of Netnography (or virtual ethnography). He describes it as "ethnography conducted on the Internet; a qualitative, interpretive research methodology that adapts the traditional, in-person ethnographic research techniques of anthropology to the study of online cultures and communities formed through computer-mediated communications" (Kozinets, 2006).

The tweets during the period of 1st November 2018 to 30th April 2019 were analysed and assessed, and the data collected was used to answer the pre-determined research questions. During the six-month timeframe, all tweets were coded for length, impressions (how many times a tweet was seen), engagements (total number of times users interacted with a tweet, i.e., all clicks on hashtags, links, avatar/profile photos, username and expansions, retweets, replies, follows, likes) and interests represented. A detailed analysis of user/stakeholder engagement was undertaken to look at how social media enhances public engagement at these institutions.

3.4.2   Content analysis

Content analysis has four advantages to both traditional and online forms of research methodology. It is unobtrusive and; it accepts unstructured material. It is also context-sensitive and can thus process symbolic forms. It can further cope with large quantities of data. Furthermore, both traditional and web-based content analysis is useful for describing the communication characteristics and making inferences about where the communication came from and its effects (McMillan, 2000).

The method used to analyse data obtained via a qualitative design usually centres on content analysis which is a systematic analysis of written or verbal responses and audio-visual materials. An example of this is when we analyse who sends the messages, the recipients, the media, and the intention and actual content of messages. We can identify and describe interpersonal patterns (Du Plooy, 2002).

3.5   DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher analysed the results of this study to determine the analysis of Twitter by the Parliament firstly. Secondly, the researcher sought to determine the use of Twitter by Parliament as a communication medium. Thirdly, the researcher analysed responses to tweets made over six months. Finally, Parliament's point of view through a detailed review of the institution's engagement and their users/stakeholders (undertaken as part of this research).

The adoption of a specific method for data collection, to a large extent, determines the classification of a study. The distinction is mainly due to the restrictions imposed on the philosophy underpinning the inquiry, freedom and flexibility in the structure and approach of gathering the data, and the depth and freedom given to the researcher to obtain answers to the research questions. Quantitative studies favour these restrictions while qualitative studies advocate against them.

One of the factors which define this study as being qualitative, is the answer to "how was the information analysed?" Was it descriptive, categorical, or numerical analysis? Did the researcher use a combined method of both quantitative and qualitative analysis or just one? Did the researcher write descriptively or analytically?

In this study, the researcher collected the information through an unstructured and flexible format and identified discussion issues during the data collection process. The data was recorded in a descriptive and narrative form and subjected to categorical and descriptive analysis. Lastly, the researcher communicated the findings in a non-analytical style. For these reasons, the research process is regarded as qualitative.

When a research study is to be undertaken, the researcher needs to collect the required information in most cases. However, as in this case study, the information required was already available and only required to be extracted. This method involved the data collected from the primary source and involved observing the participants, who were the senders and receivers.

3.5.1　Interpretation and coding data

The researcher interpreted the data received and undertook three sets of coding. The first set distinguishes the criteria for categorising the tweets/messages from Parliament, which, according to Darwish, can either be informational, promotional, interactional, participatory, and collaborative. (Darwish, 2017). The second set of coding counted the number of words used to convey the message and studied the impression, engagement, and interest represented. The third set of coding looked at the responses to queries by Parliament and then identified whether public participation and engagement took place.

3.5.2　Reliability and Validity

If a research instrument is dependable, consistent, and stable, predictable, accurate, and honest, it is considered reliable. The greater the degree of consistency and stability in an instrument, the greater its reliability. Therefore, according to Moser and Kalton (1989), "a scale or test is reliable to the extent that repeat measurements made by it under constant conditions will give the same result."

Some factors affect the reliability of a research instrument, such as the wording of questions, the physical setting, the respondent's mood, the interviewer's mood, the nature of the interaction, and the instrument's regression (Kumar 2014). However, these factors do not influence the reliability of the study.

Validity is the instrument's ability to measure what it is designed to measure: Validity is the degree to which the researcher has measured what she has intended to measure. Kerlinger (1986) makes an essential point through a pertinent question raised, "The question symbolises the commonest definition of validity: Are we measuring what we think we are measuring?".

Simply put, the researcher needs to be mindful of not changing anything and to remain loyal to the research design, so the validity of the research instrument is not compromised. The researcher must establish validity through logic, which implies justification of each question concerning the study's objectives. On the other hand, the statistical procedures provide concrete evidence by way of calculating the correlations between the questions and outcomes variables. The researcher must establish the logical link between the questions and the objectives; however, the researcher's justification may lack experts' backing and the statistical evidence to convince others; therefore, the link must be tangible (Kumar 2014).

Content validity is examined based on the extent to which statements or questions represent the issue they are supposed to measure, as judged by the researcher, her followers/readership, and experts in the field. Further, although it is simple to present logical

arguments to establish validity, there are some problems. For example, the judgment is based on subjective logic; hence, conclusions cannot be drawn definitively, and different people may have different opinions about the content validity of an instrument. Also, the extent to which questions reflect the objectives of a study may differ. The researcher may not substitute one question for another as the magnitude of the link may be altered. Hence the validity, or its extent, may vary with the questions selected for an instrument.

3.6   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical consideration must be given to informed consent, voluntary participation, and privacy and confidentiality of the participants, as highlighted t below.

3.6.1   Informed consent

As Twitter is a social media platform for sharing information with the public, the users are subject to privacy settings. Users are aware and expect that strangers will observe their comments, and thus they are not vulnerable. The subject matter is not personally sensitive and would not cause harm to any person.

One critical question amplifying concern by many Twitter followers is what is considered as private vs. public data. This question is often easier to determine in an offline environment (Östman and Turtiainen, 2016).

Furthermore, "asking for permission, rights for citing, identities of informants/subjects to research and so on seem to be important ethical matters" (Östman and Turtiainen 2016). Protecting the research subject "depends on how one defines both the harm that might be inflicted on the unprotected person and also a research subject" Jouhki (2016). As such, the researcher should move beyond asking for permission. Sometimes even informed consent does not create an authentic consensual atmosphere to studying the cultural context under which subjects are investigated (Matsilele 2019).

Further, Habermas (1991) informs us that something is public if it is "open to all". The job of a public sphere is that society can become engaged in "critical public debate" (Habermas 1991). Habermas stressed that the public sphere is a sphere of public political communication and a sphere from state censorship and private ownership.

3.6.2   Privacy and confidentiality

The Twitter Terms of Service (TOS) are legal documents that govern how users, developers, and researchers access and use Twitter content on the site and via application programming

interfaces via API's. The TOS are meant to "strike a balance between encouraging interesting development and protecting both Twitter's and user's rights.

At times, questions researchers want to answer with Twitter is impossible to study without violating the TOS. For example, there have been a number of several academic papers studying the geography of tweets. To this end, Twitter requests that researchers do not aggregate, cache, or store Twitter's geographic content. Twitter thus far seems to condone academic breaches to the TOS as there is a general belief that the research contribution benefits society and Twitter (Kelley, P.G et al., 2013).

3.7   RESEARCH CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

One of the things one cannot conclusively recognise is, who is engaging in the virtual space with Parliament. Politicians may employ people to respond in the same way Parliament does, i.e., social media posting and responding is the communications division's competency. People generate tweets for discourse, and therefore, one cannot ascertain the authenticity of the tweets. Furthermore, users may have fake profiles, and consequently, the interaction is not authentic.

Regarding the study, one point to note based on the research conducted, one cannot identify who is tweeting for Parliament, as the profile details are of the institution. Therefore, it could be one individual or some individuals tweeting for Parliament.

3.8   CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter described the method and procedures used to provide insight into Parliament's use of Twitter as a communication medium and a review of the engagement between the Parliament and its users/stakeholders. The research design and method were presented. In addition, the data collection process and data analysis of the information attained was discussed. Finally, some critical details on Twitter were established

Twitter is a social media platform for the public sharing of information, subject to user privacy settings. Users generally expect to have their comments observed by strangers, and they are not children or vulnerable in any observable way. The subject matter on this platform is also not personally sensitive. It would be a mistake to assume from this that no one would mind if others used details of their posts in ways they did not intend.

On digital social media platforms, each type of communication links to the writer's personal information, and anonymity is an essential component of research ethics when presenting data for research purposes. (Townsend and Wallace, 2016). The researcher retracted personal information where necessary to satisfy this requirement in my study by removing people's names associated with tweets.

Content analysis of traditional media does not require consent, as there is no personal data contained in the data. Although personal information is linked to social media posts, thought must be given to this issue in content analysis of digital content as informed consent is central to research ethics when personal information is used. However, obtaining informed consent from large online users when there is no relationship between researcher and subject is complicated. It is also difficult for participants to withdraw consent online, and the researcher may also be unaware that this has been done (Townsend and Wallace, 2016).

My research study avoided these issues because the units of analysis are Parliament's tweets, specifically designed for a public audience. They are not directly from individuals, tweeting in their private capacity. As the researcher work in Parliament's communications division, permission was obtained from the website administrator and the manager to use @ParliamentofRSA analytics for this research to understand that these analytics are for the sole purpose of this research.

Chapter 4: Presentation and Discussion of Research Findings

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The study's objective was to understand and examine how parliament was using social media as a tool for public engagement and the extent of social media dialogical interaction between parliament and its citizens. A further objective was to assess the possibilities and limitations of using social media as a public engagement tool.

Social media in recent years has grown tremendously, enabling users to be part of real-time information exchange. Governments can use social media by providing current information, such as news on upcoming events Bertot et al. (2010), which could promote the message of Government and assist in complementing the use of traditional media to disseminate the message.

As such, the Republic of South Africa's parliament was used as a case study to understand the nature of the exchange of information by parliament to its followers. I examined posts on Twitter to assess the use of social media for public engagement purposes for six months. This period was significant, as it was the last six months of the five-year term for the 5th democratic parliament and six months before the 2019 general elections. The Twitter user subscribes to an account to see all the posts and updates of that user on their page. Usually, if one "follows" another user, that user follows you back. It is not reciprocal as a user may decide to choose to follow back or not. Therefore, it is not symmetrical.

The more followers an individual or organisation has, the wider audience their tweets will get to, and the larger the influence will likely be. Twitter is mainly used in the micro-blogging community and therefore is an ideal tool for public engagements for the public to provide their inputs, thoughts, and opinions on a subject that affects them or their lives.

This research is a qualitative analysis of content tweeted to assess public engagement created by the posts.

Using the website analytics obtained from Parliament's website administrator, the researcher assessed a percentage of tweets. These included tweets that were posted on Monday as the workweek begins on a Monday. The researcher selected the following days:

MONTH	DAYS
November	5th, 12th, 19th and 26th
December	3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th, 31st
January	7th, 14th, 21st, 28th
February	4th, 11th, 18th, 25th
March	4th, 11th, 18th, 25th
April	1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th

Table 3: Days Tweets Were Assessed

The researcher then selected one post to be assessed.

The tweets have been snapped and are highlighted as 'Figures' in this Chapter.

The graph below indicates the number of posts that were posted over the six months from 1st November 2018 to 30th April 2019.
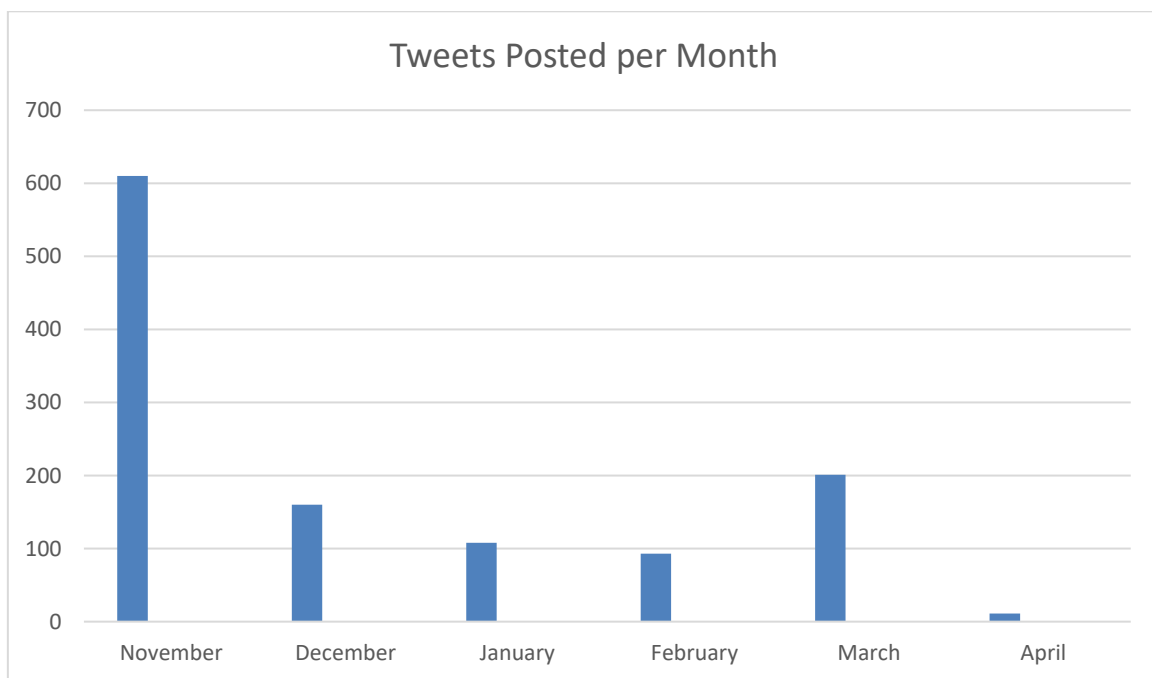
Vertical Axis – Number of tweets per month in 100s

Figure 1: Horizontal Axis highlighting some posts per month during the six-month research period

4.2 RESULTS FROM THE ONLINE OBSERVATION PROCESS

To understand the tweet's objective and garner the level of public engagement, the researcher dissected a tweet into the following categories - (informational, promotional, participatory/interactive, or collaborative) to understand the post's purpose. The researcher observed tweets to identify themes and discover the level of interest it generated in retweets. To understand public opinion, the researcher looked at the comments, how many, and whether they were positive or negative. The researcher looked at the posts to see if they promoted participation and engagement. The researcher also looked at the number of likes the tweet generated to determine the topics of interest. The researcher also looked at the type of questions that followers posted and responses to those questions by Parliament. The posts were further assessed to see if they incorporated additional information such as URLs that directed a follower to a website or blog, hashtags or pictures or videos relating to the post. The researcher viewed comments to see whether followers agreed or disagree with what was posted, their tone, and engagement level.

The researcher also noted that on 8 Mondays, there were no tweets posted. For December, there were no posts on the first three Mondays. In April there were 5 Mondays. However, there were no posts. This led to the researcher extending the research to view the 11 posts posted in April to determine the level of engagement with the public and to identify if the pattern was similar or if there were any remarkable differences. The tweets posted in April had a similar pattern, which can be seen in Table 4 below.

4.3 ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Since the arrival of social media, governments worldwide have identified and recognised the significance of social media. They have commenced to use them directly for multiple purposes, which can be informational, promotional, participatory/interactive, or collaborative. These aims are further explained as follows and also formed the basis for this study. In the literature review, the researcher described Darwish (2017), where he explains the multiple uses of social media in government such as informational, promotional, interactional, or participatory and collaborative. Camacho and Kumar (2012) found that using social media in e-government could enable citizens to access information provided by their governments over social media, thus reducing the effort to search for needed information. The tweets were analyzed according to these categories to identify which posts were participatory or collaborative, which showed the effort made for public engagement. There were two posts that had an element of public engagement. Below is the analysis Chart of Tweets from 5th November 2018 to 30th April

2019, which indicates the types of tweets and the level of participation and engagement between Parliament and its followers.

Table 3 Key:

I* Informational,

P* Promotional,

P/I* Participatory/Interactive,

C* Collaborative,

RT* Retweet,

U* URL,

H* Hashtag,

P & V* Pictures and Videos,

PC* Positive Comments,

NC* Negative Comments,

Q* Questions,

R* Responses,

L* Likes

Date	I	P	P/I	C	RT	U	H	P&V	PC	NC	Q	R	L
5/11	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
12/11	1	0	0	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
19/11	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	0	1	0	0
26/11	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
3/12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10/12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17/12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24/12	1	0	0	0	5	1	4	0	0	1	0	0	8
31/12	1	0	0	0	6	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	17
7/01	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14/01	1	0	0	0	16	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	15
21/01	1	0	1	0	3	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	5
28/01	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
4/02	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
11/02	1	0	0	0	20	1	1	0	1	40	0	0	19
18/02	1	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
25/02	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
4/03	1	0	1	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
11/03	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
18/03	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25/03	1	0	0	0	7	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	7
1/04	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8/04	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15/04	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22/04	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
29/04	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	16	4	2	0	83	19	14	1	4	44	2	0	87

Table 3: Highlighted rows indicate that there were no Tweets were posted on those days.

Date	I	P	P/I	C	RT	U	H	P&V	PC	NC	Q	R	L
03/04	1	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
04/04	1	0	0	0	5	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	14
05/04	1	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
09/04	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
10/04	1	0	0	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
11/04	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
16/04	1	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
17/04	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	3
18/04	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
26/04	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
30/04	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Total	**11**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**27**	**11**	**5**	**0**	**4**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**61**

Table 4: Analysis Chart of Tweets posted in April

Table 4 shows a striking similarity to Table 3. Both tables indicate that Parliament's Tweets are all informational; there is a high retweets activity; all posts all contain URLs that link the follower to the website. There is also a high level of likes achieved.

4.3.1 Informational Communication

Informational tweets provide information without expecting a reaction. Tweets are always in full sentences where few or no abbreviations are used except for shortened URLs. A URL incorporates the domain name and other detailed information to create a complete address (or "web address") to direct a browser to a specific page online called a web page. It is a set of directions, and every web page has a unique URL.

An informational tweet is an individual one and is easily understandable, and generally, each tweet is the headline or "taster" for a blog post, web article, or other related information. The focus is consistent and professional or is a single topic.
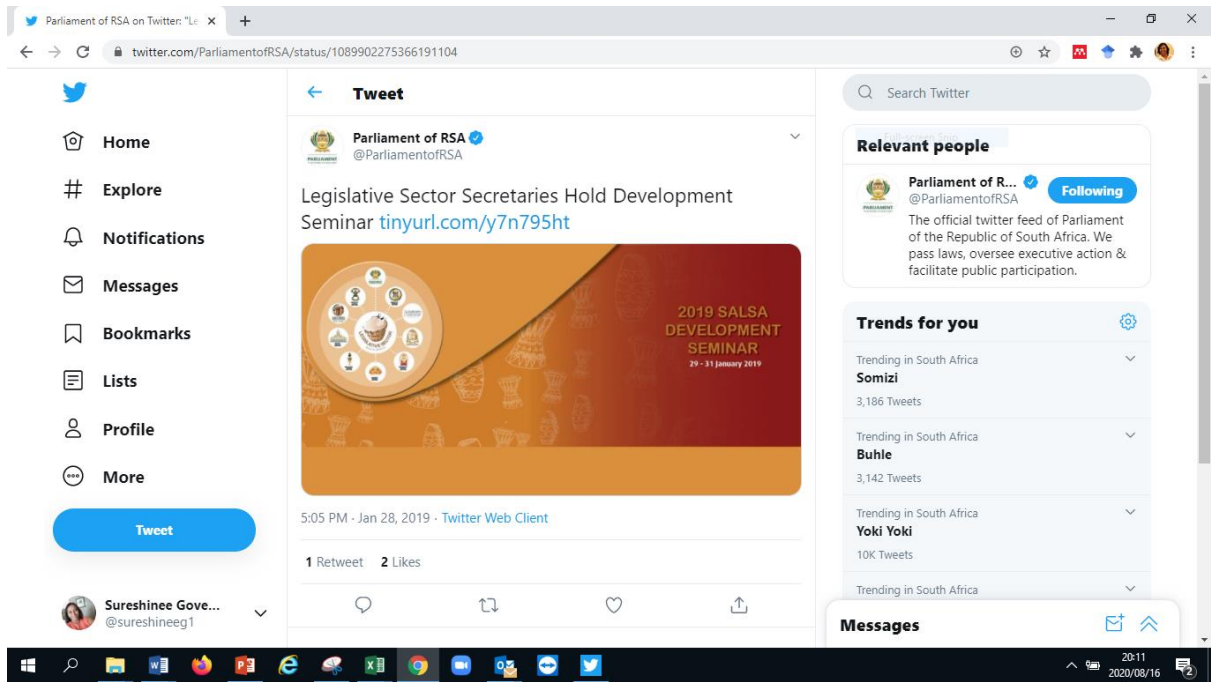
Figure 2: Legislative Sector Secretaries Hold Development Seminar, 28 January 2019

Above is an example of an information tweet that provides a link to the website informing followers that a development seminar was held.

Figure 3: Schedule of Parliamentary Committee Meetings of 27 November 2018, 26 November 2018

Above is an example of an informative tweet that provides a link that takes a follower to the schedule of committee meetings for the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces for the next day. Sixteen tweets were informational as they contained URLs directing the follower to a web page that had more information on the subject.

4.3.2 Promotional Communication

A promotional tweet promotes a product or service from a business or share information related to the industry. Usually, one in three users identifies promotional tweets with links to content from a user or company as worthwhile. The same number of people find value in reading information updates – especially in the form of news. Some organisations tweet questions and post the occasional "random thought," which will require a link for a complete read. It is viewed as a promotional tweet.
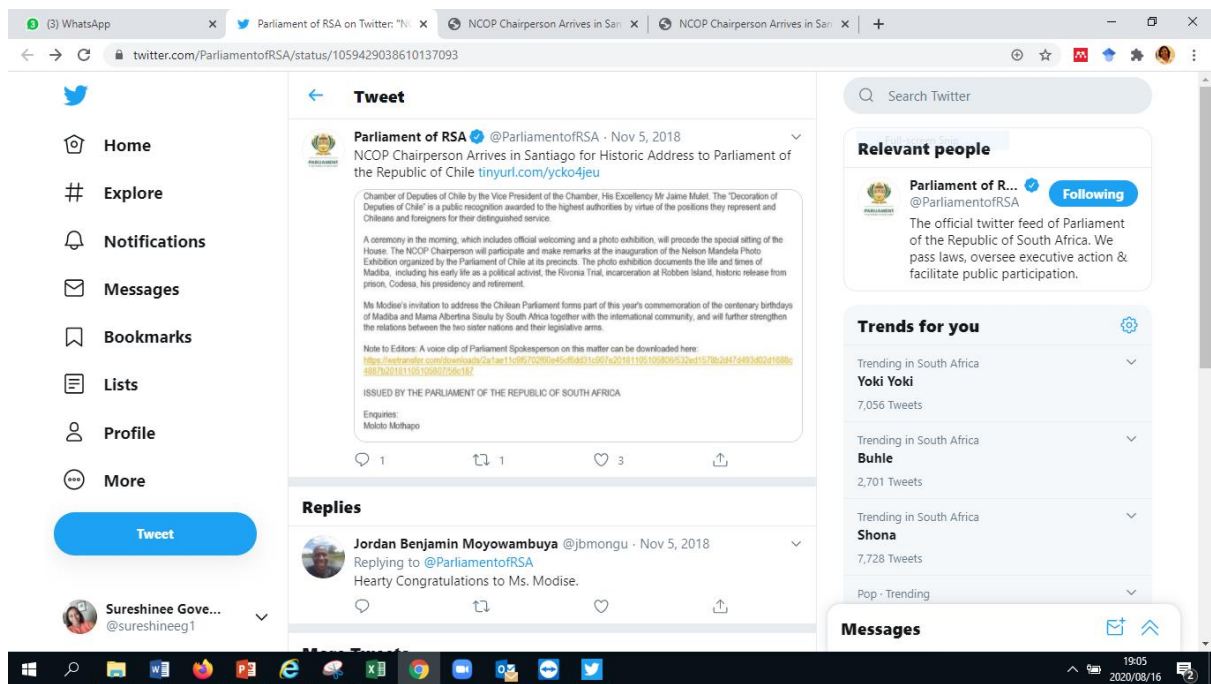

Figure 4: NCOP Chairperson arrives in Santiago for Historic Address to Parliament of the Republic of Chile, 5 November 2018

Four promotional tweets were promoting the work of the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces internationally. This is seen by the content "arriving in Santiago for a historic address to the Parliament of the Republic of Chile" on 5 November 2018. The second post in the same month promoted the National Council of Provinces, Taking Parliament to The People in Gauteng.
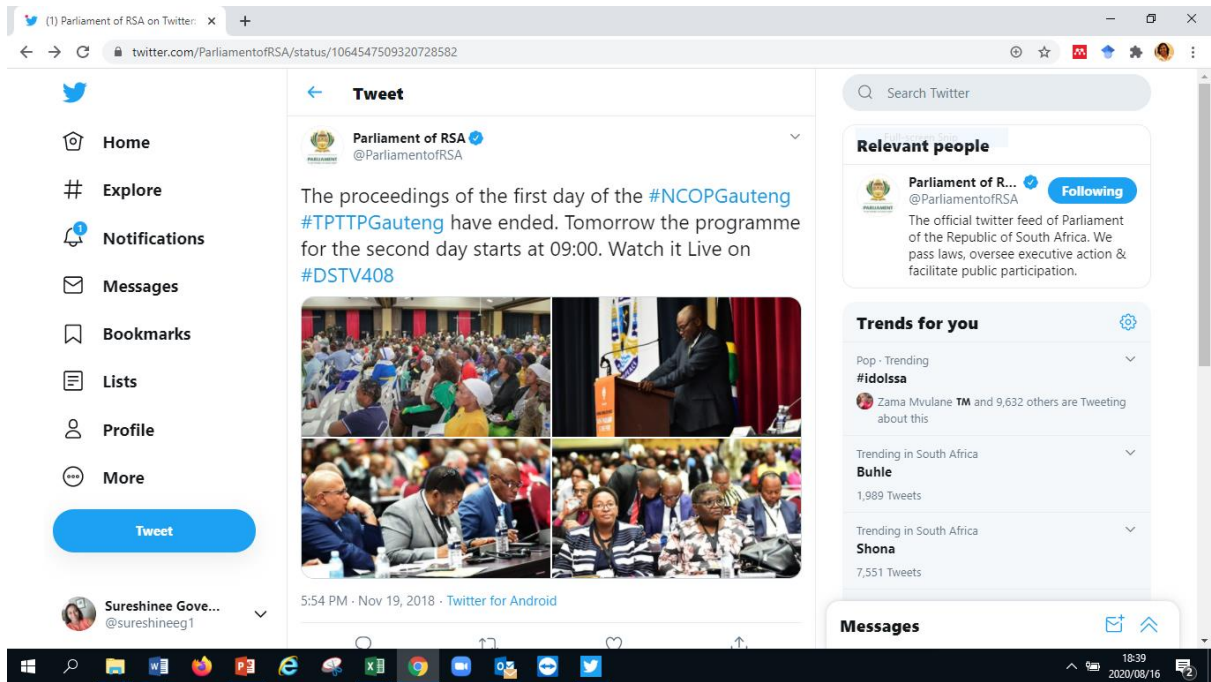
Figure 5: The proceedings for the first day of the #NCOPGauteng #TPTTPGauteng have ended.19 November 2018

This post is viewed as promotional as it promotes the National Council of Provinces' service works outside of its national base.
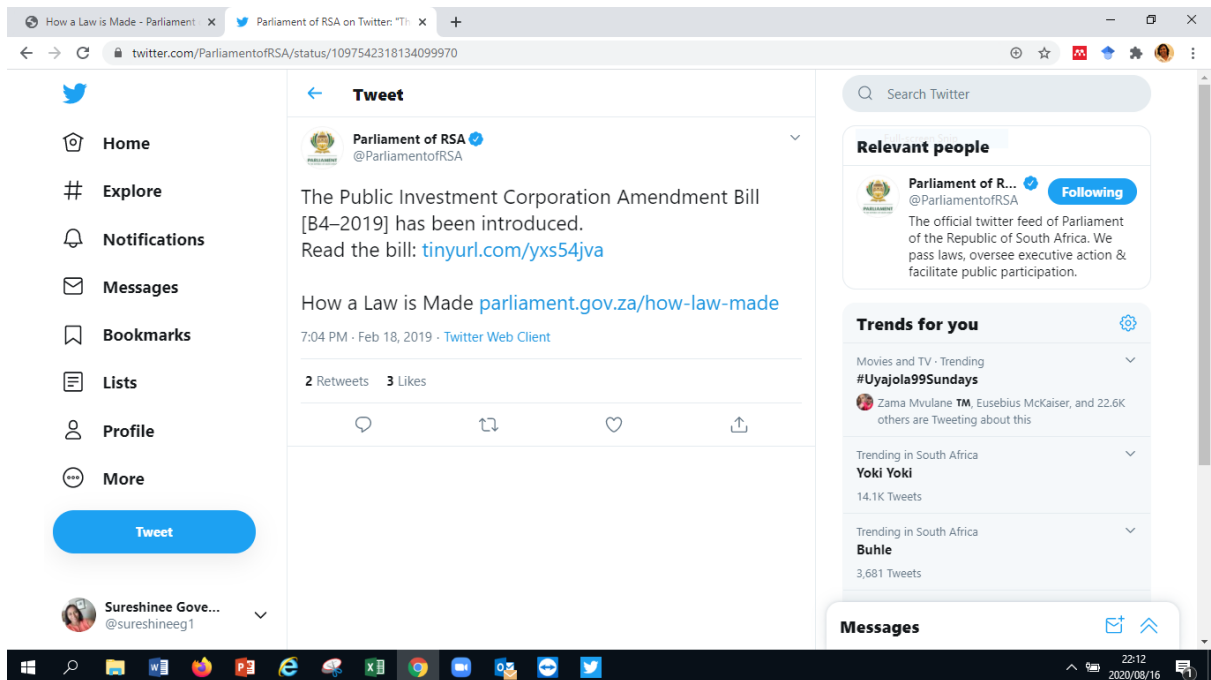

Figure 6: The Public Investment Corporation Amendment Bill [B4-2019] has been introduced. 18 February 2019.

This post promoted the bill as the URL to the full bill had been incorporated in the Tweet. There was an additional URL for the follower to read how a law is made. There was also a post that promoted the Legislature Sector Secretaries holding a Development Seminar. These posts are viewed as promotional as they promoted the work of parliament.

4.3.3 Participatory/Interactive Communication

Participatory or interactive communication via social media occurs by maintaining citizens' engagement with their governments and allowing citizens to express their opinions, experiences, and wisdom. Social media is a catalyst for encouraging more participation by citizens to share information and gives them a platform to express thoughts, ideas, and opinions, and promotes democracy. Social media allows citizens to publish their generated content and publicizes it, Dareen and Abu-Shanab (2015). Social networks can provide a new platform for communication between citizens and government officials and debate and dialogue among citizens. By beseeching ideas and information on social media, governments can garner diverse viewpoints and expertise from citizens to draft more effective bills and then acts, Noveck (2009).

Governments can make use of surveys on social media to get feedback from citizens before making any decision. Social mediums such as Twitter allow for consultation and deliberation with citizens. It makes participation in decision-making processes possible, thereby providing opportunities for in public policy design. Apart from allowing citizens an opportunity to participate in policymaking (submissions to bills) via Twitter, a tweet can also call the citizenry to action in the interests of the public.

Below is an example calling for citizens to take action and to report criminals to the police.
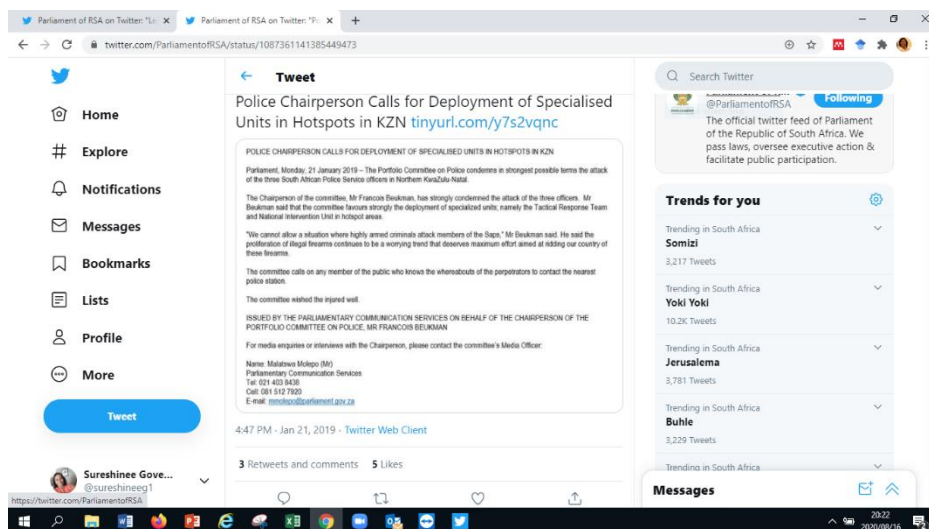

Figure 7: Police Chairperson Calls for Deployment of Specialised Units in Hotspots in KZN, 21 January 2019

The researcher found that four tweets were participatory during the six-month research period. There was no interaction as there were no responses to Parliament's comments for the posts to be engagement posts. The Tweet on the 21st January 2019 was a media statement, "Police Chairperson Calls for Deployment of Specialised Units in Hotspots in KZN". This statement was in response to the attack on 3 South African Police Service officers in northern KwaZulu-Natal. The statement was a call for action and therefore interactive as the wording of the content included - "calls on any member of the public who knows the perpetrators' whereabouts to contact the nearest police station." This tweet included a URL that directed the follower to the webpage of statements of Parliament.

The second tweet was on 4th March 2020, "Have Your Say," calling for submissions on the Airports Company Amendment Bill.
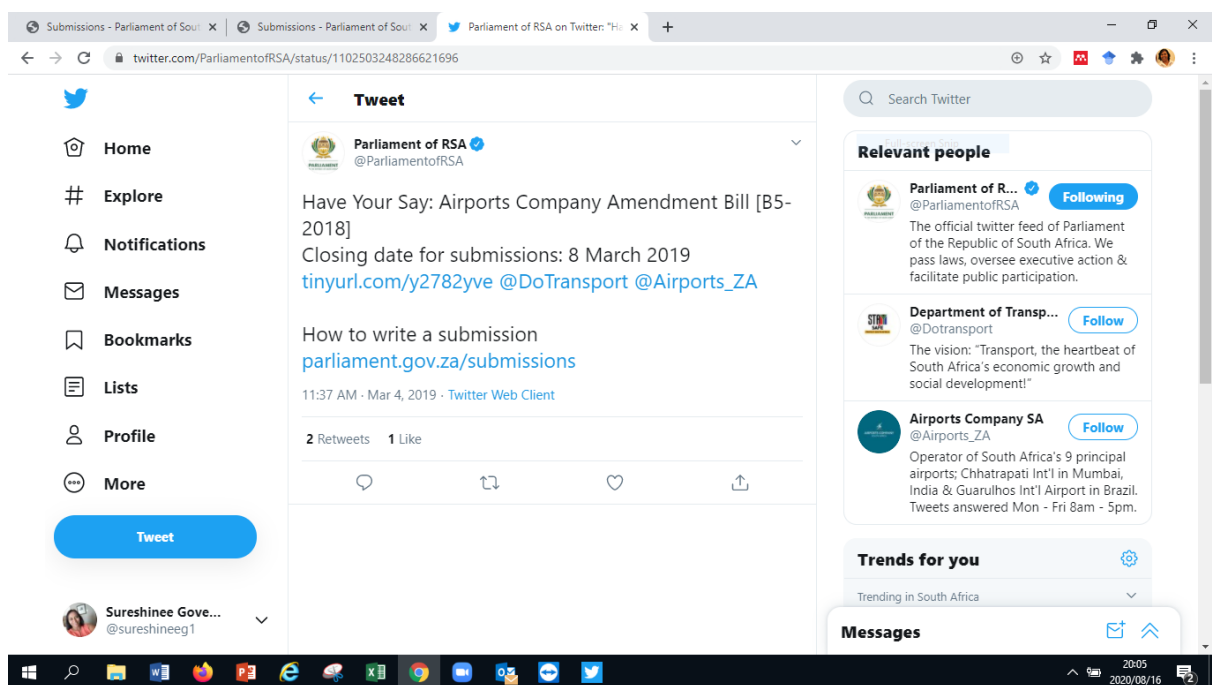
Figure 8: Have Your Say: Airports Company Amendment Bill [B5-2018], 4 March 2019

This post was interactive and informative as the second URL – parliament.gov.za/submissions takes a follower to the web page, providing information on how to submit.

4.3.4 Collaborative Communication

Collaboration occurs when citizens are allowed to participate by creating the content of government topics, and the government use and follow the content generated by citizens to fulfil the mission of the government as cited by Dareen A. Mishaal and Emad Abu- Shanab (2015) and Zavattaro, S.M., and Sementelli, A.J. (2014).

The arrival of social media and its omnipresence and numerous ways to connect with different stakeholders helped governments find a channel to disseminate information to the public and engage the public to participate in political conversations. It has effectively saved government's time, cost, and effort (Lee, G., and Kwak, Y.H. (2012). The new forms of digital interaction create the potential to increase democratic engagement and reach online audiences who were not previously involved in policy-making activities. There were no tweets that were collaborative.

4.3.5 Retweet

A retweet is either used as a noun or a verb, which shares the original post by another user on their page. Some retweet manually by typing 'RT @username" before adding their comments to the post. The "username" indicates the post's originator. A retweet occurs when a user thinks that the post is interesting or entertaining enough to share with their followers. There were high levels of activity for these two posts.
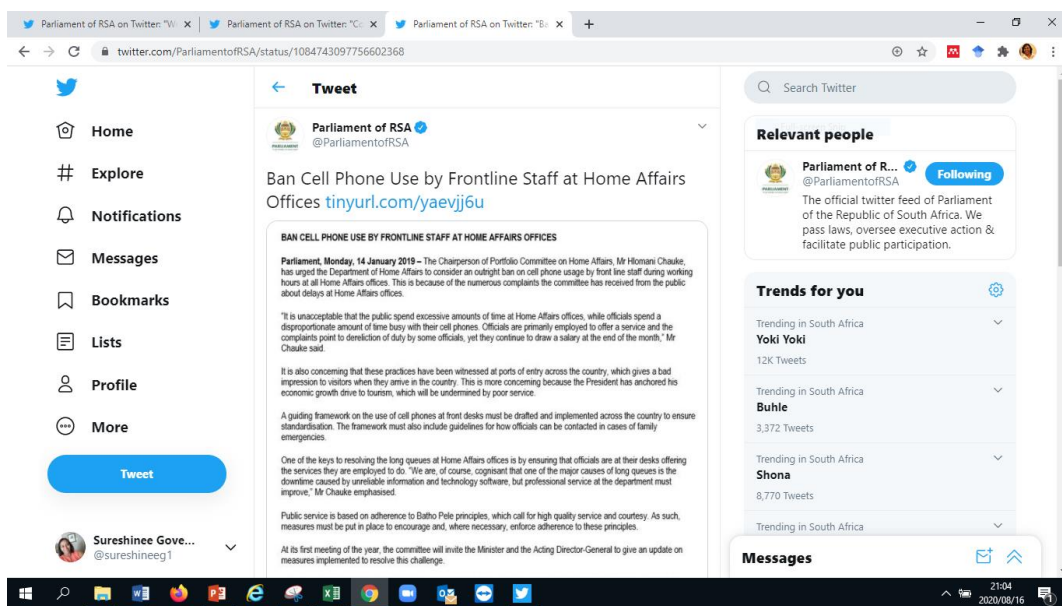

Figure 9: Ban Cell Phone use by Frontline Staff at Home Affairs Offices, 14 January 2019.

This post was retweeted 16 times.

Figure 10: Media Alert: Parliament Hosts Fourth Industrial Revolution Exhibition, 11 February 2019

This post was retweeted 20 times. The comments were not complimentary, and followers might have thought it was absurd that the country failed to provide an effective electricity service due to power outages yet had ambitions to move operations towards the 4th industrial revolution.

4.3.6 Use of URL Shortener

At times a user will post a Tweet and will share a URL or website address with followers. Because tweets are limited to 280 characters, a user will want to share URLs or websites into clickable tags that will allow their posts to be within length restrictions, i.e., URLs that start with bit.l.y, tinyurl or ow.ly. A URL shortener creates the micro version of the address that automatically transfers anybody who clicks it to the longer address of the page you want to share that has more information that the user may be interested in or need.

All the posts had URLs that linked the follower to further information which was good as content is restricted to 280 characters in a Tweet and a URL connects the reader to more information.

4.3.7 Use of Hashtags

Wikstrom (2014) studied the role hashtags played by it being incorporated into the messaging on Twitter. He found that a tweet containing a hashtag joins and is incorporated into a timeline of other tweets containing the same hashtag. By default, a hashtag arranges and sorts tweets into the same themes. For example, a hashtag #land will categorize all conversations with the

hashtag, thus structuring Twitter information. It further allows people to interact and engage in reflections and stimulates conversations on a particular topic.

A hashtag is a keyword or phrase preceded by a hash (#) sign, as with #haveyoursay or #knowyourparliament. When a follower clicks the hashtag, he will be led to a page that lists all Twitter users who have applied the hashtag in their posts. In simple terms, a hashtag is an easy way for people to categorize, find, and join conversations on a particular topic. A hashtag is further used to bring attention to keywords or topics within a tweet and can be placed anywhere in the tweet. Usually, it is at the end of a post.

4.3.8 Use of Pictures and Videos
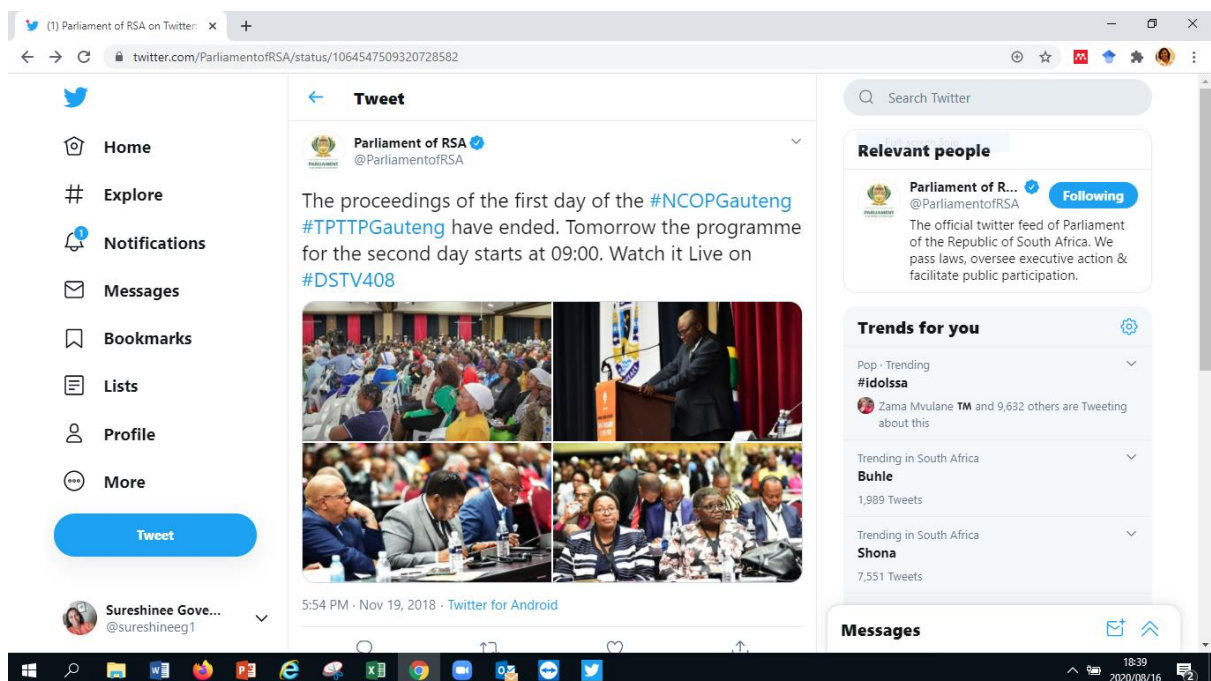
Figure 11: The proceedings for the first day of the #NCOPGauteng #TPTTPGauteng have ended, 19 November 2018

Pictures and videos usually complement the post and provide additional information to describe what the post is. A photo or video can add value to content by providing a pictorial story or evidence of what is posted. It was the only tweet from the sample which had four pictures. The pictures reflect that the venue was full of people. The other posts did not have photos, and there were no tweets with videos.

4.3.9 Positive and Negative Comments

Usually, when a follower finds a post interesting, he/she will post a comment. When the follower agrees with the post, he is more likely to post a positive comment.

Figure 12: Example of positive comment in response to a tweet
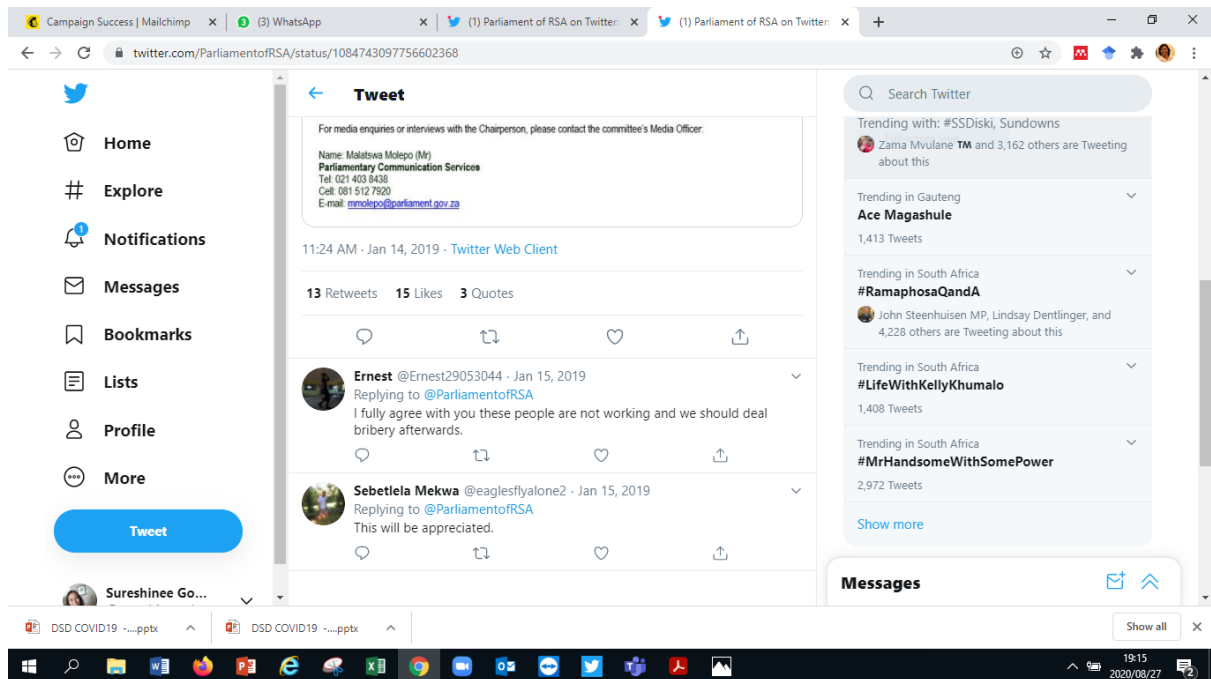
Figure 13: Ban Cell phone Use by Frontline Staff at Home Affairs Offices, 14 January 2019

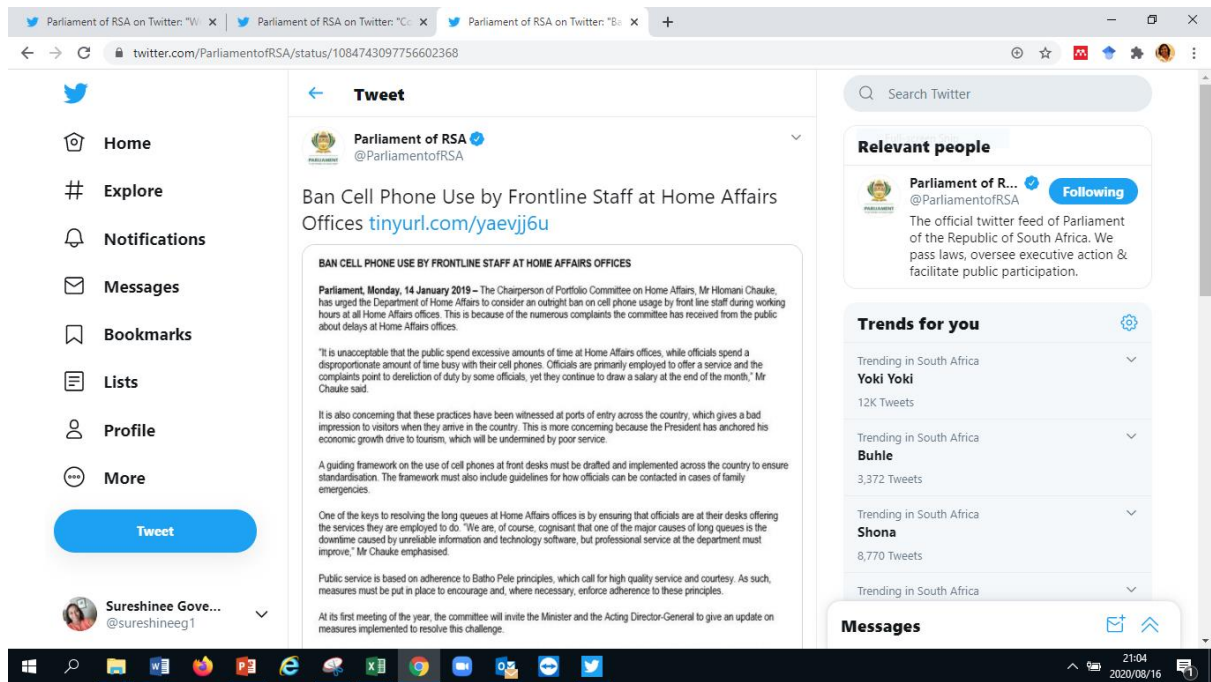There were four positive comments posted on three days. On 14 January, there were two comments in response to a media statement published, "Ban Cell phone Use by Frontline staff at Home Affairs." One follower, Ernest responded, "I fully agree with you these people are not working, and we should deal with bribery afterward". Sebetllela Mekwa replied, "This will be appreciated". There were no responses to the comments from Parliament.

The other two posts that garnered positive comments were on 5 November 2018. The post on "NCOP Chairperson arrives in Santiago" and the tweet posted on 11 February 2019, "Parliament Hosts Fourth Industrial Revolution Exhibition."

At times a follower on Twitter may not agree with a post and will retaliate with a negative comment or with a hashtag with followers who share the same view. An example is #voetsekANC, a hashtag that is seeing an increase in some followers due to the fraud and corruption currently plaguing South Africa.

Figure 14: Media Alert: Parliament Hosts Fourth Industrial Revolution Exhibition, 11 February 2019

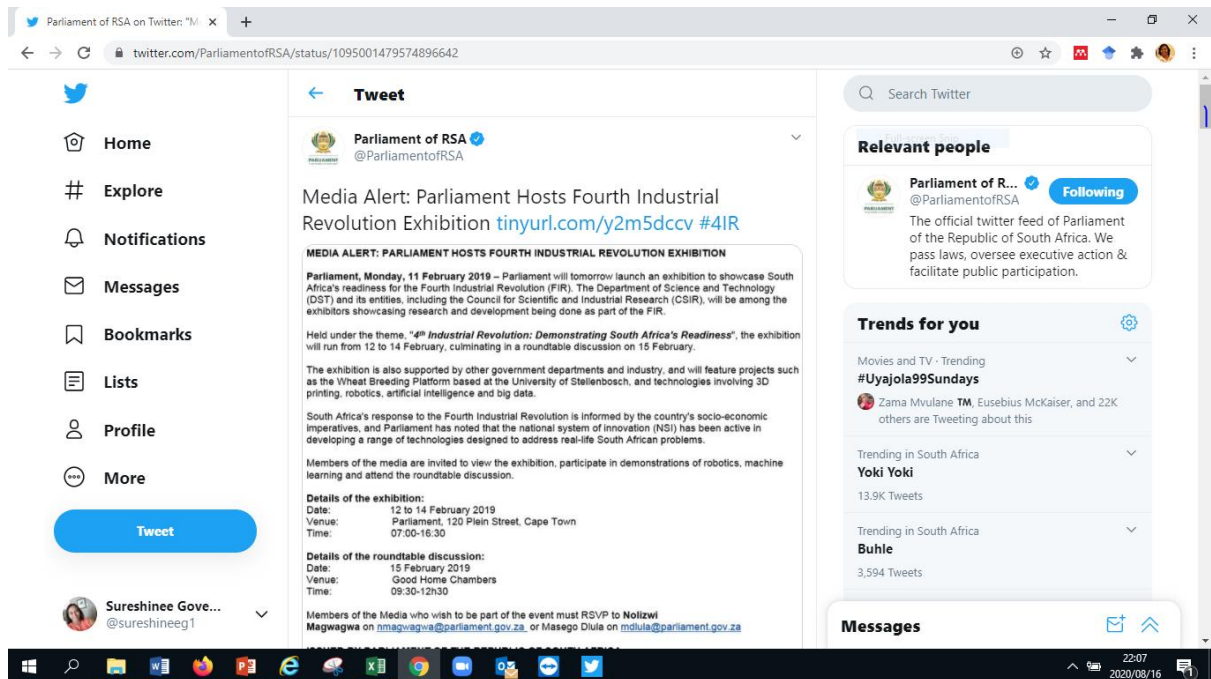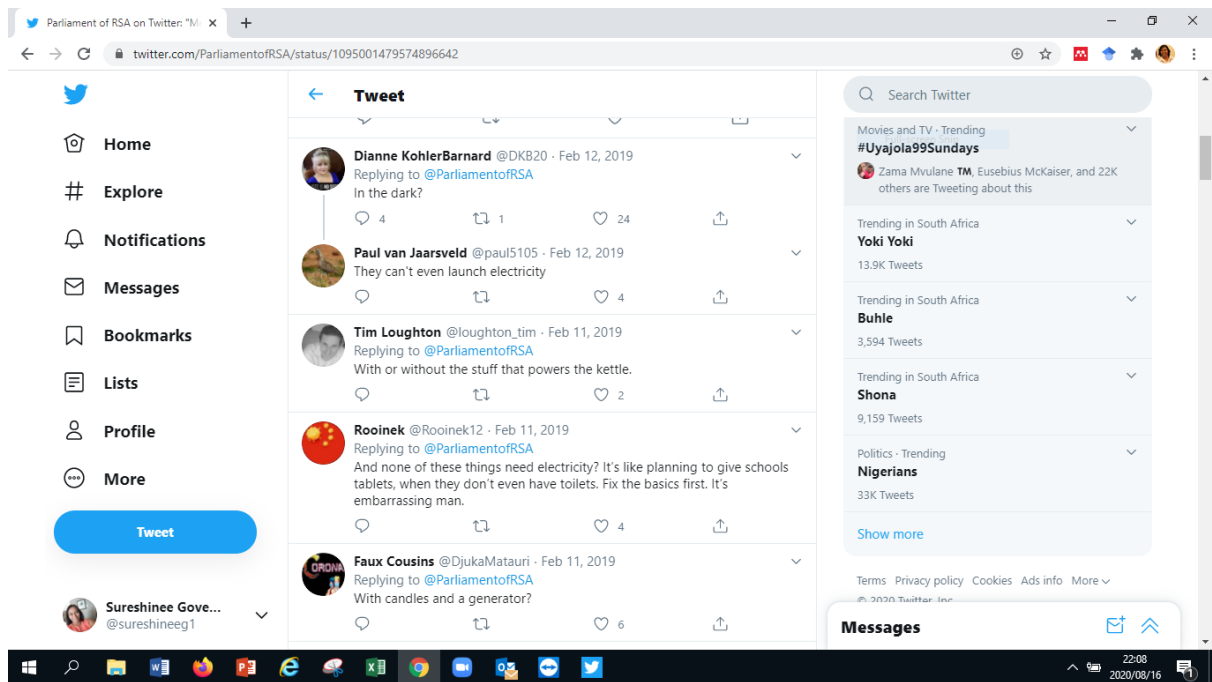**Figure 15:** Responses to Media Alert: Parliament Hosts Fourth Industrial Revolution Exhibition, 11 February 2019

There were 42 negative comments/quotes which were noted in response to a tweet posted on 11 February 2019. This was a media alert, "Parliament Hosts Fourth Industrial Revolution Exhibition." The followers who responded commented on the electricity issues which needed to be resolved as 4IR required electricity to be implemented.

Below are some of the comments to the tweet.

@DKB20 replying to @Parliamentof RSA – In the dark?
@paul5105 responding to @Parliamentof RSA – They can't even launch electricity
@loughton_tim replying to @ParliamentofRSA – with or without the stuff that powers the kettle
@Rooinek12 responding to @ParliamentofRSA – And none of these things needs electricity? It's like planning to give schools toilets when they don't even have toilets. Fix the basics first. It's embarrassing, man.
@DjukaMatauri @replying to @ParliamentofRSA – with candles and a generator?

Other comments were on the high data costs, and nothing was done about that. From all the tweets, this one generated the most interest from followers as the lack of electricity affected everyone, and people were frustrated.

4.3.10 Questions and Responses from Followers

When a follower reads a post and is not sure of the post's meaning, he/she will ask a question to seek clarity or to get answers. There were two questions asked, one on 19 November 2018, where a follower asked, "How was it anyway?", referring to the National Council of Provinces Program of Taking Parliament to the People, which occurred in Gauteng Province. The second question was posted in response to a media statement on police deployment in KwaZulu-Natal on 21 January 2019. The follower wanted to know if there were no deployments in Bonteheuwel in Cape Town. He further commented that "may the deployments die like flies until the police service does something for Cape Town. As the Department of Police was not tagged in the tweet, it is uncertain if the Department of Police was aware of the post or its response.

Responses to questions usually indicate that an organisation is monitoring the tweets that they disseminate and followers' responses. An organisation also can answer clarity seeking queries and put the inquirer's mind at ease. There were two questions asked as in above. There were no responses to questions or comments posted from followers. It gave the impression that communication via Twitter from Parliament is linear. Although social media is used to communicate information, it is used to push information, and there is no pull.

4.3.11 Likes

A 'like' is an affirmation that a follower likes what he/she has just read or seen on a post. It is like a" pat on the back," says blogger James Parsons. When a follower likes a tweet, it appears in your list of likes. Parliament tweets did receive likes. The most likes were on the post of 11 February 2019, which was on the media alert, "Parliament Hosts Fourth Industrial Revolution Exhibition." There were 19 likes; however, there were no followers who posted a positive comment on this exhibition's hosting.
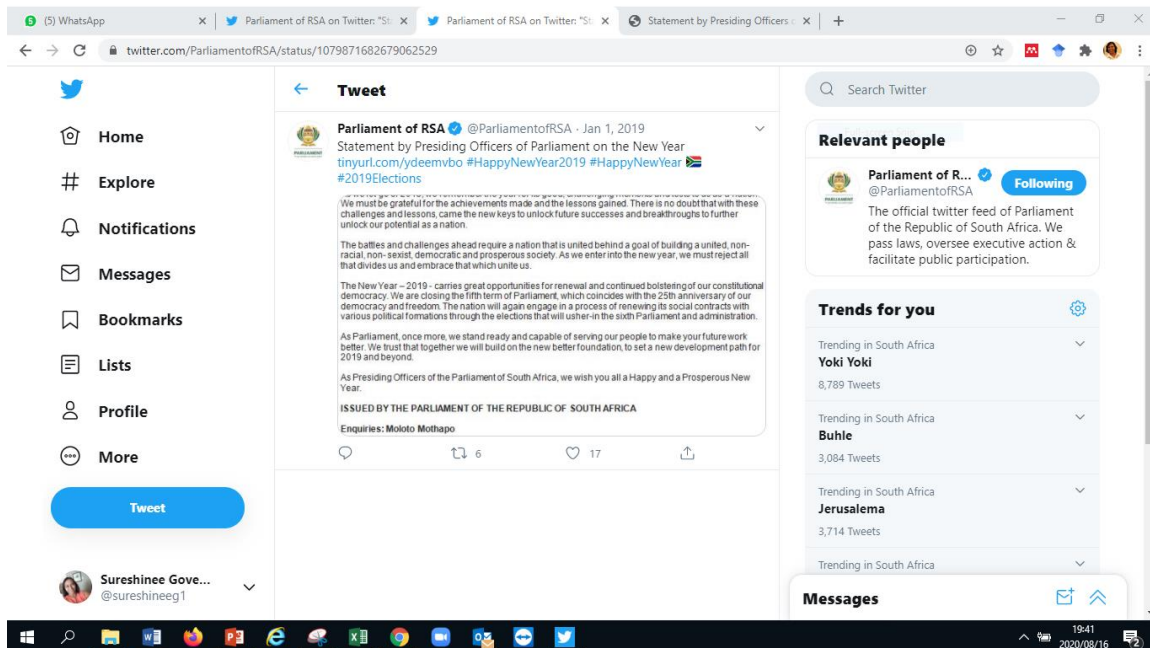
Figure 16: Statement by Presiding Officers of Parliament on the New Year, 1 January 2019

The second tweet with the highest number of likes was a media statement posted on 31 December 2018, "Statement by Presiding Officers of Parliament on the New year." The Presiding Officers reaffirmed their commitment to serving the people to make their future work better and set the new development path for 2019. The Presiding Officers wished all a happy and prosperous New Year. This tweet received 17 likes, six retweets, and no comments (James Parsons, 2020).
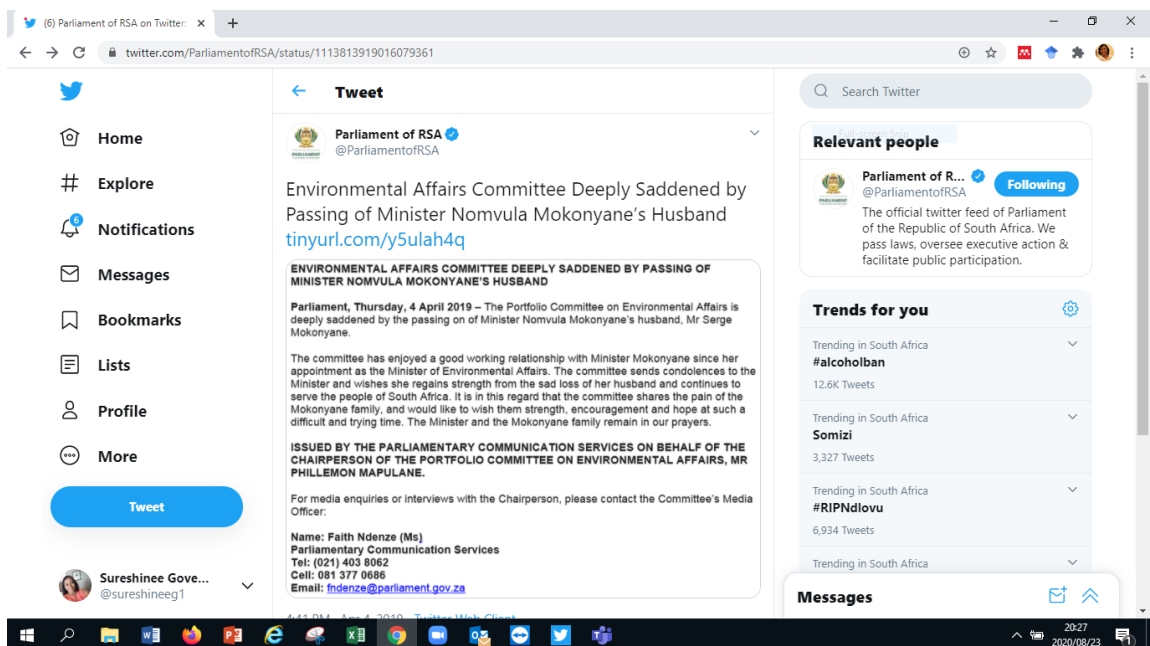
Figure 17: Environmental Affairs Committee Deeply Saddened by Passing of Minister Nomvula Mokonyane's Husband, 4 April 2019

This Tweet was regarding the death of the husband of Minister Nomvula Mokonyane, which received the most likes for the month. Although there were 17 likes, this did not indicate what the followers liked about the tweet. There were three comments - @PhillyMapulane, the former Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs, as shown in the tweet. His was a message of condolence. @Gamathabani #GTNNLIVE, the post was unrelated to the Tweet. @Hlabirwa commented, "He does have a name, right? Please address him with his name.

4.4 ASSESSMENT OF RETWEETS

A retweet is to share somebody else's tweet that one has seen in their feed. A small arrow icon indicates to others that this was not originally your tweet. Several tweets were retweeted. The most notable tweet which was retweeted was the one on 11 February 2019, providing details of the Fourth Industrial Revolution exhibition's hosting. There were 20 retweets of this post with one positive comment. The second post, which attracted 16 retweets, was posted on 14 January 2019 on the ban of frontline staff using cell phones at Home Affairs.

It seems that when Parliament is doing something positive like speaking out at the inefficiency of a government department, then followers are pleased. However, hosting a Fourth Industrial Revolution Exhibition gained the ire of people who would have preferred the electricity crisis to be fixed than for Parliament to be hosting an exhibition on the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which requires electricity to be effective. This was noted by the comments which were received.

When you 'engage' with another user, you are making conversation on the Twitter-verse, which develops into a string of responses and exchanges. The engagement was essential to keeping Twitter followers because it shows that you are human and are capable of having meaningful online connections. Organisations often make engagement a priority in their Twitter marketing strategies to reach out to clients and their target markets. To assess the level of engagement, a social media coordinator/manager can categorise what people are saying into trends. Often, when a hashtag becomes popular on Twitter, it then becomes a trend or trending topic.

The Twitter homepage provides a list of the most popular hashtags at a particular time. Parliament's homepage also shows a list of trends on the right side, although these trends are tailored according to who you are following. An observation of the trends revealed no trends created by Parliament, for example, #knowyourparliament or #haveyoursay. Still, it showed the names of celebrities, artists, and soccer teams such as #somizi, #lifewithkellykhumalo, and #kaiserchiefs, amongst others.

This indicated that Parliament did not run a Twitter campaign for engagement with its citizens as there were no trending topics relating to Parliament, National Assembly, or the National Council of Provinces.

Another approach to encourage social media engagement with citizens is timely responses to questions and comments. As Twitter is real-time and immediate, this enables both the sender and receiver to engage. However, the study indicated that Parliament linearly uses twitter by providing information but not using the opportunity to engage its citizens. There were no responses on any of the tweets.

4.5 SOCIAL MEDIA AS A CHANNEL FOR SUPPORTING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Social media and in this case study, Twitter is an ideal channel for supporting the objectives of increasing the number for public participation. As discussed in the above chapter, trends are determined by an algorithm that monitors famous people based on who the organisation follows and the organisation's location. Twitter presents activity based on real-time hashtag use and not topics that have been prevalent for a period. What you see on the trending list are more likely related to the issues that matter to the organisation and the online community where the organisation belongs. Twitter also allows a user to see trends that are not within their network by viewing the Twitter home page. Twitter does not restrict a user from seeing trends only in its network. One can customize the trends box and then select a specific location to see what is trending worldwide.

Twitter supports public participation by allowing hashtags creation by users. When a hashtag is used over and over, it becomes a trend. A user can search keywords which link him to the trend. The study revealed that there were no hashtags that encouraged and supported public participation or engagement. An example would be #haveyoursay.

However, there were four tweets with hashtags. On 19 November 2018, there was a tweet on Taking Parliament to the People with three hashtags (#NCOP, #TPTTPGauteng, and #DSTV408). There were 4 hashtags on the 24 December 2018 (#Christmaseve2018, #Christmas, #Christmas2018, #SeasonsGreeting). On 31 December 2018, there were 3 hashtags (#HappyNewYear2019, #NewYear, #2019Elections). On 11 February 2019, there was 1 hashtag - #4IR. The study revealed that the maximum usage of hashtags to create trends that would attract and maintain followers was not taken advantage of. In this way, social media supports public participation; however, there were no hashtags that said #publicparticipation or #engagement or #talktoyourparliament.

There was no indication of a Twitter Party or a Tweet Chat with stakeholders to exchange opinions or submissions on a bill. The tweet on 11 March 2019, which called for submissions (Have Your Say: Airports Company Amendment Bill B5-2018), could have initiated a Tweet Chat with stakeholders in the aviation industry to increase public engagement with this bill. A search of keywords such as aviation or airports would have revealed hashtags to link with other like-minded followers on Twitter.

4.6 SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Sharing of information crucial; however, those tweeting for an organisation must be actively aware to balance engaging citizens and the tweeting of useless information. Twitter has three principle uses for communication and public participation practitioners. Twitter can assist an organisation to get the word out about their program, which is outreach. Twitter can be used to inform people about the issues under consideration by providing information. And lastly, Twitter can help an organisation gather citizen input and foster a civic dialogue which is engagement.

In her blog post, Pierre (2020) outlined the importance of creating a content strategy and editorial calendar. A project will have content for public consideration and input. It will have information about how and where people can participate.

She had identified three principles for twitter content, which were:

- information about the opportunity to participate – with a link back to the consultation website.
- Information about the issue(s) under consideration – with a link to more detailed online information about the matter; and,
- information containing a prompt or question for public response/input.

Creating a content calendar mixes all three types of content to get these out across their own Twitter accounts on each day of the consultation or processing of the billing period. Prompts and questions work well with Twitter; however, one must include the hashtag in all the tweets!

Pierre also cautions that if you limit your Twitter use to getting information out (one way), you will only be successful in driving people to an online destination. Still, you won't get much dialogue or qualitative insights (i.e., no inputs, submissions, or ideas on how a bill can make a difference or improvement in one's life) from your participants. Social media's power comes from the fact that it is about two-way communication. During citizen engagement, Twitter allows you to retweet someone else whose comment you find of value to your consultation. There were no Tweets which created the snowball effect.

4.7. CONCLUSION

During this study, the researcher wanted to know how many people participated with Parliament, who were these people who participated, what did they say during engagements, and how effective was the use of social media for public engagement purposes. The researcher noticed that mainly ordinary people and Members of Parliament from opposition parties responded to tweets from the observations. Comments were critical of the government, and some were random with no relevance to the Tweet. Below is an example of a response unrelated to the Tweet.
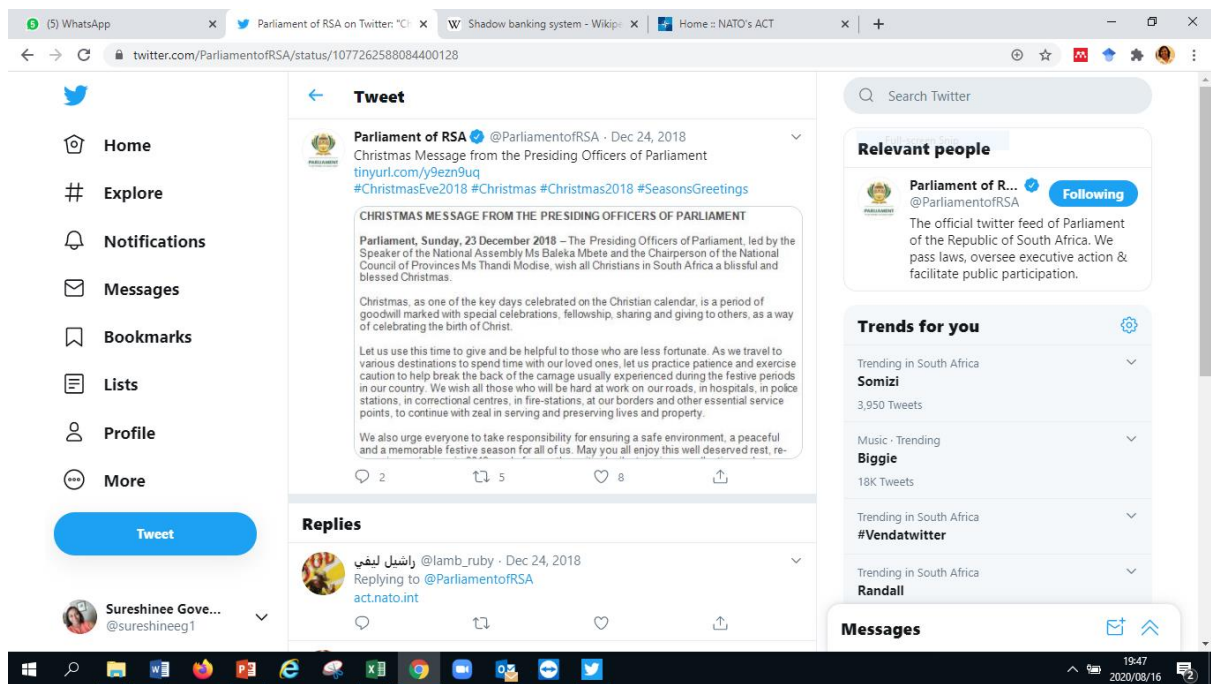
Figure 18: Christmas Message from the Presiding Officers of Parliament, 24 December 2018.

The response from @lamb_ruby replying to Parliament was act.nato.int. This website belongs to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which was formed in 1949 to provide collective security against the threat posed by the Soviet Union. This response is unrelated to the Christmas message from the Presiding Officers.

Further motivation for this study was what Parliament could learn from this exercise. That there will be people who fake profiles, and therefore, one would not know their real identity and agenda.

While sharing information should be encouraged, those who manage social media accounts need to balance engaging followers and updating with useless tweets that have no value to the follower.

There was one post that met the criteria for being informational, promotional, and participatory or interactive. However, the tweet was not collaborative. The tweet posted called for the public to "Have Your Say: Airports Company Amendment Bill (B5-2018). The tweet contained a Url to the webpage, the Department of Transport and Airports South Africa were tagged, which meant all their followers would have seen the tweets calling for a person or organisation to voice their opinion on the said bill, therefore engaging followers and calling them to action. The tweet also provided information on "How to Write a Submission" with a link to the webpage that shows a follower how to write and submit a submission on a bill. It was noted that this post received two retweets and one like. There were no comments from followers. At the time of the study, Parliament had 499 000 followers. However, the reason for the low activity on the tweet did not come to the fore. There were no responses from Parliament to the comments or questions from followers.

The research did not reveal the 'effects" of the tweets on citizens as there were no engagements between Parliament and its followers. It was interesting to note though, there were no tweets that initiated the snowball effect of followers posting and reposting. There was also no tweet that gained momentum on a specific topic which caused Parliament to trend for the day.

The researcher also observed for the "effects" relating to tweets on a bill, where followers would engage on the bill, ask questions or provide their input or comment. This effect was not evident. The study revealed that Parliament did not use Twitter to gather inputs on a bill, to acquire comments on any issue at a public hearing or at Taking Parliament to the People event.

Chapter 5: Summary, Recommendations, Further Research

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study's objective was to assess the use of social media by the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa for public engagement purposes. The researcher sought to understand how Twitter specifically facilitated such engagements and whether followers engaged in conversations with Parliament as part of the general engagement processes.

The nation's relationship to their Parliament has changed. In the past, the work of Parliament would have been reported through the media, today members of Parliament tweet and post comments to social networks directly from the chamber and committee rooms as events unfold. It allows citizens to directly follow multiple points of view and different political perspectives on a debate and, in some cases, directly contribute by communicating with members of Parliament in real-time.

Citizens anticipate quick and instantaneous forms of communication, which extends the role of Parliaments to provide information about, and access to Parliament across a range of digital channels. Digital media make Parliament and its members more transparent and accessible and can bring democracy closer to the people. However, this also increases the conduits and can intensify parliamentary communication, outreach, and engagement, says Williamson (2013).

Therefore, leaders of the Government or Parliament must facilitate engagement with their citizens to foster meaningful relationships. It is essential as Parliament's mandate is to make new laws, amend existing laws, and conduct oversight over Government departments. Parliament should serve the public and bills created for the benefit of the people. Therefore, Parliament must, for example, gather inputs on a bill as part of the public engagement and public participation process when a bill is introduced.

Essentially new technologies allow individuals to reach specific or general receivers with a message. It is the fundamental purpose of Twitter, where one can be followed by millions and follow them back, according to Fuchs (2014).

A robust social media existence allows Parliament to deliver digital messages that could be used for several purposes, such as feedback on a service delivery challenges by departments,

information on areas where Parliament's oversight is lacking, and inputs or submissions on a bill.

5.1.1 Social listening by Parliament

Social Media allows citizens to ask questions about important events in a country such as elections, the State of the Nation Address, or the subsequent Budget Speech, which sets the tone for the country's economic activities. Further, citizens can search for information on new bills and interact with policymakers in a way that makes them feel like they are being heard, and their contribution is valuable. Through social media, Parliament can effectively target constituents, receive feedback, and respond accordingly and immediately.

Parliament can encourage discussion and receive feedback from its constituents in all areas of the country about essential issues, which affect their communities. By utilising social media to open communication with its components, it could, for example, respond immediately to challenges being experienced by communities in outer lying areas. Having a proactive approach and responsiveness will increase citizen engagement and build trust.

According to Microsoft.com (2017), 76% of policymakers indicate that social media enables more meaningful interactions with constituents.

My research study allowed for a better understanding of how Parliament used social media, particularly Twitter, for social listening and public engagement purposes, such as collecting inputs, opinions, and submissions on a bill.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS

5.2.1 Call to Action

There are four ways to maximise Tweets for action by followers, which Romanek (2013) elaborates as a *"Call to Action."* The first and most effective one is to ask followers to download information. In the case of Parliament's work, tweets could request followers to download content, which has a URL link to their web page. In my study, there were no tweets that explicitly asked people to download content. However, almost all tweets contained URL links.

Tweets need to give followers direction and incentivise them to click on the link provided in the tweet. The use of hashtags and @handles needs to be kept at a minimum, so the follower is enticed to click on the URL.

The second call to action is a request, i.e., *"Ask for a Retweet."* This can be done to change followers into advocates by asking them to retweet your information. An organisation can ask

followers to retweet to show the follower's affiliation with their brand. The negative observation in my study was that none of Parliament's tweets contextualised why a tweet was worth sharing. Neither did the tweets indicate the value of the information for followers to be encouraged to retweet.

The third call to action is another request, i.e., *"Ask for a follow."* This could be done to extend the reach of Parliament to new audiences on Twitter. It could be as simple as to ask someone to "follow" your tweets. Romanek (2013) indicated that promoted tweets in timelines that asked for a follow increased follows by an average of 258%. Follows increased by an average of 86% when the same call to action was included in Promoted Tweets. Such promoted tweets would have included or highlighted exclusive content the account offers, followers, such as snippets of previews, photographs of behind the scenes preparations, and short videos promoting Parliament's work. None of the assessed tweets asked for a following.

The fourth call to action is a *"Ask for a reply."* In this instance, one would initiate a conversation with Twitter users, pose a question, and motivate followers to engage in one-on-one with the institution. Promoted tweets in timelines that accentuate "an ask to reply" increased replies by an average of 334%. Responses increase on average by 307% when this call to action appeared in promoted tweets. To get followers interested in your tweets, one needs to get personal, using a conversational tone to humanize the institution and make Twitter users feel comfortable responding to the institution via a @reply. To get back the maximum number of responses, one could combine questions with an exclusive incentive such as Coffee with the Speaker of Parliament or win 2 Tickets to SONA 2020. A look at the tweets did not indicate any call for action, which asked for a reply.

Twitter is about the conversation. Calls to Action should be reserved for the most action-oriented campaigns. Tweets with Calls to Action should always be balanced with useful information. This study showed that Parliament has not been maximising their use of these Calls for Action options.

5.2.2   Comments from Followers

Comments from followers indicated their reactions and feedback with which I could work. Posts that received several remarks were a sign that people were interested in what was shared. Comments spark conversations. One such tweet was a media alert posted on 11 February 2019, "Media Alert: Parliament hosts Fourth Industrial Revolution Exhibition." This post sparked interest in that it related to the electricity crisis that the country was facing.

There were 20 Retweets, 40 Quote Tweets, and 21 Likes in response. Followers used the opportunity to criticise the Government for its failure to manage the electricity crisis. One said that for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) to succeed, the country needed to have electricity without interruptions. Given the ESKOM situation, people used the opportunity to criticize South Africa's ruling party, the African National Congress. One follower went so far as to suggest that Parliament competed with Government to see who would be the first to roll out the 4IR. Notably, another said that the basics could not be sorted, and the 4IR would fail because of the high cost of data.
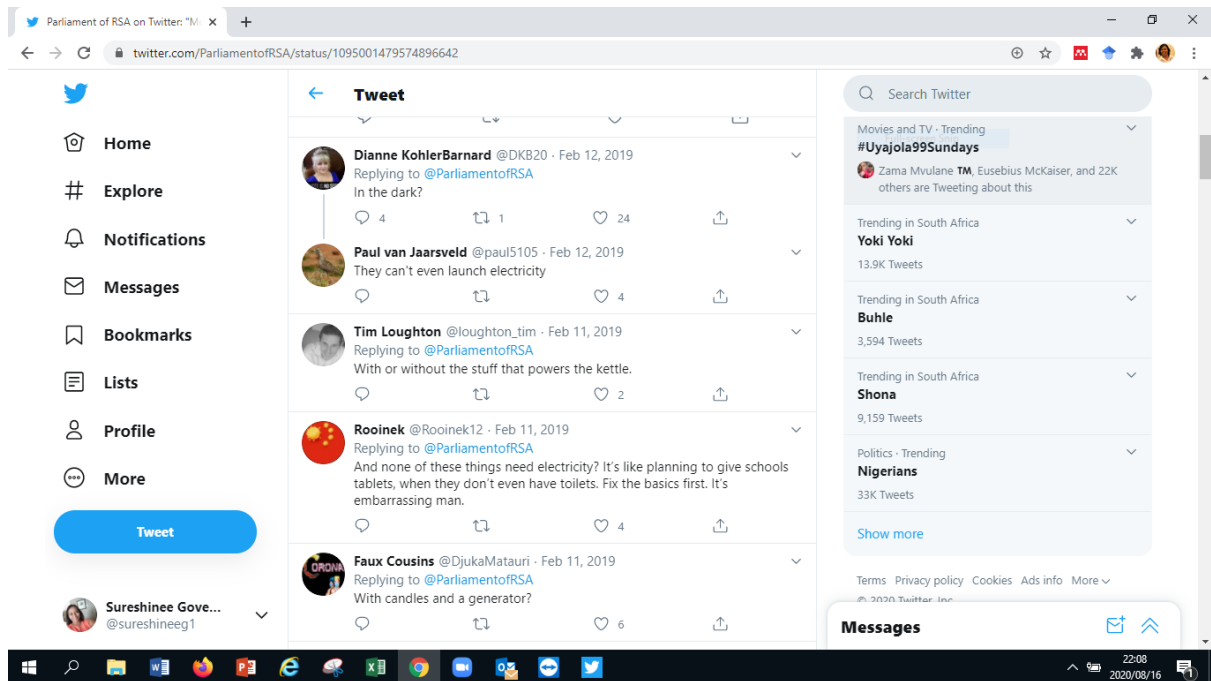
Figure 18: Comments on the Media Alert: Parliament hosts Fourth Industrial Revolution Exhibition

5.2.3   Rate of Activity on Twitter

During days of events such as "Taking Parliament to the People" held on 19 November 2018, showed an increase in activity on Parliament's Twitter account. There were seventeen tweets providing announcements and updates. However, there were no tweets that depicted engagements between citizens and Parliament. The second day of high activity was on 24 December 2018, where there was a tweet with a link, alerting followers to the Presiding Officers Christmas message. This tweet was one tweet where the response from a follower @lamb.rugby had no relevance to the tweet that merely said (act.nato.int). There were five retweets and eight likes to this message.

In February 2019, there was again an increase in Twitter activity due to the State of the Nation Address. The tweets included announcements, pictures on the state of readiness, and rehearsals for the event. On the day of the event, the tweets provided pictures of guests on the red carpet and program updates leading up to the President delivering the State of the Nation Address at 19h00.

5.2.4   Parliament's response to questions and comments from followers

The research findings revealed that there were no responses by Parliament to any question or comment from a follower for the period of this study.

Research by Mafihlo, P (2015) indicated that citizens perceived social media to be a more convenient and direct way of reaching Government, compared to traditional and more structured ways of getting the voices of citizens heard. Respondents indicated that partnerships established through social media could eliminate the bureaucratic and hierarchal structure and allow citizens to work together with the Government. This observation is shared with Zaffar and Ghazawneh (2012), who stated that if collaboration is constrained by authority or power, it has a detrimental impact on developing trust and establishing relationships. The tweets were all linear, with no engagement or interaction taking place. This indicated that Parliament posted information without considering that answers to questions or responses to comments were required in a way that meant that "someone was listening." The table in chapter 4 indicates no responses to questions or comments made on the platform at all.

On 14th January 2019, a media statement was issued, "Ban Cell Phone Use by Frontline Staff at Home Affairs". The interest by the public was indicated by 13 Retweets, 15 likes and 3 quotes. The only time the public was positively related to Parliament as one follower @Ernest29053044 wrote, "I fully agree with you...." and another @eaglesflyalone2 wrote, "This will be appreciated". This would have been an ideal opportunity for the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs to engage with the followers.

Alternatively, the post should have tagged the Department of Home Affairs to solicit a response from the Department on what corrective measures would be taken. Parliament must encourage two-way communication by sparking conversations, responding to questions and comments, and more importantly, by being a listener.

5.2.5   Twitter chats/Chat rooms

A Twitter chat is a virtual meet-up for people with common interests. These are conversations/discussions on Twitter at a predetermined date and time, relating to a specific topic. Hashtags are included to draw followers' attention to the conversation and for chat participants to see the tweets.

Twitter chats are scheduled; the same account usually hosts frequent conversations. Discussions can happen weekly or monthly, but the key is for them always occur simultaneously. Twitter chats are extremely useful for networking and generally engaging in meaningful conversations about any shared topics of interest. Twitter, as the platform, serves to help an organisation connect with a much larger audience than usual.

For example, each chat is designated by its hashtag and often features a single broad topic. A typical conversation could be for a bill on land reform, where a chat is created on an issue such as expropriation of land without compensation, #expropriationwithoutcompensation or #landrestitution, where a campaign could be planned to receive inputs on a bill electronically. This campaign could have been run weekly for an hour to gather information from the public on comments on a bill or any other matter that required comments from the public.

This research has indicated there were no chats created on the timeline of Parliament's Twitter account.

5.3   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Cox (2019) provides a list of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for an organisation to establish if their social media campaigns are working. The 2018 Sprout Index from Sprout Social, found that 80% of digital marketing professionals thought that boosting brand awareness was the primary goal of their social media campaigns. However, more than half (59%) of consumers looked for social posts that taught them something.

Therefore, it is prudent to set KPIs that gauge how cognisant your audience is of what your brand is doing and how they are interacting with what you post. KPIs should be actionable. The information posts contain should provide the context necessary to make decisions. It should provide insight into how to retool posts in the future. Conversion from social media likes to social media engagements should be the desired outcome.

- **KPI 1 – Comments**

    The number of comments left on a specific tweet is indicated below the tweet. All that needs to be done is to simply look at the number to get an idea of the number of people who have seen the post. It helps to measure engagement. Comments offer direct insight into how

your audience responds to content and whether your social media campaign is working as intended.

Whether they are positive or negative, comments give you reactions and feedback you can work with. A post that received a few comments is usually an indication that people are interested in what is being shared. Comments ignite conversations and provide the crucial infrastructure for specific campaign types, such as "Meet Your MP," "Public Hearings," or "Taking Parliament to The People," amongst others.

Cox (2019) says that there are some unfailing ways to improve comment volume, such as asking open-ended questions, requiring a comment for entry into a competition, but more importantly, replying immediately to comments and postings during periods of peak activity. Twitter users are usually most engaged in the evening's midweek. Therefore, that would be an ideal time to schedule tweets requiring comments.
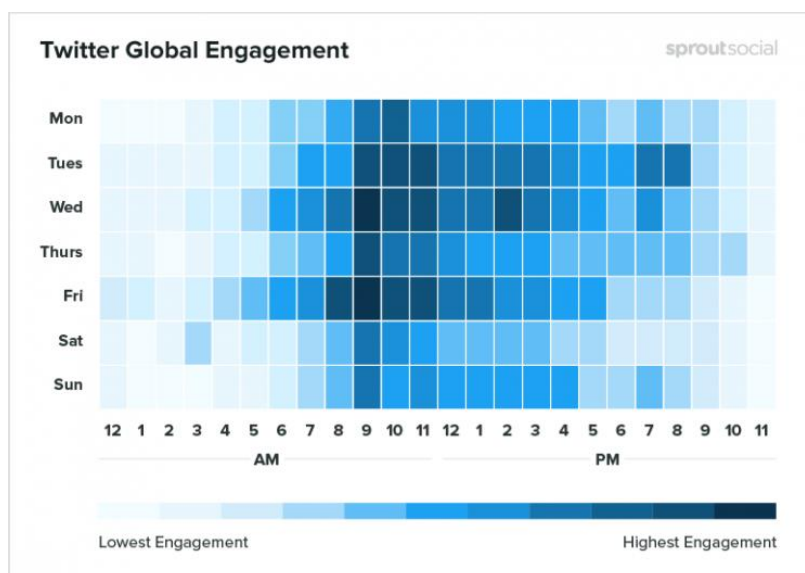
Figure 20: Graph indicates Twitter engagement – Sprout Social

- **KPI 2 – Impressions**

An impression is how many times a post appeared in someone's feed. Social media channels provide built-in tools for tracking campaign impressions. Twitter's mobile dashboard displays these social media analytics by impressions (the number of people who saw your Tweet), total engagement (number of Tweet interactions), detail expands (number of people who viewed the details of the tweet), and likes (number of people who liked the tweet).

This helps to measure reach. While reach shows how many unique views a tweet receives, the number of impressions provides a look into how many repeat viewers you are.

This KPI indicates that if a post has a strong "impression- to- reach" ratio, it is catching your public's attention. Viewers who are returning to a post multiple times are generating multiple impressions and are more likely to convert, i.e. likely to understand and agree with the organisation.

A social media coordinator can optimize impressions by encouraging audiences to come back to their content by using relevant hashtags and keywords, working with influencers, adhering to a posting schedule or content calendar, and writing extended captions/descriptions photographs which are unusual and peaks interest in the topic. The post should compel the follower to invest a significant amount of time reading and engaging with its posts, plus tagging others to share it.

- **KPI 3 - Click-through rate (CTR)**

Click-through rate (CTR) indicates how many times a viewer clicks a Call to Action (CTA) post, or the link in the profile, to learn more. There are companies such as Hootsuite and Sprout Social which provide a useful formula for calculating CTR, which measures engagements and conversions. When a follower clicks on a link in the post, they engage with it and look to find out more via the website. CTR is useful to gauge how seriously your followers are taking your requests, e.g., subscribing to your newsletter, scheduling time to talk, reading the latest update, downloading a YouTube or podcast, or anything that requires action.

One can optimise CTRs on Twitter by using short, concise statements, including hashtags and emojis, avoiding extended statistics, including a CTA (get more information now), posting in the afternoon or evening, and adding photographs and images.

- **KPI 4 - Website traffic and referrals**

This is the number of website sessions referred by tweets. It is possible to track these numbers by using tools such as Google Analytics. It helps to measure reach, engagement, and conversions. Web traffic statistics help identify whether the organisation's social media strategy is capturing the target audience's attention and driving them towards the landing page on the website.

It is useful to monitor how social media campaigns affect overall website traffic and is also crucial in optimizing social content, CTAs, and landing pages, which are the elements of the overall communications strategy. To optimize on this KPI requires a concerted effort such as a completed profile with contact details, URL, and attention-grabbing pictures, which leads to the information that the organisation intends for its followers to read.

There are several other KPIs to assist an organisation in optimizing their social media strategy. Most importantly, an organisation will want to monitor how well their social media efforts reach, engage, convert, and bring back crucial audiences. The specific mix of KPIs will vary according to the goals of each campaign. Another critical KPI for Parliament would be to tag the responsible Government Department when a media statement or alert is posted. In this way, the Department in question can respond to issues that arise, and the public will know the difference between the role of Parliament and Government.

In my study, there was only one post which was a media alert that tagged a department. This was on 4 March 2019 titled, "Have Your Say: Airports Company Amendment Bill [B5-2018]" which tagged the Department of Transport and Airports Company, South Africa. This was useful for the departments to keep track of comments/suggestions/inputs and issues from the public so that corrective measures could take place.

5.4   AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study did not look at the efficacy of Twitter conversations (chats) on social media. There were no posts that indicated that a Twitter chat was scheduled from the sample. The researcher also looked randomly at other posts to see if there were any Twitter chats. This led to the conclusion that Parliament did not create and schedule such conversations, and therefore this aspect could not be assessed. This could be a possible area for further research to understand if such discussions, when created and scheduled, will help the Portfolio Committees of the National Assembly and the Select Committees of the National Council of Provinces know whether it would enhance public engagements with Parliament in future.

Wiltshire (2020) articulates that Twitter chats are particularly valuable for networking and generally engaging in meaningful conversations about any shared topics of interest. Twitter, as a platform, assists in connecting with a much larger audience. One such media organisation, Social Media Today, hosts worldwide #SMTLive Twitter chats twice a month for an hour to get social media and digital marketers to meet to talk about pertinent issues that affect them. A recap of the chats is shared on their site to have access to the information that was shared.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The World e-Parliament Report (2018:67) identified technologies, knowledge, and standards at the centre of its operations processes. It further exemplifies the values of collaboration, inclusiveness, participation, and openness to the people. The report states that instant messaging has seen a significant increase, and social media use also continues to rise. It also identifies obstacles for the greater use of information and communication technology such as training and skill deficits for staff and members and growing concerns over security and trust among members.

The most significant barrier to more excellent citizen engagement is a lack of knowledge of how the Parliament works. As part of the World e-Parliament Report (2018:66), a survey was done with 86 participating countries and identified several themes around the challenges and benefits of digital tools and communication. Many acknowledged the ability to form and increase networks and to effortlessly distribute information rapidly and extensively at a somewhat lower cost as a vital benefit of these new tools. One participant responded as follows; *"I can reach (and be reached) by many people simultaneously and easily, I can forward and shape ideas, gather input, tap into sources that I would otherwise not have access to"*.

Some of the members characterize the digital technologies as "how the world works," and increasingly, part of the picture going forward, for society as well as Parliament. This suggested a sense of certainty that Members of Parliament need to engage with and use this tool regardless of how they feel personally. The study had found that one portfolio committee Chairperson, @PhillyMapulane, was active on Twitter when he commented on the post of 4th April 2019, which related to the death of Minister Nomvulane Mokonyane's husband. This indicates that Chairpersons of both houses should be trained to use Twitter to their advantage and thus promote their respective committees' work. This would also encourage their followers to interact with Parliament's Twitter account, and in this way, they can grow their following.

The report went further to say that Members of Parliament use digital tools to support their work in Parliament and communicate with citizens. Younger members use mobile technologies, but Parliament comprises predominantly of members who are over 60 years of age (96%), so the transition of these members to move toward digital tools will be very slow, if at all.

Communicating with Citizens

The World e-Parliament Report (2018:67) indicated that there had been an upward shift of Twitter users from 2016 to 2018, an increase from 48% to 68% of members. Parliaments have identified three clear priorities in communicating with citizens, i.e., to inform citizens about policy issues and proposed legislation, explain what Parliament does and engage more citizens in the political process. Using digital tools to communicate with citizens is something Parliaments need to consider seriously. This survey has revealed a significant increase in citizens' use of social media tools to engage with Parliament (Williamson, 2013). Of major significance in this report is that 76% of the respondents report an increase in social media use over the last two years, 12% report use remaining steady. No parliaments reported a decrease in the use of digital tools for communication or engagement.

Moreover, Chen (2020) provides insight into the benefits of Twitter chats, of which one of them is brand awareness. One has to use a hashtag to participate and keep track of the conversation, and therefore if everyone else is doing the same, this increases awareness of the brand. Participation in chats increases Twitter followers. Even if the rate at which the follower increases is slow, it still means that these are followers who are aware of the brand, have interacted, and are interested in your field on Twitter. That is the type of follower who is invaluable to an organisation, and all efforts to attract them should be taken and maintained.

Twitter chats are perfect for establishing brand authority. The more Parliament participates in Twitter chats on topics relevant to its mandate, the more it becomes an authority in that specific field. Chen (2020) says that Twitter chats are all about learning and sharing information, not promotion. It could prove to be quite useful when introducing a bill, i.e., Parliament can schedule Twitter chats to provide the necessary information to the public so that they, in turn, can make relevant input to strengthen the bill.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) stated that, given its technical advances, social media is more powerful than conventional media. In this context, and given the current scenario of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has forced the world to go virtual in almost every aspect of life, it would therefore be prudent for any organization, not just Parliament, to devise a social media strategy and social media policy to ensure that the maximum number of people are reached using available technology and digital platforms. It will help disseminate critical information citizens require to ensure their voices are heard, considered, and implemented in policy-making decisions.

At the time of the study, there was no social media strategy or policy on the Parliament's website. The researcher was informed that a social media policy was devised and will be made available once it had been approved.

Finally, this phenomenon of limited participation and engagement with its citizens is not exclusive to the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa. A similar scenario was found by Nogueira (2015), who undertook a comparison of four Latin American countries of their social media use and participation. One of the characteristics lacking in all four government communications was their ability to turn their content into something meaningful for their citizens. The posts conveyed a formality and a tokenistic approach to participation that often ends up estranging citizens. Only three posts sought e-consultation from citizens and none towards e-decision making, indicating that the Latin American governments do not use social media to encourage broad citizen participation.

It remains to be seen whether the Republic of South Africa's Parliament embarks on initiatives where social media, Twitter specifically, is used to engage with their citizens. However, insights gained through this study show that one thing is abundantly clear, i.e., social media can disseminate information far and wide in the shortest time possible. To this end, if Parliament chooses not to expedite the approval and implementation of social media strategy or policy (which includes Twitter), they will most certainly be at a disadvantage.

The researcher hopes that the findings from this study be utilized by Parliament and Government departments to help inform the drafting of their future social media strategies and public engagement plans.

References

Adam, 2019. The Connection Between Geo-targeting and Social Media. Accessed at https://business.twitter.com/en/help/campaign-setup/campaign-targeting/geo-gender-and-language-targeting.html

Airports Company Amendment Bill (B5-2018). Accessed at https://pmg.org.za/bill/772

Allison, 2010. 4 Ways to Effectively Use Social Media as a Catalyst. Accessed at https://mashable.com/2010/03/12/social-media-catalyst/

Armstrong, 2011. Providing a clearer view: An examination of transparency on local government websites. Accessed at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/251595282_Providing_a_clearer_view_An_examination_of_transparency_on_local_government_websites

Benkler, 2006. *The Wealth of Networks - How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. London: Yale University Press

Bertot and Jaeger (2010). *Designing, implementing and evaluating user-centered and citizen-centered e-government. International Journal of Electronic Government Research,* 6(2), 1-17.

Bertot, J, and Grimes, 2010. Using ICTs to create a culture of transparency. E-government and social media as openness and anti-corruption tools for societies. Government Information Quarterly. *Science Direct*, 27(3): 264-271.

Bertot, J, and Hansen, 2012. *The Impact of Policies on Government Social Media Usage: Issues, Challenges, and Recommendations. Government Information Quarterly*, 29(1)

Bertot, J, Munson, and Glaisyer, 2010. *Social media technology and government transparency. IEEE Computer Society,* November issue.

Bertot, J., and Grimes, 2010. Social media technology and government transparency. *IEEE Computer Society,* November issue.

Blankenheim, 2009. As the ad money dries up, media closes. Vocus corporate blog. Accessed at http://www.cision.com/us/2009/07/ad-money-dries-media-closing on September 22, 2019

Bornman, L., 2015. Information society and digital divide in South Africa: results of longitudinal surveys. Information, Communication & Society Volume 19, 2016-Issue 2

Boyd and Ellison, 2008. Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication,* 1(3): 1-16

Bosch, 2017. *Twitter activism and youth in South Africa: the case of #RhodesMustFall*. London: Taylor and Francis Online

Bosch and Mutsvairo, 2017. *Pictures, Protests, and Politics: Mapping Twitter Images during South Africa's Fees Must Fall Campaign*. Africa Journalism Studies, 38:2, 71-89

Bosch, Mare and Ncube. 2019. *Facebook and politics in Africa: Zimbabwe and Kenya*. Media, Culture & Society, Vol. 42(3), 349-364.

Bosch, Wasserman, and Chuma, 2018. South African Activists' Use of Nanomedia and Digital Media in Democratization Conflicts. International Journal of Communication 12 (2018), 2153-2170

Bryer, 2010. *Across the Great Divide: Social Media and Networking for Citizen Engagement. In "Connected Communities: Local Governments as a Partner in Citizen Engagement and Community Building,"* A White prepared for the Alliance for Innovation, James Svara and Janet Denhardt (eds.)

Bryer and Zavattaro 2014. Social Media and public administration. Administrative Theory: Theoretical Dimensions and Introduction to the Symposium. Accessed at https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2753/ATP1084-1806330301

Camacho and Kumar (2012). Social Media on e-Government. Accessed at https://diuf.unifr.ch/main/is/sites/diuf.unifr.ch.main.is/files/documents/student-projects/Group5_Camacho_Kumar.pdf

Campbell 2011. *Egypt Unsh@ckled: Using Social Media to @#:) the System: How 140 Characters can Remove a Dictator in 18 Days.* Carmarthenshire, Wales: Llyfrau Cambria/Cambria Books.

Cann, Dimitriou, and Hooley, 2011. *Social Media: A Guide for Researchers.* England: University of Derby

Castells 2012. *Networks of Outrage and Hope*: *Social Movements in the Internet Age.* Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Chen 2020. Twitter Chats: How to successfully host and participate in them. Accessed at https://sproutsocial.com/insights/twitter-chats/

Chuma, W., 2006. *The Limits and Possibilities of Virtual Political Communication in Transforming South Africa: A Case Study of ANC Today and SA Today.*

Coats and Passmore 2008. Public Value: The Next Steps in Public Service Reform. Accessed at
http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.549.8241andrep=rep1andtype=pdf

Coglianese 2009. The Transparency President? The Obama Administration and Open Government. Cited in Governance: *An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions,* 22(4): 1-14.

Compaine, B. M 2001. The Digital Divide: Facing a Crisis or Creating a Myth? The MIT Press

Cornelissen, 2015. *Corporate Communication: A Guide to Theory and Practice.* London: Sage Publications Ltd

Cox 2020. 6 Social Media KPIs for Social Media Marketing Mastery. Accessed at https://www.brafton.com/blog/social-media/6-social-media-kpis-for-social-media-marketing-mastery on 13 September 2020

Dareen and Abu-Shanab, 2015. *The Effect of Using Social Media in Governments: Framework of Communication Success.* Jordan: Yarmouk University

Darwish 2017. *The effectiveness of using social media in government communication in UAE.* Zayed University. Dubai Accessed at https://www.zu.ac.ae/main/en/research/publications/_documents/The%20effectiveness%20of%20Using%20Social%20media%20in%20Government%20communication%20in%20UAE.pdf

DeFranzo 2019. What is the difference between qualitative and quantitative research? Accessed at from https://www.snapsurveys.com/blog/qualitative-vs-quantitative-research.

Demchak, Friis, and LaPorte, 2000. Webbing governance: Global Trends Across National-Level Public Agencies. In G.D. Garson (Ed.), *Handbook of information systems* 44(1): 63-67

De Villiers, 2001. *A People's Government, The People's Voice. A Review of Public Participation in the Law and Policy-Making Process in South Africa.* The Parliamentary Support Programme. Cape Town.

Duffy and Foley, 2011. Social Media, community engagement, and perceptions of parliament: A case study from NSW Legislative Council. Accessed at https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/articles/Documents/social-media-community-engagement-and-perception/17-DuffyandFoley-Social%20Media.pdf

Du Plooy, 2002. *Communication Research – Techniques, Methods, and Applications.* Lansdowne: Juta

Flick, M., 2014. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis.* London: Sage Publisher Ltd.

Fox 2009. *Engagement and Participation: What the Public Wants and How our Politicians Need to Respond. Parliamentary Affairs,* 62(4): 673-685.

Fraser 1990. Rethinking the public sphere: a contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. *Social Text*, 25(26), 56-80.

Freeman and Reed, 1983. Stockholders and Stakeholders: A New Perspective on Corporate Governance. *Sage Journals,* 25(3): 1-17

Fuchs 2014 *Social Media – a critical introduction.* London: SAGE

Getting 2007. Basic Definitions: Web 1.0, Web 2.0, Web 3.0. Accessed at https://www.practicalecommerce.com/Basic-Definitions-Web-1-0-Web-2-0-Web-3-0 on 6/7/2020

Gillwald, A 2017. Beyond Access: Addressing Digital Inequality in Africa. Ottawa: Centre for International Governance Innovation and Chatham House.

Gigler and Bailur 2014. *Closing the Feedback Loop- Can Technology Bridge the Accountability Gap?* Researchgate

Goldstuck, (2017), Social media deepens its hold on SA - all the stats | Fin24 (news24.com) on 6 July 2020

Grunig. 2006. Furnishing the Edifice: Ongoing Research on Public Relations as a Strategic Management Function. *ResearchGate.*

Grunig and Hunt, 1984. *Managing Public Relations.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston

Grunig 1992. *Excellence in Communication Management*. London: Routledge Taylor Francis Group

Grunig, 2001. Two–way symmetrical public relations: Past, Present, and Future. Accessed at https://www.researchgate.net/profile/James_Grunig/publication/323369596_Two-Way_Symmetrical_Public_Relations_Past_Present_and_Future/links/5a908ea0a6fdccecff01f8a5/Two-Way-Symmetrical-Public-Relations-Past-Present-and-Future.pdf

Grunig, G., and Dozier, D., 2002. *Excellent public relations and effective organizations: A study of communication management in three countries*. London: Routledge

Habermas, 1991. "The public sphere" In Mukerji, C.; Schudson, M. (Ed.): *Rethinking popular culture. Contemporary perspectives in cultural studies*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press. 398-404.

Hinton and Hjorth, 2013. *Understanding Social Media*. Australia: Sage Publishing

Hofmann, Beverungen, Räckers, and Becker (2013). Accessed at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259516275_What_makes_local_governments'_online_communications_successful_Insights_from_a_multi-method_analysis_of_Facebook

Hon and Grunig, 1999. *Guidelines for Measuring Relationships in Public Relations.* The University of Florida and the University of Maryland. Institute of Public Relations.

Howard and Muzammil, 2013. *Democracy's Fourth Wave? Digital Media and the Arab Spring*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hsieh, H, and Shannon, S.E. 2005. Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis.
Accessed at http://qhr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/15/9/1277 on 9 December 2020

Index of Economic Freedom 2020 Accessed at https://www.heritage.org/index/about on 6 July 2020

Ipsos 2015, Parliament of the Republic of South Africa: Public Participation Survey – Wave2 Khayabus. *W2, 2015 Final Report*. Unpublished report.

Jouhki, 2016. Facebook's Emotional Contagion Experiment as a Challenge to Research Ethics. Cogitation. *Media and Communication*, 4(4): 75-85

Kang and Gearhart 2010. *E-Government and Civic Engagement: How is Citizens' Use of City Web Sites Related with Civic Involvement and Political Behaviours? Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 54(3): 443-462

Kaplan 2015. *Social Media, the Digital Revolution, and the Business of Media*. London: Routledge Taylor Francis Group

Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010. Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons,* 53(1), 59-68.

Karunasena and Deng, 2012. *Critical factors for evaluating the public value of e-government in Sri Lanka. Government. Government Information Quarterly,* 29(1): 1-17

Kelley, Cranshaw, and Sleeper 2013. Conducting research on Twitter: A call for guidelines and metrics. Accessed at http://patrickgagekelley.com/papers/twitter-pmj.pdf

Kent and Taylor, M., 2002. Towards a Dialogic Theory of Public Relations. *Science Direct,* 28(1): 21-37

Kerlinger 1986. *Foundations of Behavioral Research* (2nd ed), New York: Holt

Khamis, Vaughn, and Gold, P. 2012. Beyond Egypt's 'Facebook Revolution' and Syria's 'YouTube Uprising': Comparing Political Contexts, Actors, and Communication Strategies*. Arab Media and Society Issue*, 15(1): 1-18.

Khan, 2017. *Social Media for Government. A practical guide to Understanding, Implementing and Managing Social Media Tools in the Public Sphere.* Singapore: Springer Singapore

Khasawneh, Jalghoum, Harfoushi, and Obiedat, 2011. *E-government program in Jordan: from inception to plans. International Journal of Computer Science Issues*, 8(4): 568-599

Kozinets 2006. "Netnography 2.0," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Marketing,* ed. Russell W. Belk, Cheltenham, UN and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing. 129-142

Kumar, 2014. *Research Methodology, a step by step guide for beginners.* London: Sage

Landsbergen 2010. Government as part of the revolution: Using social media to achieve public goals. Accessed at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313631912_Government_as_part_of_the_revolutio n_using_social_media_to_achieve_public_goals

Lang and Benbunan – Fich 2010. *The Use of Social Media in Disaster Situations: Framework and Cases*. New York: University of New York

Ledingham, 2006. *Public Relations as Relationship Management*. London. Routledge

Lee and Kwak (2012). An Open Government Maturity Model for social media-based public engagement. *Government Information Quarterly*, Vol 29 (4), pp 492, 503 DOI: 10.1016/j.giq.2012.06.001

Lee and Lee Elser, 2010. The Nine Commandments of Social Media in Public Administration: A dual Generation Perspective. Accessed at https://patimes.org/the-nine-commandments-of-social-media-in-public-administration-a-dual-generation-perspective/

Loader, and Mercea 2011. *Introduction Networking Democracy? Social Media innovations and participatory politics. Journal Information, Communication, and Society*, 14(6): 1-18

Lusoli, Ward, and Gibson, 2005. *(Re)connecting Politics? Parliament, the Public, and the Internet.* Oxford Academic. *Parliamentary Affairs,* 59(1): 24–42,

Mafihlo (2015). Citizens' Perceptions of Social Media and Public Value. Johannesburg. The University of Wits. Accessed at http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/18816/Citizens%20perceptions%20on% 20social%20media%20and%20public%20%20value_P.pdf?sequence=1andisAllowed=y

Mahajan-Cusack 2016. *The Impact of Social Media on Local Government Transparency and Citizen Engagement.* New Jersey Rutgers: The State University of New Jersey

Matsilele 2019. *Social Media Dissidence in Zimbabwe.* PHD University of Johannesburg. Accessed at

https://ujcontent.uj.ac.za/vital/access/manager/Repository?exact=sm_creator:%22Matsilele%2C+Trust%22andsort=sort_ss_title%2F

Matsilele, T. and Ruhanya, 2020. Social media dissidence and activist resistance in Zimbabwe. Sage

Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, 1995. An integrative model of organizational trust. Academy of Management Review. Vol. 20, No. 3 Accessed at https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1995.9508080335

Mccarthy and Krishna, 2011. Social Media: time for a governance framework. Accessed at https://www.nacdonline.org/files/social-media-time-for-a-governance-framework-sept-2011.pdf

McMillan 2000. The microscope and the moving target: The challenge of applying content analysis to the *World Wide Web. Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77 (1): 80-98.

Meloni 2012. A study suggests promotional and informational Tweets catch social marketing clicks. Accessed at https://www.brafton.com/news/study-suggests-promotional-and-informational-tweets-catch-social-marketing-clicks/ doi 18/08/2020

Mergel, 2012. *A manager's guide to designing a social media strategy*. New York: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs.

Meinhardt, 2009. The public value inside: What is public creation? *International Journal of Public Administration* 32(3-4):192-219. DOI: 10.1080/01900690902732632

Mickoleit 2014. Social Media Use by Governments: A Policy Primer to discuss Trends. Accessed at https://doi.org/10.1787/5jxrcmghmk0s-en

Microsoft.com (2017) Accessed at https://cloudblogs.microsoft.com/industry-blog/Government/2017/07/12/social-media-and-citizen-engagement/ on 10 September 2020

Moser, Claus, and Kalton, 1989. *Survey Methods in Social Investigation* (2nd ed). Aldershot: Gower.

Mossberger, Wu, and Crawford, 2013. Connecting citizens and local governments? Social media and interactivity in major US cities. *Science Direct*, 30(4): 351-358

Mouton, 2000. How to succeed in your *Masters and Doctoral Studies – A South African Guide and Resource Book*. South Africa: J L van Schaik Uitgewers

Mpofu and Matsilele, 2020. Social Media and the Concept of Dissidence in Zimbabwean Politics.

Mutsvairo, B. 2016. *Digital Activism in the Social Media Era.* London: Springer

Mutsvairo, B and Muneri, C.T. 2019. *Journalism, Democracy, and Human Rights in Zimbabwe*, London: Lexington Books.

Mutsvairo, B and Ragnedda, M. 2019. *Mapping the Digital Divide in Africa: A Mediated Analysis*. Eds. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Nogueira, 2015. *Social Media and Participation – A comparison of four Latin American Countries.* London: City University London.

Noveck 2009. Wiki Government: How Technology Can Make Government Better, Democracy Stronger, and Citizens More Powerful. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press

Östman, and Turtiainen, 2016. *From Research Ethics to Researching Ethics in an Online Specific Context.* Finland: University of Turku

Parsons, 2016 What Exactly does living a Tweet do on Twitter. Accessed at https://follows.com/blog/2016/01/tweet-likes-twitter

Pierre, K. 2020. Twitter for Public Participation. Accessed at https://thornleyfallis.com/using-twitter-for-public-participation/ doi 18/08/2020

Postill and Pink 201). Social Media Ethnography: The Digital Researcher in A Messy Web. *Sage Journals.* Accessed at https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1329878X1214500114

Robinson L et al (2015). Digital inequalities and why they matter. *Information Communication and Society. 18 (5).*

Romanek 2013. Tweet tips: Most effective calls to action on Twitter. Accessed at https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/a/2013/tweet-tips-most-effective-calls-to-action-on-twitter.html on 17 September 2020

Shark 2015. *Technology and Public Management.* New York: Routledge

Shehabat 2015. Arab 2.0 Revolutions: Investigating Social Media Networks during waves of the Egyptian political uprisings in 2011, 2012, and 2013. Accessed at https://researchdirect.westernsydney.edu.au/islandora/object/uws%3A34196

Solis, 2008. The State of Social Media. Accessed at https://www.briansolis.com/2008/09/state-of-social-media-2008-html/

Steenkamp and Hyde-Clarke, 2014. The use of Facebook for political commentary in South Africa. *Science Direct*, 31(1): 351-358

Stewart, 2009. *The Dilemmas of Engagement: The Role of Consultation in Governance.* Australia: ANU E Press

Steyn and Puth, 2000. *Corporate communication strategy.* Sandton: Heinemann

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

Todd, 2015. *12 Reasons why Twitter is better than Facebook.* Accessed at https://socialmediarevolver.com/12-reasons-twitter-better-facebook/ on 30 July 2019.

Townsend and Wallace, 2016. *Social Media Research: a guide to ethics.* Aberdeen:the University of Aberdeen.

United Nations, 2003. World Public Sector Report 2003: e-Government at Crossroads. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. New York: United Nations

Van der Graaf, Otjes, and Rasmussen, 2016. *Weapon of the weak? The social media landscape of interest groups. European Journal of Communication*, 3 (2): 120-135.

Walton and Leukes 2013. Prepaid social media and mobile discourse in South Africa. Researchgate

Warren, Sulaiman, and Jaafar 2014. Understanding civic engagement behaviour on Facebook from a social capital theory perspective. July 2014. *Behaviour and Information Technology* 34(2) DOI: 10.1080/0144929X.2014.934290

Wikström, P., 2014. #srynotfunny: Communication functions of hashtags on Twitter. SKY *Journal of Linguistics,* 27: 127-152

Williams and Gulati, 2007. Social networks in political campaigns: Facebook and the 2006 midterm elections. In the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. *Sage Journals.* Accessed at https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1461444812457332

Williamson 2013. *Social Media Guidelines for Parliaments,* Geneva, General Inter-Parliamentary Union

Wiltshire, 2019. How to Participate in a Twitter chat. Accessed at https://www.socialmediatoday.com/news/how-to-participate-in-a-twitter-chat/546805 On 14 September 2020

Wiltshire 2020. How Brands Can Benefit from Social Media Groups (#SMTLive Recap). Accessed at https://www.socialmediatoday.com/news/how-brands-can-benefit-from-social-media-groups/579098/ on 19 September 2020

Wolfsfeld, Segev and Sheafer 2013. The Social Media and the Arab Spring: Politics Always Comes First*. International Journal of Press and Politics*, 1(3): 1-10

World e-Parliament Report 2018. France, Inter-Parliamentary Union Accessed at https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2018-11/world-e-parliament-report-2018

Yang and Callahan, 2007. Citizen Involvement Efforts and Bureaucratic Responsiveness: Participatory Values, Stakeholder Pressures, and Administrative Practicality. Public Administration Review. *Public Administration Review*, 67(2): 249-264

Yu 2008. Building a value-centric e-government service framework based on a business model perspective. Accessed at https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-3-540-85204-9_14

Zaffar and Ghazaneh, 2012. *Knowledge sharing and collaboration through the social media- the case of IBM.* In Proceedings of the 7th Mediterranean Conference on Information Systems, MCIS.

Zavattaro and Semetelli 2014. A critical examination of social media adoption in government: Introducing omnipresence. *Government Information Quarterly,* 31 (2) 257-264.