

**THE INTERNET AND PROMOTION OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
IN THE ZIMBABWEAN DEMOCRATISATION PROCESS: VIEWS OF
DISPERSED ZIMBABWEAN CITIZENS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

MEMORY MUTEERI

23394412

**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Communications**

in the

FACULTY OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

at the

MAFIKENG CAMPUS OF THE NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY

Promoter: DR. W. E. HEUVA

November 2015

Table of Contents

Declaration	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Dedication	ix
Abstract	x
List of Acronyms	xi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background and Context	1
1.3 Problem Statement	4
1.4 Research Objectives	5
1.4.1 Sub-Objectives	5
1.5 Research Questions	6
1.5.1 Sub-Questions	6
1.6 Definition of Terms	6
1.6.1 Internet	6
1.6.2 Social Media	6
1.6.3 World Wide Web	6
1.7 Importance of the Study	7
1.8 Delimitation of the Study	7
1.9 Theoretical Framework	8
1.10 The Concept of Citizen Participation	11
1.11 Methodology	13
1.11.1 Research Design	14
1.11.2 Sampling	14
1.11.3 Data Collection Techniques	15
1.11.4 Data Analysis	16

1.12 Structure of the Dissertation	16
CHAPTER 2: DEMOCRACY AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)	19
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 Conceptions of Democracy	21
2.3 Definition of Democracy	26
2.3.1 Liberal Individualist Democracy	28
2.3.2 Communitarian Democracy	30
2.3.3 Deliberative Democracy	30
2.4 The Public Sphere	34
2.4.1 A Critique of the Habermasian Public Sphere	38
2.5 The Internet as a Cyber Sphere	40
2.5.1 A Critique of the Cyber Sphere	42
2.6 Assumed influences of the Internet on Democracy	45
2.7 Conclusion	52
 CHAPTER 3: DOES THE INTERNET CORRELATE WITH DEMOCRACY?	 54
3.1 Introduction	54
3.2 Quantitative Literature Review	55
3.2.1 Traditional predictors of democracy versus the strength of the Internet	55
3.2.2 The global effect of Internet on democracy (1992-2002)	56
3.2.3 Internet diffusion and democratic growth	57
3.2.4 Internet and the policy making process	60
3.3 Critique of the Quantitative Literature Review	62
3.4 Qualitative Micro-Level Literature Review	63
3.4.1 A comparison of new and old mass media	63
3.4.2 Effects of the Internet on civic and political engagement	65

3.4.3 Effects of Internet use on socio-political participation: the case of Belgian youth	66
3.4.4 The role of Internet in the Egyptian revolution	67
3.4.5 The Internet and citizen demand for democracy: an evaluation	69
3.4.6 Effects of Internet use on civil society and political engagement	70
3.4.7 The role of the Internet in political organisation	71
3.4.8 ICTs and citizen participation in Parliament	72
3.4.9 The Internet, democratic culture, public discourse and citizen participation	73
3.5 Conclusion	76
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	79
4.1 Qualitative Research	79
4.2 Research Design	80
4.3 Sampling	81
4.4 Data Collection Techniques	83
4.4.1 Qualitative Interviews	83
4.4.2 Analysis of documents	85
4.4.3 Secondary Sources	86
4.4.4 The Internet as a source	86
4.5 Data Analysis	87
4.6 Ethical considerations	88
4.7 Conclusion	89
CHAPTER 5: POLITICS AND THE MEDIA IN ZIMBABWE	90
5.1 Introduction	90
5.2 The role of media in advancing democracy	92
5.3 Media reforms in Zimbabwe since independence	96

5.4 The Press	100
5.5 Declining of one-party state idea	101
5.6 Power sharing with opposition MDC	104
5.7 The emergency and structure of Internet in Zimbabwe	107
5.8 The Internet as an alternative media	111
5.9 Use of Internet by civil society and SMOs in Zimbabwe	118
5.10 Conclusion	123
 CHAPTER 6: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS	 126
6.1 Introduction	126
6.2 Review of documents	126
6.2.1 Interception of Communications Act (ICA) 6 of 2007	127
6.2.2 Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) 5 of 2002	130
6.2.2.1 Access to Information	131
6.2.3 The Public Order and Security Act (POSA) 1 of 2002	134
6.2.3.1 Effects of POSA on Freedom of Expression	134
6.2.3.2 Effects of POSA on Freedom of Assembly	135
6.2.4 Zimbabwe National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy	136
6.2.5 Registration of Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) Card	138
6.2.6 State Surveillance for national security purposes	138
6.3 Interviews	141
6.3.1 The Nature and Extent of Internet use	142
6.3.2 Government websites as facilitating citizen participation	145
6.3.3 Citizen participation	147
6.3.4 Participation in legislation making process via the Internet	148
6.3.5 Participants' understanding of the role of Internet in promoting citizen participation	150

6.3.6 How is the Internet being used in Zimbabwe to increase citizen participation	152
6.3.7 The Internet and freedom of expression in Zimbabwe	153
6.3.8 Impediments of using Internet for citizen participation in Zimbabwe	154
6.4 Conclusion	159
CHAPTER 7: INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS	160
7.1 Introduction	160
7.2 Citizen participation and Citizenship	161
7.3 Citizen participation in the Constitution making process	164
7.4 Involvement of citizens in legislative making process	168
7.5 Social networks and citizen participation	170
7.6 Lack of confidence in the governance system	174
7.7 Lack of awareness of e-governance initiatives	176
7.8 The prospective role of the Internet in promoting citizen participation as understood by the respondents	181
7.9 The citizens and liberty to express themselves online	186
7.10 Obstacles to the use of Internet for citizen participation	191
7.10.1 Lack of Internet access	191
7.10.2 Attitudes of citizens and the government towards the use of Internet for citizen participation	193
7.10.3 Application of undemocratic laws by the government	194
7.11 Inexistence of community cohesion	196
7.12 Conclusion	197
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	198
8.1 Introduction	198
8.2 Main arguments and findings	198
8.3 Implications of the findings	207
8.4 Recommendations	207

8.5 Limitations of the study	208
9. REFERENCE LIST	209
10. ADDENDUM	234

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own effort. I certify that all the material in the dissertation which is not my own work has been identified and acknowledged. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Signed:

Date:

Memory Muteeri

Acknowledgements

I am greatly indebted to the North West University for granting me a bursary that made it possible for me to undertake this research. Without the sincere moral and practical assistance from a number of individuals, it would have been impossible to complete this study. I am particularly thankful to my supervisor, Dr. William Heuva for remaining determined and helpful in sharing critical ideas and captivating insights on several issues associated to this study. Thank you for all the constructive comments throughout this study. This dissertation would have not been possible without your tireless effort. I am also grateful to my friend Hatikanganwi Mapudzi who continued to encourage me and render support whenever she could and for sharing of archives. Thank you for sacrificing your time to read some of my drafts and making invaluable comments. Many thanks also go to Dr Siziba for editing this thesis and for the advice when I was not sure of what to do.

Writing this dissertation required long hours and sometimes long nights away from loved ones. My husband and kids deserve special mention for bearing my long absences. I wish to thank my husband Eldredge for his patience, sacrifice and encouragement whenever I would be frustrated and felt like quitting. Thank you for spending some time with our kids when I could not.

Special thanks go to my brother Talkmore for your tireless intervention when I could not understand the way to go about it. Thank you for making it to appear simple and doable. Many thanks to my brother Amos for the faith you had in me since my undergraduate years, and for keeping nudging me to go on, even when I thought I had arrived. Thanks to all my siblings for encouraging me to carry on even when the road seemed uphill. I am grateful to my mother for the words of wisdom and prayers.

Above all, I want to thank God the Almighty for leading me this far. Without the Lord's guidance all the efforts would have been fruitless. Several other individuals have also contributed to this work though I am not able to single them out on this short page. Thank you all.

Dedication

To my beloved late Father Amos Saurombe 1939-2002

I know he would be proud

Abstract

This study examines the use of Internet to enhance citizen participation in Zimbabwe focusing on the Zimbabweans dispersed in South Africa. It aims to critically examine the overall role played by the Internet in the democratisation process in Zimbabwe. The study presumes the view that as Information and Communication Technologies become more accessible and affordable, more people are able to easily coordinate, organise and participate in the public sphere. It also examines the current concerns of Zimbabwean citizens in relation to their rights to freedom of expression and access to information. The study looks at the increase in Internet diffusion and the rise of new diverse media platforms and how these can empower citizens to participate in the political realm. It is assumed that new technologies have great implications for political societies, playing a great role in facilitating political action, the creation and maintenance of a vibrant public sphere, giving ordinary citizens the ability to share information, mobilise, campaign and maintain a critical eye on their leaders. However caution should be taken not to overemphasise these positive outcomes of Internet use because they are contextually based. The application of the Internet in an endeavour to advance democracy has not yielded the same results world over. In some instances the same technology has been manipulated and abused by authoritarian governments to thwart democracy. In this respect several counteractive methods have been put in place by authoritarian governments for instance, legislation in response to online challenges posed by new media. At the same time the study also deliberates on the legitimate role the media should play be it in a democracy or in an authoritarian government. It is significant to note that Internet has the potential to facilitate the development of civil society and democracy in situations like those in Zimbabwe. However, the limitations of the Internet as a public sphere must also be recognised. The capacity of the Internet to revolutionise political participation and civil life is dependent on other factors like access, ownership, reliability and socio-economic and political context of a country. Hence, it is of great importance to note that the potential of the Internet in enhancing democracy should not be exaggerated because its capacity is dependent on other factors. The outcomes of its application in different places for instance in the North have not been the same in the South such that its role in the democratisation process is debatable. Interviews were conducted with Zimbabwean citizens living in South Africa to establish the participants' views and opinions with regard to the use of Internet for citizen participation.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

3G	Third Generation Mobile Technology
4G	Fourth Generation Mobile Technology
ACHPR	African Charter on Human and People's Rights
AIPPA	Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
AMI	Africa Media Investments
ANZ	Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe
BSA	Broadcasting Services Act
CDMA	Code Division Multiple Access
CDMA2000	Code Division Multiple Access (3 rd Generation cellular/radio technology)
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CIO	Central Intelligence Officer
COPAC	Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DI	Democracy Institute
DSL	Digital Subscriber Line
EDAW	Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
EDGE	Enhanced Data rates for GSM Evolution
EPO	Emergency Powers (Censorship of Publications) Order
GISP	Government Internet Service Provider
GNU	Government of National Unity
GPA	Global Political Agreement
GSM	Global System for Mobile Communications
IAP	Internet Access Provider
ICA	Interception of Communications Act
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISP	Internet Service Provider
ISO	International Socialist Organisation
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
LOMA	Law and Order Maintenance Act
LRF	Legal Resource Foundation
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MED	Media Africa Group
MIC	Media and Information Commission
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
MOI	Ministry of Information
NCA	National Constitution Assembly
NNAP	NGO Network Alliance Project
OSA	Official Secrets Act
OSISA	Open Initiative for Southern Africa
PF ZAPU	Patriotic Front Zimbabwe African People's Union
POSA	Public Order Security Act
POTRAZ	Post and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe
PSTN	Public Switch Telephone Network
RBZ	Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation
RICA	Communication-Related Information Amendment Act
RPPC	Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Company
SIM	Subscriber Identity Module
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USF	Universal Service Fund
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front

ZEDC	Zimbabwe Electricity Distribution Company
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army
ZMC	Zimbabwe Media Commission
ZUM	Zimbabwe Unity Movement

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study and provides the background and context. It also explains the rationale or significance of the study and outlines the research objectives. Furthermore, the chapter briefly introduces the theoretical and methodological frameworks of the study, while these are discussed in depth in chapters 2 and 4 respectively.

1.2 Background and Context

Great weight has been attached to the Internet as a technology that breaks the obstructions between the citizens and governments. The United Nations (2011) has characterised the Internet as an exceptional technology, because of its speed, worldwide reach, and relative anonymity, which has generated anxiety amongst governments and the powerful.¹ The application of Internet is becoming more and more relevant for the 21st century governments, not only as a means of political campaigning but also as a platform employed by the public to engage in political discussion, debate and the formation of opinions. In agreement with that Howard (2010:132) argues that “democracy and democratisation can no longer be effectively studied without some attention paid to the role of information and communication technologies.” This is because of the way they have impacted on democracy and the process of democratisation.

The Internet’s networking facilities are providing citizens with opportunities for them to partake in socio-political deliberations that affect them. Notably, Janse van Rensburg (2012:93) states that “for African countries dealing with unique and increasingly complicated political and socio-economic issues, the Internet provides a platform from which citizens can now address these issues themselves and, in doing so, contribute to a public sphere that strengthens the democratic fibre of their countries.” For instance, the Internet played a significant role in Egypt’s uprising. Just as Tunisians before them, Egyptian protesters took pictures from scenes, uploaded them on social networks, posted comments about recent progress on the ground and provided the followers with truthful information about the activities taking place (Mrkalj, 2011). To some extent this shows how the Internet has made communication easier and has minimised the role of gate keepers.

¹ Frank La Rue, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression. General Distribution. Vol 17(7):22 (United Nations General Assembly, May 16, 2011).

Moreover, “communication between individuals in non-permissive environments and with the outside world has clearly changed due to the widespread adoption of social networking tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube” (Joy-Webb, 2011:1). To some extent, these developments in new media have empowered citizens in states with restricted media such that they are now able to participate in the political sphere. This argument is supported by Zhuo et al (2011 cited by Alsebaei, 2013:31) who argued that the social media made it possible “for first hand and truthful information to be broadcast within and without the Arab world.” Protesters used these websites, text messages as well as electronic mails to coordinate their efforts and to propagate information. In addition, in the Arab Spring uprisings social media technologies have been used to organise, communicate and raise awareness in the face of state attempts of suppression and Internet control (Howard *et al.* 2011).

Whilst the application of the Internet resulted in the Arab Spring revolutions, the same results have not been witnessed in other countries. For instance, in the Northern African countries like Bahrain and Sudan; and in the Middle Eastern countries like Libya and Syria, thousands of protestors have been killed and demonstrations violently repressed. Thus one may wonder if the widespread access to ICTs really empower citizens to participate in governance processes and empower resistance movements at the expense of the coercive control of repressive regimes, or it empowers the authoritarian regimes to control opposition. Hence one may be forced to argue whether these ICTs are truly “liberation technologies” or if they in real sense create a “synchronized public” that constrains undemocratic rulers? (Meier, 2011:2). Though the Internet has been hailed as a tool that advances democracy, in some instances the emancipating potential of the Internet has been exaggerated. It is also significant to note that authoritarian states can employ increasing Internet adoption to their advantage.

Information and Communication Technologies have, in a number of ways redefined what is understood to be effective citizenry and citizen participation, which are central to a functioning democracy (Janse van Rensburg, 2012:97). Nevertheless, vast portions of the world and the millions of people, predominantly in the developing and low-income African states and Asia have no access to ICTs and remain ignorant of this phenomenon (Janse van Rensburg. *ibid.*). The Internet in Africa is generally confined to the capital cities, and statistics show, for instance, that Nigeria, Africa’s strongest economy, has about 39, 7% of its population accessing Internet whilst Egypt has 53, 2% of its population accessing Internet and South Africa with 51, 5% (Internet World Statistics, 2014). Regardless of these advances

in technological reach and growing digital awareness, statistics show that Africa still has a way to go in excelling as far ICTs are concerned (ibid).

Several scholars have identified numerous reasons for the slow pace of Internet connectivity and use in Africa; for instance, Kanjo and Lwanda (2008) argue that clear policies on the application and development of information and communication technology are lacking. Most African countries do not afford to upgrade the infrastructure required for the development of Internet. Infrastructural “limitations include scarce and /or poor quality telephone lines, unreliable power supplies, out-dated equipment, and a lack of knowledge and training” (Kanjo and Lwanda, 2008). In addition, regulatory barriers imposed mostly by authoritarian governments are also an impediment to Internet diffusion in most African states. These regulatory obstructions “include government monopolies on telecommunications, high access rates for telephone service and legal disincentives to foreign investment” (ibid.). Moreover, poverty has immensely furthered the sluggish pace of Internet development in Africa. In a continent where the majority of the citizens survive on less than a dollar a day and are concerned with more basic needs like food, water, medical care, shelter and clothing, the Internet remains a luxury only a few can afford (Lesame, 2005).

The information revolution is inconceivable without democracy, and true democracy is unimaginable without freedom of information, thus Annan (1997) argues that information and freedom are inseparable. As Hacker and Van Dijk (2000) note, some countries have tested the use of the Internet as a political medium and there are recommendations that it has catalysed a paradigm shift in democracy by re-engaging the citizenry in political processes and enabling active involvement in both the decision-making processes and in the business of governance. It is very important to note that the way states configure the Internet control schemes reflect that state’s public sphere (Moyo, 2007). In other words, in most cases where the government devise several means of Internet control, the public sphere is also controlled such that citizen deliberations on political matters are limited and monitored. In Africa, as is the rest of the world, there is growing interest in democracy as a system of governance that will empower citizens to freely express themselves, have a say in decisions that affect the way they are governed and freely choose their leaders, thus in a way take charge of their lives and chart their destiny.

Nevertheless, as La Rue argues “the global reach of the Internet, and its ability to transmit information in real time and mobilise populations, creates fear among governments and the

powerful” (cited in Capdevilla, 2011). As a result there has been increasing restrictions on the use of the Internet, by means of employing sophisticated technologies to block content, monitor and identify activists and critics, as well as criminalising legitimate forms of expression (ibid.). In addition, restrictive legislation has been put in place to justify measures against freedom of expression. In Zimbabwe where there are oppressive media policies and violation of basic human rights through repressing freedom of expression and information, the Internet might create and facilitate citizen participation by affording the citizens an alternative platform. It is against this backdrop that this thesis sought to examine the Internet’s potential to contribute to the freedom of expression and provision of information needed to make informed decisions and choices, critical factors in the development and sustainability of democracy.

1.3 Problem Statement

Against the above background the purpose of this study is to examine how the Internet can be applied to promote public discourse and citizen participation as functions of democracy in Zimbabwe. When the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) came into power in 1980, it made promises that it would focus on equality and had no issue at all with other political parties contesting elections as it was their right to do so. Seven years after independence ZANU-PF and Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) united and became one party retaining the name ZANU-PF. This was after the Gukurahundi massacres. The idea of uniting into one political party was a way to gain control and a way of suppressing dissent voices. Although the country adopted a multi-party system, it still experienced inequitable distribution of power. Since then, alternative views have been suppressed such that even when the majority voted against the ruling ZANU-PF in the year 2000 referendum and 2008 elections, the government rigged the outcome and hold on to power (Southall, 2013).

Media legislations, for instance, the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) of 2002 prevent citizens from using the media for social change by putting restrictions on dissemination of information, curtailing freedom of expression and punishing expression of political dissent. It is through AIPPA that the government has succeeded in stifling independent media and the closure of independent newspapers. Moreover, the AIPPA also provided for the regulation of the mass media and the establishment of a Media and Information Commission (MIC) (AIPPA 2002). In addition, Section 16 (2) of the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) of 2002 “restricts freedom of expression, movement and

assembly and makes it a punishable offence for anyone to undermine or make any abusive, indecent statement about the president or acting president, whether in respect of his person or his office” (Moyo, 2006:201). This implies that the public are not at liberty to criticise their leaders. The broadcast media are monopolised by the state and no private television stations are allowed to operate (MISA, 2011). Though two private radio stations; Star FM and ZiFM radio were granted licenses to operate thirty-two years after independence, the licensing has been criticised as an alleged plot by ZANU-PF to falsely display the entry of private broadcasters to Zimbabwe’s airspace. This is because the owners of both radio stations are supporters of President Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party. The print media are dominated by state and only a few private newspapers have been granted licences to operate.

The main challenge associated with technology from the part of government-citizen relations in Zimbabwe is that of security, that is, the protection of privacy and the security of transactions must be assured. For instance, “a row erupted between Zimbabwe’s regulatory authority, the Postal and Telecommunications Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ), and Econet Wireless Zimbabwe, the country’s largest network operator, over the regulation of Blackberry services” (Ndlovu, 2012:6) Under the provisions of the Interception of Communications Act (6 of 2007), all service providers must provide a telecommunications “service which has the capacity to be intercepted”. Since Blackberry devices use a secure encryption code that makes the interception of data impossible, POTRAZ does not licence their use in the country (Ndlovu, 2012:6). Under such repressive conditions, citizens have to find other platforms through which to express and engage themselves in political deliberations. Considering the above-mentioned restrictive legal provisions in Zimbabwe today it becomes crucial to examine how the Internet can be used to enhance active citizen participation in the political discourse of the country.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine how the Internet can be used for citizen participation in the democratisation process in Zimbabwe.

1.4.1 Sub-objectives

- To assess the effective use of Internet as a tool for promoting citizen participation in their governance.

- To examine factors that may hinder the effective utilisation of Internet for citizen participation in the Zimbabwean political process.
- To examine the factors that might enhance the use of Internet in the political realm.

1.5 Research Questions

- How can the Internet be used to promote citizen participation in the democratisation process in Zimbabwe?

1.5.1 Sub-questions

- How effective is the Internet as a tool for promoting citizen participation in the democratisation process?
- Which factors can hinder the successful utilisation of the Internet for citizen participation in the Zimbabwean political discourse?
- What factors might enhance the use of Internet in the political realm?

1.6 Definition of Terms

1.6.1 Internet:

A matrix of networks that interconnects millions of computers, including personal computers, workstations, mainframes, supercomputers, and handheld computers. The networks that make up the Internet use a standard set of communication protocols, thus allowing any computer equipped with basic software and hardware tools to communicate with others over the Internet. The Internet is used for e-mail, file transfer remote login and as the basis for the entire World Wide Web (Editors of the American Heritage Dictionaries, 2006:166).

1.6.2 Social Media:

is defined as the platforms which the users share their knowledge, manners, fields of interests through Internet or mobile phones. These social platforms include, generally, chatrooms, discussion forums, location based services, social directories, social labelling, weblogs, podcasts, video cast, wiki, Facebook, and twitters (Kim et.al., 2008:8214; Eroz and Dogdubay, 2012:124; Kartal, 2013:164 in Aktan and Ozupek, 2015:201).

1.6.3 World Wide Web:

an information system on the Internet that allows documents to be connected to other documents by hypertext links, enabling the user to search for information, whether in the form of graphics, audio, and video files by moving

from one document to another simply by clicking on hot spots (Christensson, 2006).

Of significance to note is the fact that the World Wide Web is not another word for the Internet. The World Wide Web, or just "the Web," as some people call it, is a subset of the Internet. The Web consists of pages that can be accessed using a Web browser. The Internet is the actual network of networks where all the information resides (ibid.). The Internet is a vast hardware and software infrastructure that enables computer interconnectivity. The Web, on the other hand, is a massive hypermedia database - a myriad collection of documents and other resources interconnected by hyperlinks (ibid.).

1.7 Importance of the study

This study has great socio-political and academic importance because it deals with a contemporary phenomenon that is pertinent to the citizen's right to participate in governance in a democracy. Moreover, it is even more important in an African context, where until recently many states have lacked a practical medium through which ordinary citizens could participate and contribute to a culture of democracy in a non-offensive way that tolerate conflict. In several African states conflict has in many ways become an everyday occurrence for Africans especially in Zimbabwe. In many instances, what are in effect single party systems have condemned opposition to the ruling party as treason and political opponents are often presented as "anti-people" or enemies of the state and are severely repressed (Hameso, 2002:30). In Zimbabwe and other autocratic states where freedom of expression has been severely repressed, the Internet could provide a platform for communication and networking where traditional media have been limited. This study might encourage more debate on the use of Internet to facilitate citizen participation in political deliberations.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study

The researcher's main focus was solely on the use of Internet, whether accessed via mobile phones or computers and the promotion of citizen participation, and does not focus on magazines, television, radio and newspapers. In this study the term Internet encompasses the use of social media since the latter require an Internet connection to function. The study covered the post-independence era from the time the Internet was introduced to date though a discussion of media reforms since independence was also included. The researcher chose this period of time because of the economic and political upheavals, which have been

characterised by electoral violence, oppressive media policies and regulations that violate the basic human rights and freedom of the citizens. The researcher did not go to Zimbabwe for the interviews due to safety reasons as advised by the Higher Degrees Committee of the Faculty. Instead interviews were carried out with Zimbabwean citizens who are living in South Africa and the questions specifically asked for their experiences whilst they were still in Zimbabwe and not their South African experience.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

There are three influential views developed around the Internet democracy rhetoric and practice, each derived from a different model of democracy. Dahlberg (2001b) “partitions the domain of normative thinking about the Internet’s democratic potential into three types, each of which corresponds to a distinct model of democracy: the liberal individualist, the communitarian and the deliberative” (cited in Freelon, 2010:5). The liberal individualist model “sees the Internet as assisting the expression of individual interests” in other words, this model places the needs and rights of the individual right above those of the community. The key function of Internet in this model “is to offer a platform for personal or individual self-expression and the communication is primarily one-way, and participants peruse the views of others primarily to learn where they stand on the issues and, if necessary, rebut them” (Freelon, 2010:6).

In contrast to the Liberal individualist model, the communitarian model “highlights the possibility of the Internet enhancing communal spirit and values” (Dahlberg, 2001b:616). Under this model the purpose of online communication is to embrace the influence of technology to strengthen prevalent communal ties at the same time developing new ones. Thus the community will become stronger based permanent identity characteristics such as race, gender, nationality, or based on common views, interests and dogma. The communitarian desire on Internet political forums “entails high levels of in-group interaction and collective identity construction and other forms of bonding alongside a commitment to strong in-group/out-group boundaries” (Freelon, 2010:6).

The third model of democracy is the deliberative. Dahlberg’s (2001b:167) conception of deliberative democracy is summarised in the following definition:

In free and open dialogue, participants put forward and challenge claims and arguments about common problems, not resting until satisfied that the best

reasons have been given and fully defended. Participants attempt to come to an understanding of their interlocutors and to reflexively modify their pre-discursive positions in response to better arguments. In the process, private individuals become public oriented citizens (cited in Freelon, 2010:6).

This implies that in deliberative democracy the citizens have the freedom to express their views and opinions. They deliberate on different opinions and argue on issues of common concern until the best reasons are fully safeguarded. The normative requirements for a well-functioning public sphere include; “rationality, equality, reciprocal listening, political topicality and cross-cutting debate, among others” (Freelon, 2010:6). This study is informed by Habermas’ public sphere which is based on the deliberative model of democracy and the model’s vision that the “public sphere will be extended through cyberspace” (Dahlberg, 2001:168). The deliberative model views the Internet as an extension of the public sphere where citizens can deliberate on issues and this discourse is not influenced by the state or business power. These discussions can end up in formation of public opinion which can be instrumental in holding those in power accountable. Within the “Internet rhetoric and practice, the decentralised communications enabled through Web publishing, electronic bulletin boards, and chat rooms seem to provide spaces for rational-critical discourse.” (Dahlberg, 2001:616). In a way the deliberative model offers a more democratic model because of citizen participation.

Fundamental to the deliberative model is dialogue and difference. The model “assumes that difference always exists between subjects, difference which necessitates a process of rational critical discourse in order for privately-oriented individuals to become publicly-oriented citizens and for public opinion to develop that can rationally guide democratic decision-making” (Dahlberg, 2001:616). The implication of this is that communication is two-way; citizens are given an opportunity to air their views which are taken into consideration. Differences are not shunned but given space such that, citizens deliberate on matters of concern and come up with universally accepted views at the end.

In Habermas’ interpretation, the bourgeois public sphere played an intermediary role between the private concerns of individuals in their familial, economic, and social life compared to the demands and concerns of social and public life (Kellner, 2000:260). The public sphere was made up of “organs of information and political debate such as newspapers and journals, as well as institutions of political discussion such as parliaments, political clubs,

literary salons, public assemblies, pubs and coffee houses, meeting halls, and other public spaces where socio-political discussion took place” (ibid.264).

Habermas’ notion of the public sphere thus describes “a space of institutions and practices between the private interests of everyday life in civil society and the realm of state power. The principles of the public sphere involved an open discussion of all issues of general concern in which discursive argumentation was employed to ascertain general interests and the public good” (Kellner, 2000:263). The discussion was supposed to initially determine whether the issues to be discussed were of common interest and of public good. Other issues which were not of public interest were not given attention; focus was on deliberations about the public good. The discussion that came to pass at these sites was predicated on “norms of reasoned discourse in which arguments, not statuses or traditions, were to be decisive” (Kellner, 2000). The public opinion that came as a result of these deliberations turned out to be a foundational connection between state and society.

Habermas’ public sphere theory is not without limitations. Kellner (2000:263) argues that “Habermas idealises the earlier bourgeoisie public sphere by presenting it as a forum of rational discussion and debate when in fact certain groups were excluded and participation was thus limited” (Kellner, 2000:265”. This implies that the Habermasian public sphere was not representative of the society and eventually some views of excluded groups were not left out in the debates that transpired. “While the concept of public sphere and democracy assume a liberal and populist celebration of diversity, tolerance, debate and consensus, in reality, the bourgeoisie public sphere was dominated by white, property-owning males. Working class, and women’s public spheres developed alongside of the bourgeoisie public sphere, to represent voices and interests left out in the forum” (ibid. 266). The mere fact that other groups were excluded implies that there was no diversity in the views discussed. Furthermore, the fact that the white, property owning males dominated the public sphere means that the outcomes of the debates were supporting their views, in a way they were dominating the other classes which were not represented in the society. Therefore, instead of considering one liberal public sphere, it is more practical to conceive a variety of public spheres which at times correspond and are at variance sometimes. Amongst them could be public spheres of those who were left out like women as well as other conventional structures. Moreover, as Kellner (2000:266) argues, “the public sphere itself shifts with the rise of new social movements, new technologies and new spaces of public interaction,” just

the way it changed with the advent of the Internet. Therefore, Habermas was not supposed to conceive the public sphere as static.

In the New Information Age Habermas' classic public sphere has been conceptualised along the lines of the 'cyber sphere'. The cyber sphere "holds potential for a stronger diversity of opinions and expressions, as they actually exist in society, thus strengthening the public discourse and sphere, hence supplements the rationale of the mass media" (Jorgensen, 2001:13)). In other words the public sphere offered by the new Internet technologies is better than the one offered by the old mass media in that several different opinions and views that exist in the society can find their way resulting in deliberations that include many people involved and also many taking part in decision making.

1.10 The concept of citizen participation

Milakovich (2010:2) defines citizen participation as "voluntary or coerced participation in local, state and national issues that involve governmental decision-making." He further notes that the "term 'coercion' does not imply the application of force or violence. Rather, it is used in the same sense that Lowi describes 'forced compliance' with government rules and regulations" (Lowi, 1964 cited in Milakovich, 2010:2). In simple terms, citizen participation means that naturally by being a citizen, one has an obligation to participate in political deliberations that affect the public. Citizen participation suggests willingness "on the part of both citizens and government institutions to accept certain pre-defined civic responsibilities and roles and that each contribution is accepted, valued and possibly used in decision-making. The inclusion of citizen representatives as co-equal partners in decision-making processes contribute to successful citizen participation" (ibid.) On the same note, the government and the citizens have to admit that they both have a role to play in such a way that each role played by each part is regarded as significant in the governance processes. This means that the inputs from both sides should be weighed and included in the making of decisions. As Gaventa and Valderramma (1991:1) posit, "the concept of citizen participation is related to rights of citizenship and to democratic governance." They further assert that "nowhere is the intersection of concepts of community participation and citizenship seen more clearly than in the multitude of programmes for decentralised governance that are found in both southern and northern countries" (ibid).

The conception of ‘citizen participation’ as discussed by Milakovich (2010:3) has its origin in democratic political tenets, linked to the notion of participatory democracy and had specific purposes of participation which included:

providing information to citizens; receiving information from or about citizens, improving public decision processes, programmes, projects, and services; enhancing public acceptance of governmental activities; altering patterns of political power and allocations of public resources and delaying or avoiding difficult public-policy decisions (Milakovich, 2010:3).

As outlined above, successful citizenship is depended on citizens’ access to information. For citizens to take part in decision making they must be knowledgeable. Decision making becomes easier when both the citizens and the government have information and as a result of working together in making decisions, the public readily accept the activities of the government. Moreover, it also serves to inform the public about the services of the government such that the citizens can hold them accountable. In essence, these purposes served to connect the public and the government such that the citizens were involved in governmental processes. These activities have been made easier by the use of Internet technologies.

The Internet has turned out to be of assistance to citizen activists in various ways. New social movements, non-governmental organisations and citizen activists with the intention to “challenge and occupy new public spaces in which they were formerly excluded can now participate” (Milakovich, 2010:3). With the development of Internet, citizens and activists where formerly alienated can now engage in political activities because the Internet provides the space to do so. The space in the traditional media limited who could participate at times due to resources and also government control. Moreover, with the Internet there is no restriction to one public sphere. Besides the common public sphere, several other public spheres can develop alongside the main public sphere such that counter views which are not incorporated in the main public sphere can also be accommodated.

The development of alternative public spheres online also means that citizens are exposed to a range of diverse views and ideas expressed through these cyberspheres and more options available than possessed by the traditional media centuries ago. Members of the community who were previously excluded from the traditional public media can now find their way and engage in online deliberations where millions of websites provides easy and quick access to different views, networks and organisations.

Though there is no ideal model of democracy, the deliberative model of democracy embraces citizen participation more than the others. The deliberative model which is informed by the Habermasian public sphere informs this study. The normative requirements for a well-functioning public sphere that have been outlined above form the basis of how the Internet could be applied to enhance citizen participation.

1.11 Methodology

The study used a qualitative research approach. This method was chosen because the researcher sought to gain more insight into the use of Internet for citizen participation in Zimbabwe. Some studies have already been done on the subject but the researcher sought to illuminate and understand more on the topic so that new perspectives are gained on things which are already known. Denzin and Lincoln provide a definition of qualitative research which is regarded by many as an authoritative contribution on qualitative research methods. They define qualitative research as

multi method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life history, interview, observational, historical, interactional, visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:3 cited in Neergaard and Ulhoi, 2007:5).

In another description, Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:8) describe qualitative research methods as methods aiming at determining the dynamic and changeable nature of reality by collecting subjective data, presented verbally by people. In qualitative research “detailed data is gathered through open ended questions that provide direct quotations and the interviewer is an integral part of the investigation” (Jacob, 1988). Unlike in quantitative research, the researcher is part of the investigation in qualitative research.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994:10) qualitative data occur naturally as ordinary events in natural settings. Thus, this study used the strength of qualitative data to explore the views and opinions of Zimbabwean citizens on the potential of the Internet in the promotion of citizen's participation in the political dispensation of Zimbabwe.

1.11.1 Research Design

The research design is a detailed outline of how the investigation will take place. It includes consideration of the research approach which is to be taken, and the research methods, data collection tools and the methods of data analysis that are to be employed (Moule and Hek, 2011:30). In other words, the research design includes; how the data was collected, what instruments were employed, how the instruments were used and the intended means for analysing the collected data. The outline of how the study was conducted follows below and includes, sampling, data collection methods and data analysis.

1.11.2 Sampling

In this study the researcher did not go to Zimbabwe due to safety reasons, and as a result the sample was drawn from Zimbabwean exiles living in South Africa. The researcher made use of snowball sampling. Babbie (2010:208) asserts that snowball sampling “is appropriate when members of a special population are difficult to locate, such as the homeless individuals, migrant workers, or undocumented immigrants. In snowball sampling, the researcher collects data on the few members of the target population he or she can locate, and then asks those individuals to provide the information needed to locate other members of that population whom they happen to know.” In other words the number of participants increase as each participant suggests another subject. This method was appropriate for this study because of the availability of the Zimbabwean exiles that left the country due to socio-political and economic decay and are living in South Africa.

The researcher identified a few Zimbabwean citizens in Mafikeng who were capable of providing rich accounts of their experiences. She then asked those subjects to provide the names and contact details of other Zimbabweans who could also provide the required information. The researcher ended up having participants in different places like Johannesburg, Pretoria and Kimberly. The researcher did not just pick anyone to participate but chose subjects who were capable of providing detailed information on the subject of inquiry. In support of this view Padgett (2008:56) asserts that “by definition, qualitative studies rely heavily on people who are articulate and introspective enough to provide rich descriptions of their experiences.” Selecting participants anyhow would result in failure to get rich accounts of the required information.

1.11.3 Data Collection Techniques

The researcher collected data using in-depth interviews and review of documents. Among several data collection techniques, “the most common sources of data collection in qualitative research are interviews, observations, and review of documents” (Creswell, 2009; Locke, Silverman, & Spirduso, 2010; Marshal & Rossman, 1999 cited in Thomas *et al.*, 2011). The primary body of data for this study was drawn from the interviews and government documents, consisting of regulatory, legal and policy documents. The secondary material was obtained from sources such as books, published and unpublished articles, conference papers, policy statements, seminar papers and newspaper articles. Both public and private documents that contain information regarding the topic under discussion were used. Myers (2009:161) asserts that “documents are relatively cheap and quick to access...they make things visible and traceable.” In addition Merriam (2009:139) posits that “the presence of documents does not intrude upon nor alter the setting in which the phenomenon being studied occurs, as does the physical presence of an investigator.” The information from the documents was complemented by transcripts from interviews conducted with Zimbabwean citizens living in South Africa.

As just indicated, the main method of data collection was in-depth interviews. As stated by Boyce and Neale, (2006:3) “in-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programme, or situation.” The purpose when using in-depth interviews is not to interview a large number of participants, but a small number so that one can get in-depth information on the study. In-depth qualitative interviews use open-ended questions “which allow the researcher to deeply explore the respondent’s feelings and perspectives on a subject. This results in rich background information that can shape further questions relevant to the topic” (Guion *et al.*, 2011). In-depth interviews are appropriate when a researcher requires detailed data concerning the participants’ views and thoughts or when trying to discover issues in depth. For the present study, questions were worded in such a way that participants expounded on the subject of inquiry and not just to provide yes or no answers and in a way that they were free to use their own words. The interviews were levelled towards understanding the views and perspectives of the informants on the use of Internet for citizen participation.

In this study the researcher recorded the interviews using an audio recorder. In addition to the recorded responses, the researcher also wrote notes about her reflections soon after each session of the interview. The strength of qualitative data gathering methods is highlighted by Merriam (2009:85 cited in Saurombe, 2014) asserts that “qualitative data collection strategies consist of direct quotations from the people whose situations are being studied, thus their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge can be captured vividly”.

1.11.4 Data Analysis

In this study the researcher analysed the data manually. Data analysis is a complex process which is not done once and for all, it involves going forward and backward. Whilst in the data collection process the researcher can start analysing data also. As Jorgensen (1989:107 cited in Boeije 2010:76) puts forward:

data analysis is breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher sorts and sifts them searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns or wholes. The aim of this process is to assemble or reconstruct data in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion.

In the above definition of data analysis weight is given to two main activities, which are the “segmenting of data into parts and reassembling the parts again into a coherent whole” (ibid.). The data that the researcher analysed consisted of what the respondents said and what she read in various documents. The process involved determining themes in the interview records as well as from the documents which were reviewed. The process was done repeatedly in an attempt to verify and confirm the data. The data was coded according to different themes which were derived from the research questions before being interpreted. As stated by Burnard et al (2008:429) in qualitative research, “data analysis does not come after data gathering, but that after each and every session with a participant the researcher will start analysing.” Initial analysis of the data may further inform subsequent data collection where further explanation may be necessary.

1.12 Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter lays the foundation of the study. It introduces the concept of democracy and the Internet. It summarises the research questions, research objectives as well as the significance of the study. Furthermore, the chapter briefly introduces the theoretical and methodological

frameworks of the study, while these will be discussed in detail in chapters 2 and 4 respectively. The structure of the dissertation is also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Democracy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

This chapter provides the theoretical and conceptual framework that guide the study. The aim of this chapter is to identify and present theoretical positions that will guide the empirical analysis in the rest of the chapters. It discusses the debate surrounding the conceptualisation of democracy, the crucial aspect of the public sphere and its perceived transformation into the cybersphere. It also discusses the concept of citizen participation in relation to deliberative democracy and also other models of democracy. In addition, it also discusses whether the Internet plays a positive or negative role in the democratisation process.

Chapter 3: The role of Internet in a democracy

The chapter reviews literature that is related to this study. It presents how ICTs have been employed in different states and the different outcomes that have been yielded and how those studies inform this study.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter explains the methodology and the rationale for choosing that methodology. It also discusses in detail the research design, including the research methods: data collection and data analysis techniques used in the study.

Chapter 5: Media and Politics in Zimbabwe

The chapter explores the historical features of the Zimbabwean politics and media. This is a significant part of the study, as it introduces the reader to the roots of political and social despondency in contemporary Zimbabwe. It also explores Zimbabwe's media history, critically analysing the harsh media laws. The chapter gives an overview of the press and broadcasting media in Zimbabwe. How the media has been repressed since independence and how this has affected citizen participation. It also discuss the role of media be it in a democracy or authoritarian state. A discussion of the emergence of Internet in Zimbabwe is also included and how it has been used as an alternative media. Moreover a discussion of its employment by the civil society is also encompassed.

Chapter 6: Presentation of findings

This chapter presents the findings acquired from the review of documents and the interviews. It provides a description of the research results and not the analysis.

Chapter 7: Findings and Discussion

The chapter analyses and discusses the findings of the research. It further links the findings to the theoretical and conceptual issues outlined in chapters 2 and 3 above.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This chapter summarises the most important findings of the study. It discusses the research findings and points out some of the challenges faced with the application of the Internet in a bid to advance a democratic dispensation. It also highlights the limitations of the study and provides some recommendations for future research.

Chapter two presents the conceptual and theoretical framework for the study. It builds and expounds on the theoretical positions presented in this one. It explains concepts and outlines theoretical propositions on which the study is constructed.

CHAPTER 2

DEMOCRACY AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

In the case of a word like democracy, not only is there no agreed definition but the attempt to make one is resisted from all sides....The defenders of any kind of regime claim that it is a democracy...(George Orwell)

2.1 Introduction

The fact that the media are fundamental to contemporary democracy is universally recognised. The media is a crucial source of information and because democracy as a political system necessitates that the citizens should be well informed and so that they are able to participate efficiently in public discussion and in the entire political process where they have to make knowledgeable decisions. Thus, the exchange and unrestricted flow of “information as well as equal opportunities to participate in political debates have been considered key elements of democracy” (Moyo, 2004:12). As a result, constitutional guarantees for freedom of expression and press freedom are obligatory to safeguard citizens in such a manner that they are free to hold and express their opinions, and the press is free from the influence of both political and commercial forces.

The vital aspects of a truly democratic society as Haider (2009) argues “are freedom of expression and equitable access to information”. This applies to a situation where all citizens are kept conversant and enlightened about the decisions that affect their day to day living. Naturally, the human being has a “need and desire to communicate and exchange information with others” (Haider, 2009:1). In support of Haider’s view, Kaul (2012:6) asserts that “everyone everywhere should have the opportunity to participate and no one should be excluded from the benefits the Information Society offers.” The advent of the Internet has resulted in more access to information which can be shared across the globe swiftly, making interaction and connecting easier and more effective (Haider, 2009). Significantly to note is the fact that the “Internet has a potential to be a very powerful tool in the evolution of a democratic society, especially with regard to the accessibility of information, however used otherwise, it also has the potential to undermine the very fundamental concepts of what a democratic society is all about” (ibid.).

In many democratic countries these communicative rights are protected in an assortment of laws, policies and regulations. Nevertheless, in almost all these democracies, restrictions are placed on the freedom to communicate. Even though this is predominantly apparent in those countries that do not have a democratic culture, it is of great importance to note that even in recognised liberal democracies such as the USA, where the First amendment guarantees freedom of expression through its famous clause that “Congress shall not make laws... abridging freedom of speech or the press”, these rights continue to be the site of contestation² (see, for example, Lichtenberg, 1995: Introduction; Fiss, 1995; Holmes, 1995; Harvey, 1998 cited in Moyo, 2006:27).

This chapter deals with underlying theories, concepts and themes related to digital democracy which emerge in the literature and inform this study. The theories of democracy discussed in this chapter are the liberal individualist, communitarian and deliberative. The chapter begins with an overview of the diverse conceptions of democracy. More emphasis is placed on those concepts of democracy that relate to the provision of equal and effective opportunities for citizens to be involved in undertaking of collective policy making or, more precisely, for policy making by government. The chapter also discusses the concept of citizen participation and the public sphere. It considers the role of information and communication technology (ICT) mediated communications which emphasises citizen inclusion in formal policy making processes by government. It attempts to explicate on the relationship between conventional models of democracy and the role of the media as a public sphere in the democratisation process.

The section below outlines the concepts and theories that inform the research topic and these deal with democracy, participation and the Internet; and the public sphere theories. The section discusses the conceptions of democracy, the theories of democracy; the communitarian, the liberal representative and the deliberative. In addition, it also discusses the Habermasian public sphere and the Internet and the cybersphere. It emanates from the view that real democracy necessitates that the means of communication should empower the public to communicate autonomous of both the state and commercial interests, as well as linking the public sphere to a healthy civil society. The overriding interest in this quest is to identify aspects of these theoretical discussions that help illuminate this study of the use of

² The tightening of media laws in many countries after the September 11 2001 terrorist attacks on the USA, for example, has pointed to the vulnerability of media freedom, even in the countries that have traditionally been viewed as democratic.

Internet for citizen participation. It is important, though, to note that these views have been initially pronounced within the context of Western liberal democracies in response to the realities prevailing in those countries. The challenge therefore is to adjust these ideals to the analysis of state-media relations in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular.

2.2 Conceptions of Democracy

Democracy is a deeply disputed notion and generally multifaceted debates revolve around the meaning of democracy and the credibility of various models of democracy. Moyo (2006:31) argues that it is difficult to ascertain whether democracy which is engrained in Western history and culture can be successfully applied to non-Western societies that have different values and history.

Moreover, the dilemma surrounding the conception of democracy is worsened by “the question of whether democracy is a universal principle that can be generalised cross-culturally or it is a naturally liberal idea that cannot be transferred easily without complications” (Moyo, 2006:31). For instance, is the way democracy embraced in Western countries the same way it is understood in Africa? If it is different, then one might also ask if the way democracy is understood in South Africa the same way it is understood in Zimbabwe or Egypt. If it is different, does it mean that each country needs to have a different version of democracy?

Democracy as a concept and as practice has been for many years considered foreign to Africa (Ake, 1993; Nzouankeu, 1991 cited in Moyo 2006). This view is based on the misunderstanding that because Africa had its own exclusive history and customs, forcing democracy on it would destroy African culture. For instance, “the multiplicity of cultural differences in most of the African states was seen as a condition that made them prone to ethnic conflict, and hence required firm governments” (Ake, 1993:72 cited in Moyo, 2006:31). For that reason multiparty politics was discouraged in favour of ‘one-party democracies’ allegedly because the former encouraged ethnic-based conflict. Furthermore, the one-party-state was understood as an apparatus for economic growth on account of its presumed capacity to condense social tension and mobilise people’s energies (Nzouankeu, 1991).

Voltmer and Kraetzschmar (2015:5) posit that “while in established western democracies the idea of ‘democracy’ is firmly linked to the paradigms of liberal democracy (including

institutions of representation, such as competitive elections, political parties, etc.) and a free market economy, the interpretations of what democracy means are highly contested in transitional societies.” The implication thereof is that the meaning of the concept should not be static but differs according to the context in which it is applied. Their assertion is centred on the postulation that “democracy cannot be ‘exported’ in a one-to-one fashion, but is and has to be re-interpreted and ‘domesticated’ within the local systems of meaning (see Voltmer 2012; Whitehead 2002) (ibid).

To further elucidate on the debate, Rao and Wassermann (2007:32) assert that that the “wrong assumption is namely ‘the belief of the universal portability of Western values’”. People have a tendency to accept as universal, without interrogating, many of the ideas that have been developed in the Western countries. Because of that assumption some have doubted or discredited the existence of democracy in Africa forgetting that the Western values fit well in their societies and not smoothly in different situations, for instance, in Africa. Thus, the meaning of democracy and how it functions in that context has produced many operational and institutional problems including the role of the media.

Of importance to note is the fact that democracy is a disputed concept and yet it is one of the most used concepts today, not just as word but also the connotations that are assigned to it by people in different contexts (Arthur, 2011:1). Several scholars (Ferguson, 2006; Nyamnjoh, 2010; Wasserman, 2010) have suggested that democracy is not just about the ability to handle the society, but more significantly, democracy is a way of life. Hence, to them discussions about democracy should not be just the concept but its detailed meaning in different settings and in this instance, the African context. On this note Arthur (2011:1) argues that:

If democracy is indeed a way of life, we must appreciate that different societies have different traditions and cultures that shape their ways of life. Out of necessity therefore, Africa’s history, culture and beliefs should shape its way of life!

Because Africa’s history and values are different from the Western values the concept of democracy cannot be assimilated into the African culture, as a result some critics demand a different conception of democracy. Concurring with Arthur is Fortman (1994:69) who asserts that “cultures are not static. Thus, rather than just an idea or set of ideas, democracy should be seen as a process. Every society has to receive democracy in its own way.” Hence, the Western world should not try to impose their democracy on African states; rather the democratisation process will take place in manner that suits the African environment.

Because of the controversy surrounding the notion of democracy, a number of academics, for instance, Nyamnjoh (2005) and Wasserman (2007) demonstrate that Western or global ideas that came in this tide of the media and democracy cannot be imported and applied in African contexts without difficulties. Reinforcing their argument is Faremo who contends that:

We must not forget that democracy must grow from local roots; it cannot be imported, sold or paid for. It cannot be imposed from outside. The people of each nation must take their fate into their own hands and shape the form of government most suited for their national aspirations. Consequently we must avoid any attempt to impose predefined models of democracy on African countries... (Grete Faremo as quoted in Human Rights Handbook, 1992, part 11:13 cited in Fortman, 1994:69).

In a way imposing a form of democracy that does not address the needs of the people in that situation will create more problems than solutions. Nyamnjoh (2005) argues strongly that democracy and media cannot be embraced in all contexts in the same manner. The implication of his argument is that the way democracy is understood in the West is not the same way it is understood in the African context because the circumstances prevailing are different. On the same note the role played by the media in these two different environments cannot be the same because there are so many different factors acting upon the processes. Furthermore, Nyamnjoh (2005:25) contends that “liberal democracy and Africa are not good bedfellows.” They cannot exist together in harmony. Therefore, Arthur (2011:1) contends that “owing to its history, socioeconomic development status and differentiated conditioning, it is important that Africa negotiates a form of democracy that most suits its context.” Thus, Africa is in need of democracy, not the Western idea of democracy but a form of democracy that is in accord with the African situation.

Of significance to note is the fact raised by several scholars, that there is need to reconsider these critical concepts whilst at the same time as some scholars suggest it is impossible to reject these earlier concepts because they originated from the West or are non-African (Berger 1998; Nyamnjoh 2005; Rao & Wasserman 2008). There is need to think of ways in which concepts such as democracy and the media can be administered and integrated into the African context so that they become appropriate if they are, particularly when they have proved to be of significance as democracy has.

Reasoning on the suitability of the concept of democracy in Africa, Nyamnjoh (2005:25) contends that:

‘... implementing liberal democracy in Africa has been like trying to force onto a body of a fully figured person, rich in cultural indicators of health with which Africans are familiar, a dress made to fit a slim, de-fleshed Hollywood consumer model of a Barbie-doll entertainment icon...then when the dress fails to fit the African body, instead of blaming the tiny dress or its designer, the tradition has been to fault the popular body for emphasizing too much bulk, for parading the wrong sizes, for just not being the right thing. Not often is the experience of the designer or dress maker questioned. Such high levels of insensitivity is akin to the behaviour of a Lilliputian undertaker who would rather trim a corpse than expand a coffin to accommodate a man-mountain or a carpenter whose only tool is a hammer and to whom every problem is a nail...’

In other words Nyamnjoh’s (2005) argument is that liberal democracy does not suit the needs of Africa and the blame should not be on Africa but on the concept. Therefore what is desirable is a negotiation of an applicable democracy model for Africa that which is suitable for its particular settings.

Adding on to the above argument by Nyamnjoh is one more explanation that Africans are more interested in socio-economic matters more than abstract civil liberties (Babatunde, 2014). On this note one may wonder if it is really possible to have a healthy socio-economic environment which is completely separate from the political environment. Notably, Mariam (2011 cited in Babatunde, 2014:36) aptly shows how political elites justify the uniqueness of African democracy:

Before Africa can have political democracy, it must have economic democracy. Africans are more concerned about meeting their economic needs than having abstract political rights. Economic development necessarily requires sacrifices in political rights. African democracy is a different species of democracy, which has its roots in African culture and history. African societies are plagued by ethnic, tribal and religious conflicts which can be solved not only by western style liberal democracy, but within the framework of the traditional African institutions of consensus-building, elder mediation and conciliation. Western-style democracy is unworkable, alien and inappropriate for Africans because the necessary preconditions for such a system are not present.

Of importance to note is the fact that regarding African democracy as peculiar is not really bad but it becomes challenging when it is used to justify misuse and consolidation of authority by tyrannical governments. In the same vein, Babatunde (2014:36) argues that “the mere fact that leaders who profess the supremacy of socio-economic issues over political rights have not been able to enhance the socio-economic conditions of their citizens exposes the fallacy of this argument.” Significantly, extensive involvement of citizens in the voting

process across the African continent manifests their desire for democracy. As Cilliers *et al.*, (2011:64-65 cited in Babatunde, 2014) argue, “Africans believe civil liberties are essential, central to their overall quality of life.” What this implies is that to claim that Africans are not concerned about politics is a mere misrepresentation of facts. In the same way, Ake (1993: 241) notes:

Ordinary Africans do not separate political democracy from economic democracy or for that matter from economic well-being. They see their political empowerment, through democratisation, as an essential part of the process of getting the economic agenda right at last and ensuring that the development project is managed better and its reward more evenly distributed.

Claude Ake and Jacques-Mariel Nzouankeu, among other scholars, disagree with the claims that Africans desire socio-economic democracy and not political liberties arguing that these are sheer justifications by African ruling leaders to derail the democratisation process and also to defend dictatorship (cited in Moyo, 2006:32). These scholars stress the fact that African traditional political organisations were imbued with democratic principles, necessitating intense involvement of citizens. Bratton et al (2005 cited in Moyo, 2006:32) strongly indicate that there is both widespread appreciation of, and aspiration to democracy among Africans, and that, “Africans can demand democracy in spite of the poor quality of governance actually supplied by governments of the day.” Thus, it is more plausible to argue that African democracy should reflect and strive to address the realities on the ground, without diminishing the inherent values underpinning democratic principles. The thesis that Africa subscribes to the need for an Africa specific theory of democracy does not hold water. Hence, Seleane, (2001:14) maintains that the mere fact that “democracy in several African states is generally in a sorry state has more to do with governments in Africa, rather than a need for a unique African idea of democracy.” In other words critics should not blame democracy for the failures of the African governments but should blame the African governments for failing to handle their situations.

Furthermore, Seleane (2001:23) argues that “an examination of African political documents drawn up in the course of the struggle, together with post-independence constitutions infers that these documents do not support the thesis that Africa subscribes to the need for an African specific theory of democracy.” Proposing a different notion of democracy for Africa would imply that each country will have a different theory of democracy because of differences that exist, and also each continent will also have a different type of democracy.

Therefore, it is significant to point out that the fact that some countries do not embrace democracy or are not democratic does not imply that the notion of democracy is not valid. Moreover, the failure to respect the idea of democracy in any country does not also prove that the notion of democracy is not universal. Seleane (2001:13) warns against labelling things that we do not agree to as euro-centric and suggestions that there is no place for such in Africa and should not be tolerated. Seleane points out that “democracy is ailing in Africa and in some countries the ailment is more serious than in others and that should not be an excuse for failing to give criticism where it is due” (Seleane, 2001:16). On one hand it is important that people should not accept Western notions and values without critically examining them and on the other hand if we take a critical view of the West, we should also examine our cultures to determine whether they promote or hinder democracy.

Thus the debate surrounding the conception of democracy remains open. Whether people agree on its universality or not some are in the process of embracing it. Hence, as posited “people will opt for democracy once they realise that although in terms of political decision-making it is a bad system, it is still the only system that is ‘thinkable’ (Churchill, cited in Fortman, 1994:72).

2.3 Defining Democracy

Efforts to explain democracy have constantly suffered the problem of whether the definition should be functional so as to include aspects such as “citizen empowerment, inclusiveness and representativeness or whether it should be simply be procedural: focusing on open and transparent elections, changeover of governments, equality of voting rights, and so on” (Rozumilowicz, 2002:9; Grugel, 2002 cited in Moyo, 2006:31). In addition, nowadays it has become more challenging to ascertain what democracy means as several alternative democratic visions are being developed and contrasted in normative theory and political practice. The controversy surrounding the theory of democracy is unending and has also extended to the definition of the word democracy. Several definitions have been put forward concerning what constitutes a democracy. As noted by Schumpeter (1942) democracy is “that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote”. In this definition it is essential to note that the citizens should have power to make decisions. In an effort to expatiate on this description, Dahl (1971) ascertains seven important conditions that are indispensable for democracy and these are:

Control over governmental decisions about policy constitutionally vested in elected officials; Relatively frequent, fair and free elections; Universal adult suffrage; The right to run for public office; Freedom of expression; Access to alternative sources of information that are not monopolised by either the government or any other single group; Freedom of association (i.e. the right to form and join autonomous associations such as political parties, interest groups, etc).

Although it might not be exhaustive, Dahl's description of democracy embraces the fundamental civic rights that should assure that the democratic procedure is all-encompassing, free of state domination, citizens' access information and enables citizens to participate in an informed and independent way.

Held describes democracy as "having some form of political equality" and argues that "most recent definitions refer to democracy in terms of a liberal democracy, where the term can only be applied to 'governmental affairs' as opposed to economic and social spheres, and that the concept of democracy belongs to the nation state" (Held, 1993:311 cited in Haider, 2009:2). This definition is lacking because it does not include all the elements that are part of democracy. A more plausible definition of democracy is given by Tuzzi *et al.*, (2007:31 cited in Haider, 2009:2) who "view democracy as a political concept, concerning the collectively binding decisions about the rules and policies of a group, association or society. Such decision making can said to be democratic to the extent that it is subject to the controlling influence of all members of the collective (eg. citizens) considered as equals". In this definition, citizen participation and equality are viewed as important.

Thus democracy has assumed different new meanings over the years, as evidenced by the different definitions and variants of usage that have emerged. As highlighted, "the conflict among these variants has stemmed from the question of the extent of direct popular participation that is possible or desirable in a polity" (Moyo, 2006:32).

There are several characteristics that have been postulated in a bid to evaluate the aspects that define democracy and these include:

- Rule of law, that the decisional output and implementation of the law are supreme, with independent judiciary and fair resolution required;
- Accountability, that the elected political leaders are obligated to answer for their political decisions when queried by citizens, opponents or constitutional bodies; this implies an informed public that actively participates in the political process;
- Respect for rights and achievement for freedoms, that implementation of social, political and economic equality is progressive; and

- Responsiveness: that those that are governed are able to be satisfied that their demands are met through policies, services and distribution; also requires an informed and engaged society (Tuzzi et al, 2007;36-37 cited in Haider, 2009:2).

The elements outlined above to a greater extent summarise what can be a democratic government in which, the rights of citizens to freedoms, equality, citizen participation in the making of policies, rule of law, accountability on the part of elected political leaders are included. Even though it is challenging to describe explicitly the meaning of democracy, it is possible to ascertain its outstanding features, mainly “that political power should reside in the citizens of a nation, rather than in a single person or a small group of persons” (Johnson, 2002:208). In spite of the extensive debate surrounding the meaning of democracy, what remains important is the unanimity that the sincerity of the basic idea remains unchallenged. Democracy, identified by deliberation and consensus based on political equity, is still justified as the desirable form of government even though it may not be the best form of government. Thus Bishop (2002) concluded:

I see it as an invention that by its very nature seems more in tune with equivocal support- not claiming to be the best, but offering a reasonable track record at keeping the worst at bay.

Held (1993:15 cited in Moyo, 2006:32) identifies “three variants of democracy namely, direct or participatory democracy, liberal or representative democracy and one-party democracy.” Though not exhaustive, these variants of democracy provide a clear direction of democratic theorising from ancient Greece up to the present. The section below discusses the three variants of democracy; the liberal individualist, the communitarian and the other variant that has preoccupied democratic theorising in recent years and that is deliberative democracy.

2.3.1 Liberal Individualist Democracy

The liberal model of democracy is defined as a “system of rule embracing elected officers who undertake to represent the interests and views of citizens within the framework of the rule of law” (Held, 1993:15 cited in Moyo, 2006:33). Liberal individualism emphasises “the rational of an individual’s potential for self-actualization and expression, and thus privileges these priorities above those of the collective” (Dahlberg, 2001b cited in Freelon, 2010:5). Another explanation of liberal democracy states that “Liberal democracy refers to a broad array of related ideas and theories of government that consider individual liberty to be the most important political goal” (Partridge, 1866). From the two definitions it is clear that

Liberal democracy give priority to the necessities of the individual at the expense of the community. Citizens thus exercise their right to make decisions through elected representatives.

According to Held (1993:18), the main battle within liberal democracy involves the question of how to balance “might and right, power and law, duties and rights”. This simply means that the struggle is on striking a balance between individual rights and state power. In a liberal democracy, some of the liberties that might be protected are freedom of speech and association, the right to private property, liberty of religion, the right to privacy and equality before the law. Despite the fact that the liberal democrats contend that “the state must have coercive authority in order to ensure individual security, protect trade, commerce and private property, they also realise that by investing regulatory and coercive power in the state they had accepted a force that could deprive citizens of political and social freedoms” (Moyo, 2007: 33).

In this model of democracy the importance is not on the active citizen, by contrast individuals are more concerned in pursuing personal gains in civil society with the representative state serving as an adjudicator (Held, 1993:19). As a result Liberal democracy has been condemned for proposing politics that validates individual rights at the expense of the community:

Liberal democracy is concerned more to promote individual liberty than to secure public justice, to advance interests rather than to discover goods, and to keep men safely apart rather than to bring them fruitfully together (Barber, 1984: 4).

The constitutions of most modern liberal democracies proscribe rule by the will of the majority when it harms the minority. For that reason, some theorists like Barber (1984:8 cited in Moyo, 2006:34) have come to perceive liberal democracy as “minimalist or thin democracy.” The liberal democracy theory has been criticised mainly for its “alleged indifference to conceptions of human flourishing; its supposed exclusion of the pursuit of higher goals from the domain of politics; and inattention to the ways in which a well-ordered society and a good life depend upon the exercise of virtue, the responsibilities of citizenship, and participation in a common political life” (Berkowitz, 1995).

Under the Liberal individualist theory key function of Internet political meetings is to afford an arena for individual showcasing. The communication is not interactive and individuals

scrutinise the opinions of others mostly to know their position on the issues, and if possible discredit them (Freelon, 2010:5-6).

2.3.2 Communitarian Democracy

The communitarian model of democracy was dominant in the now defunct Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and many African countries until the early 1990s, and was, in many respects, a response to the inadequacies of liberal democracy (Held, 1993). The communitarian model of democracy “affirms the central value of solidarity and this points to the fact that we become who we are through our relationships; that reciprocity, loyalty, and shared commitment to the good are defining features of a fully human life” (Bellah,1995). Furthermore, this model emphasises the idea of participation as both a privilege and an obligation, such that societies grow into positive goods when they afford the chance and support to get involved in them. Marxist critique of liberal democracy was based on the fact that, “the universal ideals of ‘liberty, equality and justice’ cannot be attained through “the free struggle for votes in the political system together with the free struggle for profit in the marketplace” (Held, 1993:21)

In contrast to the liberal model, the communitarian model “emphasizes the power of technology to reinforce existing community ties as well as establish new ones. The communities thus strengthened can be premised upon indelible identity characteristics such as race, gender, nationality, etc. or upon shared interests and ideology” (Freelon, 2010:6). Emphasis in the communitarian view is placed on Internet political forums that involve participation amongst groups and the development of shared identity and other activities that promote closeness, combined with an obligation to strong in-group/out group boundaries.

The alternative to the liberal democratic state as envisaged by Marx is ‘delegative democracy’, where ‘commune structures’ were set up and small communities would elect representatives to larger administrative units, and the elected delegates would in turn elect nominees to even larger units of administration up to the national level (Held, 1993:22) . Through this delegative democracy, representatives could be rescinded by their electorates resulting in more answerable state institutions (Moyo, 2007:35).

2.3.3 Deliberative Democracy

The concept of “deliberation can be understood as an unconstrained exchange of arguments that involves practical reasoning and always potentially leads to a transformation of

preferences” (Cooke, 2000:948 cited in Ani, 2013:208). This explanation is supported by Laidlaw’s (2012:19) assertion that “at its core, deliberative democracy is about valuing the rational and open exchange of opinions as the ideal way to reach understanding and agreement concerning common issues of concern.” This means that sincere decisions are only made when preceded by a process of rational discourse that fulfils certain procedures.

As Dorr Goold asserts (2012:24), in a deliberative democracy:

... actors listen to each other with openness and respect, provide reasons and justifications for their opinions, and remain open to changing their view about public policy problems; they should be oriented toward mutual understanding, the goal of coming to some level of agreement, and should want to learn the reasons why they agree or disagree. They must be driven not only by a search for their personal notion of the best policy, but by a search for reasons that would warrant them and their fellow citizens in believing a policy to be the best. Deliberation is not just an opportunity to learn things others know or what they think, but to more fully articulate a public justification for actions on matters of common concern. That is, deliberators discuss *what we should do as a political community* rather than (or in addition to) *what I want as an individual*.

The deliberative theory of democracy is distinguished by the view that “democracy does not only require equality of votes, but effective opportunity to participate in processes of collective decision making” (Majid, 2010:3). In a way a country should not be regarded as democratic because citizens are allowed to cast votes only but because citizens should be involved in making decisions such that at the end decisions that are implemented are acceptable to the community at large. This view is supported by the assertion that “for a democratic decision to be legitimate, it must be preceded by deliberation, not merely the aggregation of preferences that occurs in voting” (Ani, 2013:211). This means that before decisions are made the citizens must have equal opportunities to discuss and debate over issues. This should be done in such a way that the outcomes of the deliberations are easily accepted by the majority because they would have contributed in the discussions. It deals with the ideal that the distribution of power by democratic institutions is not purely represented through the casting of votes (ibid). For Dryzek (2006), democracy can not to be established through the ballot box, but through a process of deliberation in order to change a group’s preferences and views. In corroboration with Dryzek’s view, Somin (2010:257) posits that “voters must not only have the relevant empirical and philosophical knowledge, but must also evaluate it rationally.” This means that debate and deliberation should precede any significant decisions to be made.

As with the participatory perspective, there is an emphasis on citizen involvement in political decision-making, but the deliberative perspective on democracy to a larger extent highlights the possibilities for developing and modifying preferences during participation (Fung, 2004; Wiklund, 2005; Rishel, 2011). The learning aspect of participation also emphasised by participatory scholars such as Pateman (1970) is central to the research argument, since democratic politics should not just be about attaining ones desires, it should also be exploring ones needs and wants. The deliberative perspective emphasises Dahl's democratic criteria of enlightened understanding, which states that all citizens must have ample and the same prospects for realising what choices best serve their interests (Haug, 2007:81). The aim should be to establish procedures that enable political decisions to be based on the free and reasoned assent of citizens (Held, 2006:253) and adhere to norms of inclusion, reasonableness, political equality and publicity (Rishel, 2011:416-417).

Compared to the unidirectional flows of information in both the representative and participatory perspectives, communication according to the deliberative perspective is multidirectional and interactive (Chadwick, 2003:449). For e-democracy, this entails that e-democratic initiatives should emphasise allowing deliberation among citizens and their representatives to achieve a dialogue that promotes the common good. This also involves ensuring that different voices are included to achieve an equal and inclusive political process.

The deliberative theory displays equal importance between the power to make decisions and equal participation in decision making. Dahlberg (2001) and Warren (2002) stress that the "definitive idea of deliberative democracy is the act of deliberation itself" which can involve elements such as communicating, arguing, challenging, demonstrating and bargaining. Models of deliberative democracy indicate that citizens' participation in the democratic process must be directed by reasonableness. For example, casting of votes should not merely reveal choices that already have been made, but somewhat follow on a course of "thoughtful interaction and opinion formation in which citizens become informed of the better arguments and more general interests" (Rehg, 2001: ix). Warren (2002:174) notes that;

What distinguishes emerging theories of deliberative democracy from most of their predecessors is the view that democracy requires not only equality of votes, but also equal and effective opportunity to participate in processes of collective judgement. That is, deliberation about matters of common concern should not be restricted to political representatives, judges, media pundits, technocrats and other elites, but should infuse a society so structured that it underwrites on-going processes of public opinion- formation and judgement.

Central to the deliberative model of democracy is communication and argumentation. Through communicative processes, citizens' opinions are "cultivated, reasons developed and justifications proffered, so that in one way or another voting as an exercise of power also expresses an act of judgement" (Warren, 2002:173). In this manner, deliberation as a form of communication is ideal in the sense that it encourages citizens to consider their judgements in light of those of their fellow citizens (ibid.). Thus, as Laidlaw (2012:20) argues, the communication required in deliberative democracy is more than simple communication: it requires that the interchange is rational and open and pushes toward the goal of publicly acceptable decisions.

According to Barber (1984:117 cited in Moyo, 2006:36) deliberative democracy is a "strong democracy that is based on the politics of conflict, the sociology of pluralism, and the separation of private and public realms of action." As conceived by Habermas (1994 cited in Moyo, 2006:36), deliberative democracy undertake to deal with the democratic ills stimulated by the neglect of liberal democracy to live up to expectations, and to recognise and develop the democratic opportunities that have emerged over the years. In furtherance of obtaining sincere discussion, Parkinson (2003:180-181) argues that participants are expected to fulfil certain requirements which minimally embrace:

communicative competence, reciprocity, inclusiveness, and a willingness to be persuaded, to have one's pre-formed preferences transformed in the face of a better argument, and thus to set aside strategic concerns and behaviour in the pursuit of those preferences (Parkinson, 2003:180-181 cited in Moyo, 2006:36).

Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that deliberative democracy is impractical. Of significance is that deliberative democracy recognises the potential of broadening citizen involvement in a democracy and recommends organisations that make this attainable. What is important about this ideal is that it identifies and suggests institutions that can make this attainable. Moreover, the deliberative democracy pays more attention to the subject of 'citizenship' above any other model. In contrast to the liberal model in which the needs of the individual come first before the state and other citizens, under deliberative democracy:

Political rights, pre-eminently rights of political participation and communication are positive liberties. They guarantee not freedom from external compulsion but the possibility of participation in a common praxis, through the exercise of which citizens can first make themselves into what they want to be, that is, politically autonomous authors of a community of equal and free persons (Habermas, 1994:2 cited in Moyo, 2006:37).

This model is significant because it emphasises political will-formation based on consent achieved through deliberation. In the new information age the Internet has become the new source of information and is facilitating the public sphere. The Internet has revolutionised communication and has the capacity to contribute to democracy. One of the Internet's strengths is its power to connect individuals and afford a platform for rational discourse. Thus the Internet becomes a platform for deliberation that is essential in a public sphere and in a way facilitates citizen participation in the democratisation process. Hence, the deliberative model of democracy which is informed by the Habermasian public sphere informs this study.

2.4 The Public Sphere

Fundamental to the theories of deliberative democracy is the notion of the public sphere “which is based on the idea that citizens and their representatives ought to publicly justify the decisions they make and the rules they institute in order to establish, through a dynamic process, a legitimately democratic bond (Benhabib, 1996; Cooke, 2000; Dryzek, 2004; Habermas, 1997 cited in Maia, 2007:69)”. This implies that public decisions need to be justified so that both the citizens and the government agree on vital issues so that the outcomes of decisions made are acceptable to both parties. Of importance is the notion “of the ‘public’ that is attached to democratic principles that call for citizen participation in public affairs and signifies dealings accessible and visible to all” (Moe, 2010 and Papacharissi, 2002:10 cited in Steenkamp, 2011:39). Moe (2010:4) defines the public as a body that consists of members of a democratic polity who should control the rule of their society. When the public communicates about the collective control of a societal rule, they construct a public sphere (ibid).

The “concept of ‘public’ is fundamental to the public sphere as it is the factor enabling community and critical debate” (Steenkamp, 2011:39). For that reason the collection “of views and beliefs from a wide range of people shapes public opinion, which is formed in what Habermas termed ‘the public sphere’” (ibid.) The public sphere “refers to the realm of debate and open discussion on common interest issues among citizens who are considered equal from moral and political standpoint (2007:70). The normative requirements for a well-functioning public sphere include; “rationality, equality, reciprocal listening, political topicality and cross-cutting debate, among others” (Freelon, 2010).

In deliberative democracy communication is very important. The Habermasian “public sphere consisted of organs of information and political debate such as newspapers and

journals, as well as institutions of political discussion such as parliaments, political clubs, literary salons, public assemblies, pubs and coffee houses, meeting halls, and other public spaces where socio-political discussion took place” (Kellner, 2000:262). Habermas’ concept of the public sphere thus describes a space of institutions and practices between the private interests of everyday life in civil society and the realm of state power (ibid.).

The deliberative form of democracy as Heuva (2010:26) notes is generally characterised by an element of communication. For example, Winseck and Cuthbert (1997:164-167) have joined George Hebert Mead’s (1968) notion of “universal communication” and Wright C. Mills’ (1939, 1956) concept of “public communication” to Jurgen Habermas’ (1992, 1989a, 1989b) “public sphere” to conceive what they call a “communicative” or “expansive” form of democracy (cited in Heuva, 2010:26). In this form of democracy communication turns out to be a key element and a public good accessible to all. They singled out the public sphere contending that it “connects the state to the civil society” and in this conception of democracy, public communication plays an imperative role because it is a prerequisite for the “cultivation of a democratic mind” (ibid.26).

In order to have a healthy democracy, the presence of a public sphere is essential. Besides other channels and public institutions, the media and communication systems are significant platforms from where citizens enlighten themselves on important issues on which to make important choices, at the same time empowering citizens to partake in the political and economic decision-making processes (Hamelink, 1999 cited in Heuva, 2010:26). Michael Tracey clearly points out that the public sphere refers to the “arena of civic discourse, in which the media and communication institutions are said to play a central role in providing social mechanisms for public dialogue on common concerns of society” (Shalini Vetrelli, 1993, cited in Michael Tracey (1998:13). In his own formulation Habermas argues:

By ‘the public sphere’ we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. Then they behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy. Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion—that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions about matters of general interest (Habermas, 1964 cited in Villa, 2008:176-177).

In addition to the Habermasian definition Harvey (1998:540) further extends the public sphere to a “set of cultural practices and institutions which, taken together, provide the means for the sort of public communication that is required for the development and maintenance of democratic societies”. Hence, Harvey (ibid.) maintains that a vital feature of a democratic system is the establishment and maintenance of the public sphere which result in a civil society. Therefore, the public sphere becomes “that aspect of civil society in which people from various backgrounds meet to confer on matters of public importance” (Clayman, 2004: 31 cited in Hungbo, 2008:11).

Moreover, of importance to note is the fact that for a public sphere to be more effective the individuals involved must be granted more than mere access to information. For the public sphere to be deliberative as expected there is need for the members to participate actively in everything that transpires in that arena. Concurring with this view is McKee (2004:4-5) who asserts that the public sphere is:

where each of us finds out what’s happening in our community, and what social, cultural and political issues are facing us. It’s where we engage with these issues and add our voices to discussions about them, playing our part in the process of a society reaching a consensus or compromise about what we think about issues, and what should be done about them.

In Habermas’ observation, “the public sphere works most effectively for democracy when it is institutionally independent of the state and society’s dominant economic forces” (Herman and McChesney, 1997:3). If the public sphere is not independent from the state and the society’s dominant economic forces it means that the public cannot have equal access to it. Moreover, it would also mean that the views from different stakeholders in the community cannot be well represented. Eventually in such a situation views of the state and society’s dominant economic forces would take precedence over the public’s views. Even though it is not easy to retain such autonomy, the key factor is that there should be no restraint on the range of political perspectives and that the resources be distributed in such a way that influential commercial and governmental actors cannot silence the ideas of the media on behalf of the less powerful segments of society (ibid.). Whilst it is not easy to maintain such independence, critical thinkers are obstinate that the establishment of a “democratic communication” is an essential stepping stone towards the development of a self-governing public sphere (Herman and McChesney, ibid.). For the reason that a democratised communications sector, more especially broadcasting provides a platform for citizen involvement in the society, Herman and McChesney (1997:3, 4) argue that;

The media, however, are the pre-eminent vehicles of communication through which the public participation in the political process and the quality of their contribution to the public sphere is an important determinant of the quality of democracy. If their performance is poor, people will be ignorant, isolated and depoliticised, demagoguery will thrive, and small elite will easily capture and maintain control over decision-making on society's most important political matters.

This implies that for the society to have a knowledgeable, united and effective citizenry; there should be a lively public sphere. Consequently, it is because of their significance and pertinence that the media and communication institutions had first to be democratised, for them to bring about democratisation to the society (Randall, 1998). On the same note, James Curran (1991:103 cited in Heuva, 2010:27) maintains that the mass media:

should be organised in a way that enables diverse social groups and organisation to express alternative viewpoints. It should assist collective organisations to mobilise support; help them to operate as representative vehicles for the views of their supporters; and aid them to register effective protests and develop and promulgate alternatives.

When stressing the importance of communication in the public sphere, McChesney (1997: 66) argues that “by the logic of the public sphere, the crucial structural factor for democratic media is to have the dominant portion of the communication system removed from the control of business and the support of advertising.” Because the Internet holds an exceptional potential for democratic communication, it is therefore vital that we prevent the present appropriation of digital communication to suit the needs of business advertisers first and foremost (McChesney, *ibid.*).

The deliberative model views the “Internet as a means for an expansion of the public sphere of rational-critical citizen discourse, a discourse autonomous from state and corporate power through which public opinion may be formed and that can hold official decision makers accountable” (Dahlberg, 2001:616). Under deliberative democracy, the Internet facilitates deliberation in such way that the citizens influence the governing processes. Moreover, the citizens' deliberations are independent from the state and commercial power such that decision makers are answerable for their activities. In addition, “within the Internet rhetoric and practice, the decentralised communications enabled through Web publishing, electronic bulletin boards, and chat rooms does seem to provide spaces for rational-critical discourse.” Thus considering the active role that the citizens play in a deliberative democracy, the Internet becomes a significant tool to enhance the participation of citizens.

2.4.1 A Critique of the Habermasian Public Sphere

While the Habermasian public sphere is significant and plays a valuable role in political dialogue and in comprehending the development of public consensus, numerous philosophers condemn the theory for romanticising the bourgeois public sphere. “Habermas’ idea of a public sphere understood as an open forum of debate among citizens holding equal political status within a political community – restricted to men of the bourgeoisie has been widely criticised (Maia, 2007:71). His notion of a public sphere assumed to be providing unrestricted equal access to the public so that they could discuss issues of public concern and yet it was confined to the bourgeoisie men. Kellner (2000:266) argues that Habermas idealises the earlier bourgeoisie “public sphere by presenting it as a forum of rational discussion and debate when in fact certain groups were excluded and participation was thus limited.” The mere fact that it was a bourgeoisie public sphere, which excluded other classes like the poor and women eventually, implies that it was not representative of the society. Hence the ideas or opinions which were deliberated excluded those of others who were not part of the bourgeoisie.

Moreover, Habermas “generally holds a reductionist view of media, thus neglecting their potential (including that of alternative media) to generate critical reflection and facilitate the democratic participation of citizens (Stevenson, 2002:60-61; Downing, 2002: 68 cited in Maia, 2007:72).” He tends to consider media monolithically, that is to say, as mere instruments for the reproduction of power relations, instead of as hybrid institutions, which are at the same time political, economic, cultural and professional (Hallin, 1993; Curran, 1993:36-38, Dahlgren; Sparks, 1993 cited in Maia, 2007:72). In addition, Habermas’ approach to the press of the nineteenth century, the golden age of the public sphere, seems rather out-dated as far as modern day reality is concerned. In Dahlgren’s words:

The romantic notion of the public sphere composed of individuals speaking face to face or communicating via small-circulation print media is not of much utility. We live in the age of electronic media and mass publics (Dahlgren; Sparks, 1993:7-8 cited in Maia, 2007:72).

Despite the fact that the notion of “the public sphere and democracy undertake a liberal and majority celebration of diversity, tolerance, deliberation and agreement; in reality, the bourgeoisie public sphere was subjugated by white, property-owning males” (Kellner, 2000:266). This was contrary to one of the principles that he outlined, that the public sphere

was supposed to be open and accessible to all. As Calhoun (1992:3 cited in Steenkamp, 2011:41) argued:

The early bourgeois public spheres were composed of narrow segments of the European population, mainly educated, propertied men, and they conducted a discourse not only exclusive of others but prejudicial to the interests of those excluded.

While the idea of the public sphere upholds the idea of diverse beings deliberating, practically the property owning, white males had authority over it, consequently eliminating women of all classes and men of other races. As a result, the tenet of universal access of the bourgeois public sphere was not upheld, as discussions of certain groups were privileged above others. Hence, instead of being an arena for expansive development of public opinion the public sphere became a platform of the few opinions represented. In a way, it was significant who the participants were because those who contributed influenced the outcomes of the deliberations.

Because of the exclusion, “working class, plebeian, and women’s public spheres developed alongside the bourgeoisie public sphere to represent the opinions and interests excluded in the forum” (Kellner, 2000:266). This resulted in the proliferation of alternative public spheres which discussed different views of those groups alienated in the mainstream public sphere. Thus, instead of “conceiving of one liberal or democratic public sphere, it is more productive to theorise a multiplicity of public spheres, sometimes overlapping but also conflicting” (ibid.).

Notwithstanding the limitations of Habermas’ public sphere, the model is still significant because “it suggests that a public sphere emerged where citizens could organise and take part in political deliberation and debate” (Steenkamp, 2011:41). Like most theories, this theory is imperfect, but it can be argued that in contemporary society where technological developments have influenced different parts of social and political life; the public sphere changes also because of technological advancement. As a result of the changes, the Internet has extended the realms of democratic communication practices that allow expansive access to participation and increases in public exchange of information and communication (Boeder, 2005 cited in Steenkamp, 2011:41).

2.5 The Internet as a ‘cybersphere’

In the new information age Habermas’ classic public sphere has been conceptualised along the lines of the ‘cyber sphere’. The cyber sphere is an improvement on the public sphere. “The whole of the online communicative experience made possible by the Internet has thus been referred to as ‘cyber sphere’, of which the suffix ‘sphere’ is generally inherited from the idea of the ‘public sphere’” (Stephan, 2012). The Internet offers many prospects for the extension of the public sphere or for the establishment of counter or alternative public spheres where the main public sphere is rendered inaccessible, as is the case in many repressive societies (Mhlanga and Mpofu, 2014:135). With the development of the Internet, an arena which allows a new form of ‘publicness’ has emerged where debate and the exchange of ideas take place simultaneously, broadening individual opinion into social opinion (Moes, 2010; Splichal, 2006:702). The citizens are empowered with the platform afforded by the cyber sphere such that they engage more in socio-political issues and have the chance to air their views and opinions such that they are incorporated in the decisions that are made. As citizens they should all be empowered to have equal access to participation in the cyber sphere. As Scultz (1999) argues:

the excitement surrounding the Internet does not only lie in its potential to transcend geographical and political boundaries, but in the fact that it is a new medium that could extend interactive options in public deliberations.

Of late, the cyber sphere has been seen to offer opportunities for the inclusion of those who were excluded by the conventional news media or those who felt that the mainstream media did not represent them or their concerns satisfactorily. Moreover, the fact that it allows more interaction between different publics makes it more suited for public deliberations.

Optimist analysts such as Negroponte (1996) and Poster (1995) saw the Internet and digitisation as democratising and emancipatory developments (cited in Harrison, 2006:86). This implies that the cyber sphere afforded by the Internet brought new hopes for citizens to engage in deliberations on issues that affects them. Papacharissi (2002:24) finds hope in the fact that “the Internet has facilitated the development of cyber spheres, where people from all over the globe, from culturally diverse backgrounds, come together to engage in a virtual political discussion about issues in the news.” In other words the cyber sphere affords citizens with a platform whereby they can engage on political issues and access diverse views on presented issues without the interference of gate keepers. Augmenting this idea is Harrison (2006:86) who contends that “users of the Internet can bypass established centres of power

and set up their own chat rooms, forming cyberspheres and discussing and challenging mediated news provided by mainstream news organisations.”

The cybersphere has in various ways reformulated what we comprehend to be effective citizenry and public participation, which are necessary to an operational democracy. Greater access to information, enabled by the Internet makes “it possible for privately motivated individuals and groups to challenge the public agenda (Grossman, 1995), and connect the government to citizens” (Arterton, 1987 cited in Papacharissi, 2008:9). In addition increases in “access can also be understood as greater access afforded by the cybersphere to political leaders that shape the public agenda, and the ability for these elites to communicate directly with the citizens” (Papacharissi, 2008:9). This means that the public can now communicate with political leaders in an effective way and vice-versa such that the transactions between them are more open resulting in the leaders becoming more accountable.

Moreover, a distinctive attribute of the Internet is that “it functions simultaneously as a medium for publishing and for communicating. Unlike in the case of traditional media, the Internet is interactive and supports a variety of communication modes: one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many” (Jorgensen, 2001:23). This means that a participant can speak and listen synonymously and can communicate with many people at the same time. In addition, as Jorgensen (2001:23) asserts, “at any given time, a receiver can and does become content provider, of his own accord, or through “re-posting” of content by a third party.” Hence, one can argue that the way the Internet functions is totally different from traditional communications and thus offers a better public sphere in which the citizens can have rational and critical discourse.

The cyber sphere accorded by the Internet helps associations to increase citizen responsiveness. Klein, (1999:219) asserts that “in response to a crisis or an opportunity, ad hoc associations can be created more easily, and existing associations more easily reactivated. For instance, in the cyber sphere, a citizen action can be announced on existing listservs in order to attract participants, and a forum can be created quickly at nearly no cost to participants.” The fact that the Internet is so versatile makes the activities of citizen associations to be easier in that they can send out messages instantly to large crowds in such a manner that movements can be mobilised into action in a short space of time.

Another beneficial feature of the Internet as discussed by Gerhards and Schafer (2009:3) is that Internet communication “might include multiple actors, especially those from civil society who, with comparatively few resources, may not have had (as much) access to the old media.” In support of the above view, van Os et al.(2007 cited in Gerhards and Schafer, 2009:3) argues that “actors with fewer resources, such as small NGOs or individual citizens, may be able to present information online in a way that is significantly more cost-effective than getting into television, radio or print media.” In a way the Internet has opened up the public sphere for many publics who had been previously excluded in the mass media mainly due to higher costs of participating. The platform afforded by the Internet has made it easier for citizens to be visible to the world at large and for them to raise their concerns online. Thus as Dahlgren (2005 cited in Gerhards and Schafer, 2009:1) argues, participation or the results of employing the Internet for citizen participation might not be very clear now but “in the long run the Internet might democratise the public sphere and lead to strengthened political interest and participation among citizens.”

Bearing in mind the Habermasian prerequisites for the establishing public opinion, one might reason “that the Internet’s interactive nature provides the public with a communicative sphere that is essentially different from the mass media, because the distance entailed in the closed, one-way communication structure of the mass media is replaced by an open, two-way communicative structure, where every user can speak, listen and disagree (ibid.).” As a result, Jorgensen (2001:24) asserts that “whereas mass media is a *representation* of life-world; an instrument for the public sphere, Internet to a stronger degree is public sphere with new means for the public to participate.” This implies that the opportunities for citizens to participate have been provided as far as technology is concerned, what remains is improvement in other aspects that affect citizen involvement in political procedures.

2.5.1 Critique of the cybersphere

It is important to note that the cybersphere is not without criticism. Just like the Habermasian public sphere, the cybersphere has its weaknesses too. A number of commentators have highlighted these shortcomings. For instance, Papacharissi (2008:8) argues that “while the Internet and related digital technologies provide a public space, they do not necessarily provide a public sphere.” This means that the arena provided by the Internet technologies is not necessarily meant for political deliberations, it is just a public space where anyone can express anything. Some individuals go online for various activities which include shopping,

doing financial transactions and communicating with friends and family on subjects that have nothing to do with politics. In the same vein, Dahlgren (2005:151) emphasises, “the use of the Net for political purposes is clearly minor compared with other purposes to which it is put. The kinds of interaction taking place can only to a small degree be considered manifestations of the public sphere; democratic deliberation is completely overshadowed by consumerism, entertainment, non-political networking and chat, and so forth.” This view is supported by Bimber (2001) and Kaid (2002) who assert that “greater access to information enabled by online media does not directly lead to increases in political participation, or greater civic engagement, or trust in political process” (cited in Papacharissi, 2008:234). In a way people can access the Internet and use it for other purposes which are not political at all.

In addition, others have maintained that “the advantages of the Internet as a public space can be enjoyed only by the select few who have access to it, which in fact presents an illusion of an open cyber sphere” (Pavlik, 1994; Sassi, 2005; Williams, 1994 cited in Papacharissi, 2008:234). Hence, the cyber sphere provided by the Internet is not open to all but only to those who have Internet access. Moreover, the online media are also said to “reproduce class, gender and race inequalities in the society” (Hill and Hughes, 1988). Thus, the imbalances that exist in society are repeated online and this eventually leads to the non-existence of a common public sphere. Furthermore, political deliberations on the Internet could simply be controlled by the selected few just like the ones offline. Therefore, the significance of the Internet as a public sphere remains controversial.

Notably, “access to information does not ensure that information will be accessed and does not render an electorate more active or efficacious” (Papacharissi, 2008:235). The citizens may choose not to access the information. Therefore access to information on its own does not boost democracy; it depends also on the willingness of the public to access that information and use it to augment their involvement in governance procedures.

More significantly, entrance into the Habermasian public sphere was free, nonetheless no one was obliged to participate, and those who joined in the debates did so voluntarily. In like manner, the cybersphere affords anyone who wants to be part of online debates the opportunity to do so; however, not every citizen will participate or contribute meaningfully. Some citizens may choose not to participate at all since they are not compelled to do so.

Of significance to note is the fact “that by its very nature the web users are able to successfully separate their identity from the argument they are making, with much greater success than they would through mass media” (Ubayasiri, 2006:10). On one hand this can be an advantage in the sense that individuals can assist in unearthing sensitive issues anonymously without fear of being intimidated. On the other hand, the fact that anyone can publish information anonymously can result in the propagation of false information. As a result many online newspapers for example, are reluctant to “publish letters to the editor where the writers do not reveal their identity as many editors contend that any writer should have the confidence to stand by their writing as journalists all over the world do” (Ubayasiri, 2006, *ibid.*). That is the reason why the mainstream media in most instances demand that writers should identify themselves so that their discourse is reliable. Thus to some extent the fact that anyone can publish any information on the web without disclosing his or her identity weakens the veracity of the opinions and this inhibits the development of the real public sphere.

Therefore, the potential of the Internet to enhance democracy should not be exaggerated because its capacity to enhance democracy is dependent on other factors which can result in negative outcomes. The circumstances in which the Internet functions as a platform affect the outcomes or how it is used. In other words, the way the Internet functions as a public sphere in a state which is authoritarian is different when it is applied in a state which is open. Hence, the success of the application of Internet to enhance the democratisation process is conditional.

In summary, Ward (1997) argues that for the Internet to function as cybersphere that is essential in a democracy, access should be widespread, the Internet should also be easy to use; and most importantly some legal problems have to be solved. Hence Ward concludes:

If the Internet is, or were to become, a public sphere in Habermas’ model, it would have to offer a public space or arena for people to debate issues in order to influence civil society and the state; moreover, the public discourse formed in response to such debate will have to be ‘legitimised’ by the scrutiny and challenge of other citizens and stake holders in the debate (Ward, 1997: 367).

Thus the Internet has its own limitations and if such constraints are not addressed the results of its application in trying to enhance democracy will be far from being democratic. Hence, it is not independent from the deterrents of technology, economical influences and the divergent historical environments that weaken its ability to enhance democracy.

2.6 Assumed influences of the Internet on Democracy

Since the advent of the Internet, many researchers are still puzzled by its effects on political institutions and their operations. In particular, researchers and experts alike have asked if the Internet acts as a positive force in the development of democratic systems and principles. The role of the Internet is much debated when talking about the initiatives to invigorate democracy, yet undeniably crucial. According to Jimmy Wales (2010), “democracy is about deciding,” and the Internet is very much a function of that.³ This means that the Internet empowers the citizens to make decisions based on the deliberations and discussions that would have taken place. It gives the citizens an opportunity to decide and not just accept decisions that have been made already. Scholars define two basic assumptions for today’s democracy: access to information and civic responsibility.⁴ The basis of optimism might be, simply put, due to the democratic vision and architectures of the Internet itself (Barlow, 1996).

However, as Best and Wade (2009:255) note, “in terms of a rigorous establishment of the democratising effects of the Internet, the jury is still out and there are a number of reasons why this is so.” The subject is so complicated and the magnitude of potential variables involved adds more fuel to the fire. For instance, “government regime type, degree of Internet diffusion, and social roles of the Internet” are just a few of the variables that may play a role in how the Internet affects democracy (ibid). In addition, the definition and measurement of many of these variables can be contentious. For example, as discussed in the previous section, the boundaries of the term democracy, and how it is measured, are a heated debate. Moreover as Bourgault (1995: 42) contends;

The importance of the Internet cannot be overemphasised in a country where the mainstream media has always been chiefly state-controlled, heavily government subsidised and urban based.

What this implies is that the significance of the Internet in a state which heavily regulates the mainstream media will be limited. The fact that the mainstream media has been urban based can imply that the Internet diffusion might be limited in the rural areas too. It might also imply that in circumstances such as these, the Internet undertakes a new role, of being both a

³ “Does the Internet threaten democracy? A debate with Jimmy Wales, Andrew Keen, Farhad Manjoo and Micah L. Sifry,” http://fora.tv/2010/05/18/Debate_The_Internet_and_Democracy (accessed July 31, 2010).

⁴ James Mill, *Essays on Government, Jurisprudence, Liberty of the Press, and Law of Nations* (New York: Kelly Publishers, 1967), 16-27; Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991).

source of information about the government, as well as a site where citizens can express themselves freely without any fear of victimisation.

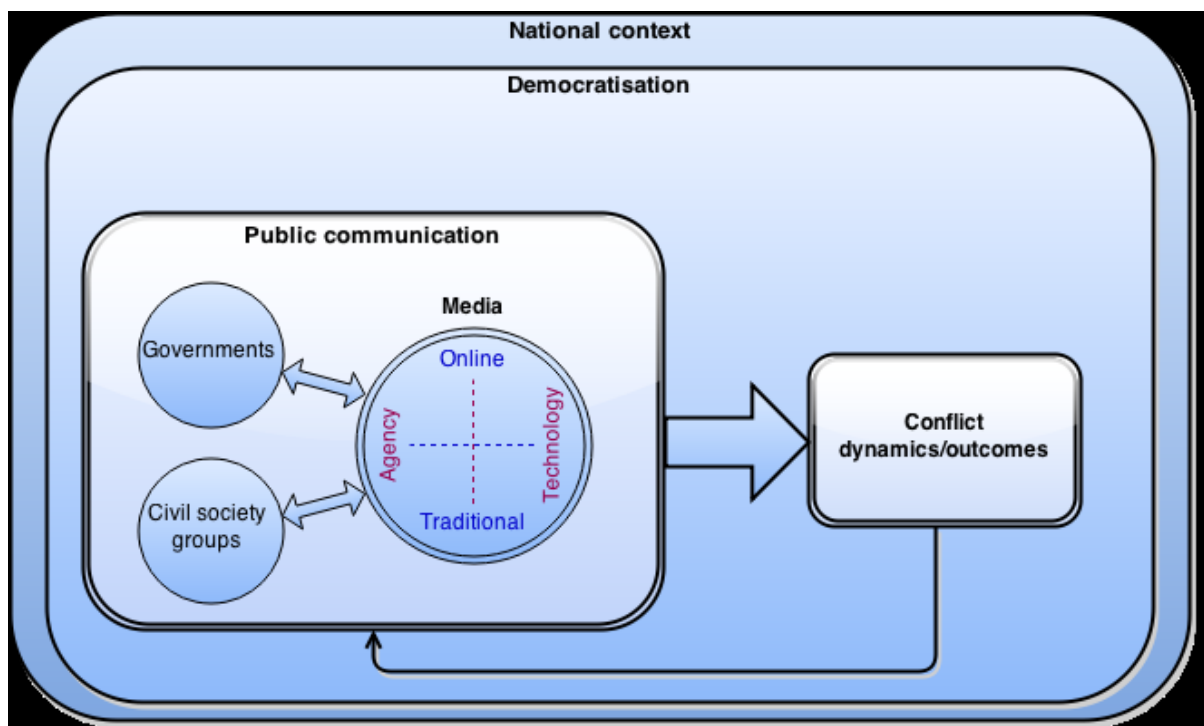
In the face of these analytic adversities, researchers and commentators continue to explore how the Internet and democracy correlate. In this day and age several scholars strive to expound on the key roles of the Internet in the democratisation processes across the world. As Best and Wade (2009:256) assert, “all are cast in terms of how the Internet interacts with democratically relevant information and communication flows as well as with social capital and the public sphere.” One of the more popular theories that identify the Internet as associated with democracy is the “dictator’s dilemma” (Kedzie, 1997). It is founded on the idea that “globalisation and globalised markets, largely facilitated and accelerated by the Internet, force governments to keep their countries’ communication borders open” (Best and Wade, 2009:256). Consequently the free flow of information not only permits the efficient passage of commercial information, but also for more democratic information. For instance, citizens get the opportunity to expose government misuse of power, and this will eventually have undesirable effects on governments in the world community if they are portrayed as illegitimate, violent, dishonest, or untrustworthy. The Internet’s collective attributes, for example, low cost and multidirectional capability help make this possible. In addition to “newsworthy dissent, the Internet can also enlighten citizens of less democratic nations of the comparatively high-income lifestyles associated with democracies and as a result, they may begin to wish for democratic change” (ibid.).

The Internet and mobile technology have been lauded by some authors, for instance, Diamond, (2010) as ‘liberation technology.’ Diamond posits that “Liberation technology enables citizens to report news, expose wrongdoing, express opinions, mobilise protests, monitor elections, scrutinise government, deepen participation, and expand the horizons of freedom” (Diamond, 2010:70). In other words the Internet facilitates the democratisation process by liberating the citizens in such a way that they have freedom to express themselves and holding those in power to account. In the same vein, Voltmer and Kraetzschmar assert that “with its non-hierarchical network structure and interactive features it seems that the Internet is a perfect match with the fundamental principles of democracy.” The Internet has made interaction very possible, for instance, it is easier for one person to send messages to many people at the same time and participate in several groups at the same time. Concurring with this view are Bennett and Segerberg (2012 cited in Voltmer & Kraetzschmar, 2015:5) who maintain that “social media platforms are re-ordering the way in which social

movements organise, as ‘brick-and-mortar’ organisation and hard-wired hierarchies are no longer necessary to mobilise support.” However, these views have been criticised as over-optimistic by scholars like Deibert and Rohozinski (2010) when they contend that the very same technologies which give voice to democratic activists living under authoritarian rule can also be harnessed by their oppressors. In other words the Internet is double edged, it equips both the oppressed and the oppressor and as a result what matters is who wins the game. Significantly, Voltmer and Kraetzschmar (2015:5-6) argue that the “short-lived success of Egypt’s so-called ‘Facebook revolution’ reminds us that long-term political change requires more than mass mobilisation.” The democratisation process requires several things more than just the Internet.

A major issue which has been raised by scholars is the fact that the role of Internet in the democratisation processes across the world is determined by the context in which it is being applied. Concerning this Morozov (2011:64) points out that “the social and political environment will inevitably have much to do with determining how, where, how quickly and widely, and to what ends they are brought to bear, as well as what the public thinks about them and their uses.”

Figure 1: A model of communication and democratisation conflicts



Source: Voltmer and Kraetzschmar, 2015:6

As shown in the diagram above the context has a bearing on the role that the Internet plays in the democratisation process. Agreeing with this view are Kalathil and Boas (2003:6) who contend that “in assessing the political impact of the Internet in any country, one must consider the full national context in which that impact occurs, for instance, the basic political, economic and social dynamics of each country.” They further argue that in any given country, state policy has an effect on the innumerable ways in which the Internet is actually used. Of significance, they point out that;

State Internet policies and governance structures are often outgrowths of older regulatory regimes for the mass media and traditional telecommunications, and a consideration of these historical roots is often valuable in understanding current Internet policy (ibid.).

As a result, such factors should be put into consideration before hailing the Internet for boosting democracy. The outcomes of its use fully depend on the environment in which it is applied. Thus the Internet should not be considered as a magic bullet which causes democracy in any situation where it is used.

Seemingly it is captivating to consider the Internet as extraordinary in its potential for political progress. However, past events warn people to be mindful of such presumptions. Accordingly Diamond (2010:71) contends that;

In the eighteenth century, the printing press revolutionised the accumulation and dissemination of information, enabling the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, and the scientific revolution. On these foundations, modern democracy emerged. But the printing press also facilitated the rise of the centralised and promoted the movement towards censorship. Today’s enthusiasts of liberation technology could be accused of committing the analytic sins of their Victorian forebears, ‘technological utopianism’ and chronocentrism “that is the egotism that one’s own generation is poised on the very cusp of history.

This means that while the Internet may facilitate the democratisation process, the autocratic governments may manipulate it to suit their endeavours. As a result suspicions have been raised with regard to the effectiveness of using the Internet for mobilising groups and for activism. Pessimists contend that several of the successes cited by scholars and activists are exaggerated in such a manner that the Internet is portrayed as having magical abilities in bringing about democracy. Morozov (2011) proposes that the Internet should be viewed as two-faced and this will help scholars to emphasise its potential and limitations as technology and not to be one-sided. For that reason, Dahlgren (2001:75) asserts that;

hopes raised on the basis of its possibilities through forums, email groups, social networks and other platforms must be tempered with grim reminders of its darker side and those qualities that could hinder civic participation and the cultivation of discursive groups such as the Forum thereby impinging on the extension of the public sphere .

Therefore it is better to regard the Internet technologies as tools in the hands of human beings who are capable of exploiting technology to achieve what they want. The outcomes are not fully dependent on the technology but on who is using the Internet and for what purpose. The idea here is that the Internet is not an inherently liberative or positive technology. Controversial founder of the website Wikileaks, Julius Assange captured this paradox:

The Net is not a technology that favours freedom of speech. It is not a technology that favours human rights. It is not a technology that favours civic life. Rather it is a technology that can be used to set up a totalitarian spying regime, the likes of which we have never seen. Or on the other hand, taken by us, taken by activists, and taken by all those who want a trajectory for the technological world, it can be something we all hope for (Mhlanga and Mpofu, 2014:140).

Seemingly the democratising prospects of the Internet are developing side by side with its gloomier, constricting side (Morozov, 2011). Moreover, some of the features of the Internet which are extolled for promoting democracy equally have the potential to refute deliberative discussions and civic engagement. In support of this argument Ronning (2010:138) notes that “on many blog sites and discussion forums, the promotion of pseudonymity and anonymity, which is important as it allows people with concerns about their security to participate, as is the case with many members of the Forum, has opened doors to various levels of irresponsibility and abuse including serious violations of privacy and threats to security of individuals.”

Ultimately, the Internet is simply a tool, susceptible to both good and detestable uses. The same way the radio and television could be vehicles of information diversity and sensible deliberation on one hand, they could also be employed by authoritarian governments to enforce their ideology and total state control on the other hand. Autocratic countries could appropriate the Internet to a similar effect. Nevertheless if citizens could improve and better use the Internet they could overthrow authoritarianism as they have done in several states (Diamond, 2010:71).

Another concern raised in the debate surrounding the role played by the Internet in the democratisation process is an “imbalance of the empirical foci in favour of Western nations

and societies and hence an increased integration of peripheral experiences into the discussion is called for” (Thussu, 2009:3). This implies that the experiences of the non-Western countries should also be incorporated in the discussions so that the reality of what is on the ground is understood better. In support of this view, Grune and Ulrich (2012:2) claim that “in general, conceptions are based on the assumption that media plays an important role in democratisation, in conflict resolution and good governance. But the classical media functions such as criticism; control and mediation derive from Western democratic experiences and are based on Western concepts of democracy.” Therefore these assumptions shape notions and expectations of media assistance programs rendered by Western donor countries and organisations but often do not meet the realities in post-war countries or developing countries. Significantly, prevailing circumstances of the nations of the South and their contexts are neglected regularly and approaches to the merits of media in development seem to be simplified as well as top-down oriented (ibid:5). Taking this debate to a higher level Nyamnjoh (2005:205) contends that “it is much more meaningful to study what Africans *do with* ICTs through enculturation, rather than simply to focus what ICTs *do to* Africans.”

Notably Babatunde (2014:40) argues that the fact that technology penetration is still very low in parts of Africa buttresses the point that technology cannot at this stage be the sole strategy for advancing democratisation in Africa. Rather, it should form part of a broader strategy. In other words assuming that African states will attain democracy through the Internet only is a blunt mistake. Several other factors need to be considered, for instance, access, literacy and the type of regime so before assuming that the Internet will bring about democracy.

As posited by numerous authors like Andersen (1997), Berger (1998), Nyamnjoh (2005), and Masilela (1997) the relationship between the state and its society also determines the role of the media in that nation. In a way, the status of a nation, for instance, the social, the economic and the political determines the role of the media. In other words the media does not exist in a vacuum but comes to exist in a society which already has values and beliefs that it upholds.

Moreover, Berger (2002:22) postulates that “to import unreflective, conventional wisdoms about the way that the media is an important element in democracy tends to be limited to the place where it came from; the global world.” As a result people take it for granted that since the Internet facilitated democracy in the Western countries it will do the same to African countries. To shed more light on this, Nyamnjoh (2005) argues that the global concept of

liberal democracy, when applied, tends to disregard, undermine or misunderstand the complexities of the African environment. Notably, liberal democracy is a democracy that gives priority to the individual and has no place in the communal democracies of African states but surprisingly it has been embraced by most African countries. What should be understood here is that this form of democracy has a tendency to weaken the community in the African society and also much of its fabric. For instance, Nyamnjoh (2005:28) reasons that “in the African media, media practitioners or journalists are torn between serving their communities and serving the ‘imagined’ rights-bearing, autonomous individual citizen.” Therefore what is needed in the African context is a form of democracy that identifies with these communal values. Should African states then look for alternatives outside of democracy or should they find alternative democracies?

It is on this premise that Nyamnjoh (2005:250) condemns what he understands to be “the limitations of a liberal democratic model that blindly emphasises individual freedoms in a context where actors are also and obviously more committed to group freedoms and solidarity networks.” Nyamnjoh suggests an unconventional notion which would recognise “the ‘politics of belonging’, and have a ‘broader definition of democracy’ which would allow for ‘ethnic cultural citizenship’ as well as ‘civic citizenship’ and for the straddling of both” (ibid: 250). Accordingly, Nyamnjoh advocates that democracy in Africa should be conceived as a combination of personal, cultural and communal interests. Basing on this distinctly vague conceptualisation, Nyamnjoh then argues that “what are currently perceived as failings on the part of the media (for example, ethnic biases, partisanship, regionalism) could indeed be healthy practices, as it would be quite understandable to have media defending particular group interests openly, rather than in camouflage as is the case under the liberal democratic model” (Nyamnjoh, 2005:250). What Nyamnjoh is simply advocating for is an idea of democracy which is suitable for a particular environment, and in this instance, the African context and not to adopt the Western notion of democracy because it was crafted to suit the Western context.

On one hand are scholars like Wasserman (2011) who have hailed the ICT revolution for its ability to enable political participation and facilitate social change in some parts of the continent. On the other hand Ott argues that “political decisions tend to be reached through small-group, face to-face communication, and that fact is set to remain despite the advent of the Internet” (Ott, 2011 cited in Mutsaers, 2013:186). Nonetheless, Ott (2011) comes to the conclusion that the Internet may not boost democracy as such but it allows the populace to

challenge the status quo. This is mostly what is transpiring in most African states, the Internet has not been successful in facilitating democracy but has empowered the citizenry to challenge the status quo.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to outline the concepts and the theories that guide the study. These are the concepts of democracy, the theories of democracy, the public sphere and the cybersphere. The chapter also discussed the debate surrounding the notion of democracy and the assumed role of the Internet in the democratisation process. Several scholars raise different views concerning the definition of democracy because the term has assumed different new meanings over the years and has been applied differently in different situations. The chapter also discussed the different models of democracy. The liberal model of democracy emphasises individual liberty and the advance individual interests at the expense of the community's interests. In addition, the Soviet-style one-party mode of democracy which put emphasis on a communist thought and delegative democracy where commune structures were set up. Another variant of democracy the deliberative model which is associated with contemporary scholars such as Habermas was discussed in depth.

The deliberative theory of democracy emphasise that citizen participation in the democratic process must be guided by rationality, thoughtful interaction and opinion formation rather than reflecting mere preferences. The main thrust of deliberative democracy is rational deliberation and increased participation. The deliberative theory which emphasises the significance of involving the citizens in the public sphere informs this study. Lastly, the chapter also discussed the Habermasian public sphere and how it has been extended to the cybersphere through the coming of the Internet. Habermas' public sphere has been criticised by many scholars for its shortfalls yet it is significant as it submits the development of a public sphere where the citizens could meet and engage in political deliberations on a daily basis.

In the chapter the researcher also discussed the Internet and how the cybersphere has afforded the citizens the opportunity to meet virtually and engage in political deliberations. In the cybersphere the citizens have more chances to debate on issues without many restrictions as was in the Habermasian public sphere. Nonetheless, just like the Habermasian public sphere the cybersphere has its own limitations too. Advances in technology have improved access to more diverse and composite information. Moreover, Internet diffusion has enabled the flow

of information to those individuals that pursue it. To some extent the Internet has facilitated the democratisation process. In democratic countries, the use of Internet as a mechanism to advance democracy is encouraged, whilst in authoritarian states the Internet is constrained, in a way eroding the values of democracy. To some extent the Internet can be instrumental in developing democratic societies; however it has not been fully exploited yet.

Following Moyo (2006) one would argue that there is need for the reform of the state first to democratise it so as to sensitise it to the citizens' need for political and civic liberties, including communicative rights that are essential to the existence of a vibrant public sphere. Then, with the recent technological developments in communication the Internet might be applied to heighten the involvement of citizens in the democratisation process. In the following chapter the researcher reviews related literature on how the Internet has been utilised to enhance citizen participation in the democratisation process in other countries.

CHAPTER 3

DOES THE INTERNET CORRELATES WITH DEMOCRACY?

‘If one wants to free a society, just give them Internet access’ (Watson, 2011)

3.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the researcher explored the different types of democracy and the theoretical arguments that attempt to position the Internet as a key institution of democracy. As can be seen from the previous chapter, the role of the Internet in the democratisation process demands that the Internet too, be democratised so as to make sure that citizens have equal access to participate in critical rational debates that concerns their governance. In addition, it has been argued that the success of the Internet as a tool in the democratisation process depends on the context in which it is used. This chapter reviews related literature on how the Internet has been used to enhance citizen participation in different places in a bid to advance the democratisation process.

From the time of the adoption of radio as a tool for mass communication in the 1920s, and television after the Second World War, there have been intense speculations that because of their accessibility, immediacy and intrusiveness, these media have immense power to influence and even shape people’s political opinions (Unwin, 2012). These developments in media have been complemented by the emergence of the Internet. With the emergency of the Internet and the development of new forms of digital social media during the first decade of the 21st century, the ways in which many people communicate and share information has changed dramatically (ibid, 2012:44). Hence, Rucht (2005:12 cited in Breindl, 2010:45) argues that “it is not surprising for scholars to glorify the Internet’s democratic potentialities in terms of its reach, speed, reduced costs, information richness, decentralisation, and absence of censorship, search engines and the rise of user-generated interactive platforms.” Because of the mentioned characteristics of the Internet many people associate it with the development of democracy.

According to Van De Donk *et al.* (2004: xvii cited in Breindl, 2010:45) “as a means of facilitating the creation of cross-national, 'disorganised' networks for collective action on the basis of negotiated common concerns, the Internet might almost have been purpose-built for social movements”. The implication of their assertion is that the Internet assists so much in the activities of social movements such that its emergency has resulted in social movements

carrying out their activities so easily. Because of its ability to broadcast messages to a large dispersed audience within a short space of time, the Internet is without doubt attractive for social movements as it facilitates mesomobilisation (i.e. the coordination between various movements across borders) and also enables reaching many with little resources, and offers the possibility to bypass state control while retaining editorial control over content and external communication (Scott and Street, 2000 cited in Breindl, 2010:45). In a nutshell, seemingly the Internet is a medium that empowers citizens who lack the means to organise to come together as counter-publics to challenge the conventional dogma.

Whether the Internet facilitates the democratisation process or whether there is a relationship between the two has been a matter of controversy amongst scholars. In this regard, Drezner (2010:37) argues that explaining the debate of how ICTs affect the animosity between states and civil society activists is exceedingly difficult. In support of Drezner's argument, Diamond (2010 cited in Meier, 2011:23) argues that it is particularly difficult to separate political, social and technological elements. The implication of this is that trying to explain the link between the Internet and democracy is very difficult such that the debate is unending. On the same note, Groshek (2010:142) maintains that developments in technology, particularly the communicative ones, have been presented and glamourised as mighty agents of democracy. Despite the Internet having effects on democracy, elevating its application as directly linked to democracy would be a blunt error. Yet again ignoring the causal relationship between the two would be a misrepresentation of facts, hence the need to strike a balance.

The purpose of this literature review is to make these effects clearer and illuminate how the ICTs increase reasoned essential dialogue connecting the state and the citizens. In the first segment of this chapter quantitative literature on the impact of information and communication technologies on citizen participation in a democracy is reviewed whilst the second segment presents a qualitative literature review. The last part of the chapter will be a critique of the literature reviewed.

3.2 Quantitative Literature Review

3.2.1 Traditional predictors of democracy versus the strength of the Internet

In a quantitative study of the Internet and democracy, Kedzie 1997 (Best and Wade, 2009: 258) tested the "dictator's dilemma hypothesis through the use of linear regression to

compare the strength of traditional predictors of democracy against the strength of Internet prevalence.” The period of analysis was from 1983 to 1993 and was based on data obtained from 144 nations. The traditional forecasters of democracy that Kedzie employed comprised of “economic development and education, human development and health, ethnicity and culture, as well as indicators that represent pre-Internet ICTs” (Kedzie, 1997 cited in Best and Wade, 2009:258). The findings of Kedzie’s study revealed that the Internet was a stronger forecaster of democracy than the other more traditional predictors (ibid.).

The main weakness of Kedzie’s study is based on the period of assessment (1983-1993) a time when the Internet was only beginning to build international prevalence (International Telecommunication Union, 2004 cited in Best and Wade, 2009:258). Despite the fact that the Internet was still at the infancy stage Kedzie came up with intensive conclusions drawn upon simple longitudinal analysis. As a result the findings of his study might not be suggestive of a true relationship between the Internet and democracy, though his is the first attempt to find an affirmative relationship between Internet diffusion and democracy (Best and Wade, 2009 ibid.). Despite the profound conclusion reached by Kedzie, and the limitations and opportunities his study presented for future researchers to build on, it was not until 2005 that a study with more recent data was conducted (Lavery, 2012).

3.2.2 The global effect of Internet on democracy (1992 - 2002)

Following Kedzie’s study Best and Wade (2009) carried out a study in which they explored the global effect of the Internet on democracy over the period of 1992 and 2002 (Best and Wade, 2009:255). In trying to gauge the influence of Internet on democracy they scrutinised the relationships between measures related democracy and Internet prevalence. The measures associated with democracy that they used were inclusive of; a nation’s gross domestic product per capita and levels of adult literacy, whilst Internet prevalence was measured by the number of Internet users per one thousand people (Best and Wade, 2009:259).

As shown by the outcomes of their study, “the Internet was not a very powerful predictor of democracy when examining full panel data from 1992 to 2002 whilst it was a stronger predictor from the period 2001 to 2002” (Best and Wade, 2009:255). The fact that the 2001 to 2002 findings indicated a notable relationship between Internet and democracy unlike in the other years might force one to argue that the relationship between Internet and democracy is conditional. The inconsistency amongst the regional findings, with Asia and Africa experiencing the most substantial effects is evidence that the relationship between the Internet

and democracy depends on other acting forces also. This implies that the democratisation process also depends on much more significant factors than the use of Internet. Had it not been so, the outcomes of the study could have been consistent in all the regions studied.

As a result of these outcomes, Best and Wade (2009:270) assert that the Internet could explain levels of democracy more sensibly than literacy and geography, but to claim that the Internet is “a natural boon to democracy” would be a gross perversion of facts because the outcomes were different in the regions under examination. The changes in government transparency and NGO effectiveness in the period studied were attributed to the application of the Internet. Wade and Best (2005:258) consider that the influence of the Internet in the years of 2001-2002, when Internet penetration became a better predictor of democracy than GDP per capita is a pointer that the Internet has come of age as a correlate of democracy (cited in Lavery, 2012). If this was accurate, then by using more current data, this trend should continue. Despite the fact that particular regions were not affected by levels of Internet application, the outcomes of the study are suggestive of an affirmative relationship between democratic growth and Internet penetration (Best and Wade, 2009:270). However, the study’s weakness is that the data used is limited to 2002, a period way before the dawn of more participatory technologies that stimulate user-generated content like Twitter, and Facebook. (Meier, 2011:27).

3.2.3 Internet diffusion and democratic growth

In his study focusing on the possibility that Internet diffusion might be associated with democratic growth, Groshek (2010) analysed seventy-two (72) countries, most of them Eastern European and former Soviet states (Groshek, 2010:148). Groshek’s study investigated whether democratic change was related to the prevalence of the Internet in a given country and the unit of analysis was the nation and analyses proceeded at the national level. In the study “macro-level time-series democracy data from a historical sample of seventy-two countries, reaching back as far as 1946 in some cases, but at least from 1954 to 2003” was used (Groshek, 2010:143)).

As the results of Groshek’s study indicated, Internet diffusion was not the cause of national-level democratic growth during the period 1994 to 2003. For that reason Groshek contends that the diffusion of the Internet should not be regarded as a universal solution that brings about democracy, but rather an element of modern-day democratisation progressions.

Remarkably, Groshek's deductions in his study seems be at variance with his own findings from another study he carried out in 2009.

The findings of Groshek's study shows that amongst the seventy-two countries studied three of them; Croatia, Indonesia and Mexico revealed greater levels of democracy more than those statistically predicted (ibid.149.). In order to ascertain whether the Internet was definitely responsible for the democratisation process some qualitative analysis was done on each of the three countries (Groshek, 2010:149.) Nonetheless, the outcomes of the qualitative analysis did not provide any confirmation that the Internet had contributed to the advancement of democracy in the countries measured.

As a result Groshek (2010:158) comes to the conclusion that "it is therefore prudent to consider the Internet a potentially potent, but under-utilised democratic tool, one that is only as useful as the citizens who employ and implement it for political purposes." This means that the potential of the Internet in influencing democracy cannot be underestimated and should not also be overstated. On its own, the Internet is just a tool and cannot cause democracy; it is in the hands of the user of Internet to facilitate its positive results. For instance, the Internet maybe available in all countries but some may choose to use it to advance democracy whilst some to inhibit democracy. Hence the effectiveness of the Internet in promoting democracy lies in the capacity of the citizens and their governments to make use of it.

In line with the above it has been argued that the capability to transform societies into democracies is not in-built in media technologies, no matter how interactive or participatory, rather, these exist in individuals and in the way they use communicative technologies (Nord, 2001; Schudson, 1999, 2003 cited in Groshek, 2010:158). In other words, naturally the Internet does not exist to enhance democracy. The Internet might be available in a certain country and the citizens might be using it but not for political purposes. As a result there will not be changes as far as the democracy of that state is concerned. This implies that the successful use of Internet in the democratisation process depends on other factors such that the results of its application in a country for instance, in South Africa will differ from its application in Zimbabwe. It all depends on how it is used. There are other factors that come into play as far as the democratisation process is concerned and hailing the use of Internet alone as bringing about democracy would be a grave mistake. If one takes a closer look at Groshek's analysis, one would be forced to argue that he does not realise that democracy is as

a result of a series of processes, rather he treats democracy as a condition (state of being) (Meier, 2011). Instead, as Livingston (2011) affirms, democracy is multifaceted and is a process, with elections only a small part of that process.

The results from this study not only fill a void left by previous research, for instance that of Best and Wade, 2005; Kedzie 2002 but also provide a predictive context for democratic effects based on comparable data sources and time-series forecast modelling (Groshek, 2010:157). The outcomes of this inquiry were intended to provide context for future studies that scrutinise the ways and the extent to which media contribute to national level democratic change (Meier, 2011). It is conceivable that the sample used here may not be perfectly generalizable to all other countries but the sample size was big such that it represents a plethora of countries from many regions around the world.

Nevertheless, the main shortcoming of the analysis is the period of analysis because major social media platforms crucial for political action, for instance YouTube (2005), Facebook (2004) and Twitter (2006), came into play after 2003 (Joyce, 2010 cited in Joy-Webb, 2011:13).

In a different study, using multi regression models and macro-level panel data from 1994 to 2003, Groshek (same author as above but different study) examined the extent to which Internet diffusion is linked to increased levels of democracy in 152 countries (Groshek, 2009:115). The countries were selected on the basis of their inclusion in many of the databases used from the United Nations, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the World Bank (Groshek, 2009:122). The findings of the study show that increased Internet diffusion was a significant predictor of more democratic governments and that the relationship between Internet diffusion and democracy was statistically significant in developing countries where the average level of socio-political flux was much higher. As a result, the author concludes that policy makers should think through the democratic potential of the Internet but be wary of unintended consequences in countries under authoritarian rule (Groshek, 2009:128). The outcomes suggest that countries that were already more democratic before the introduction of Internet, diffused the Internet more than authoritarian states. This implies that the condition of any country before the adoption of Internet has a bearing on the effectiveness of the Internet as a tool for enhancing the democratisation process.

The findings of Groshek's study suggest that, "the democratic potential of the Internet is great, but actual effects might be limited because Internet diffusion appears conditional upon

national-level democracy itself” (Groshek, 2009:132). What this implies on one hand is that countries that were already democratic before the introduction of the Internet are likely to embrace the technology to advance democracy unlike authoritarian states. On the other hand states that were authoritarian before the commencement of the Internet might also embrace the Internet but employ it to stifle democracy.

Furthermore, it seems reasonable to expect that as Internet diffusion increases over time in these countries, it will be positively associated with greater levels of democracy. Nevertheless, as history has shown, the potential that technology holds should not suggest technological determinism. Therefore, it is sensible to anticipate that even countries that exhibit rapid increases in media technology diffusion might not show new structural socio-political changes as a result of this diffusion (Groshek, 2009:134). In other words increases in the spreading of media technologies do not eventually lead to changes in politics. Governments or even individual citizens may embrace media technologies and use them in other spheres but not for governance purposes.

3.2.4 Internet and the policy making process

In an endeavour to examine the role of Internet in linking authorities and civil society, Garrett and Jensen (2010) investigated “how elected officials’ interactions with neighbourhood groups, business interests, issue groups, and other stakeholders are shaped by their use of the Internet and by the characteristics of the local e-government” (Garret and Jensen, 2010:177). Moreover, their study also sought to establish if the growing use of Internet technologies by American municipalities is encouraging interaction amongst government and stake holders who have a vested interest in the local policy making process (ibid.). The study employed data from a survey of local elected officials conducted countrywide. In addition, data from an investigation of corresponding websites of the local government was also used.

The findings of Garrett and Jensen’s study indicated that the use of Internet had become the main channel connecting the government and the publics, for instance, “ninety five percent (95%) of those surveyed used technologies such as email and the Web in the course of their official activities” (Garrett & Jensen, 2010:191). Moreover, as shown in the outcomes, one in every three officials used the e-mail daily against only one in every five who met with stakeholders face to face daily and also one in every six officials who talked to the publics daily on the phone (ibid.).

Conversely, local government web sites do not appear to have a major influence on citizen's participation in policy making.

Furthermore as indicated in the results of the study local government websites were also quite predominant in the U.S., with the entire ninety-seven percent (97%) of the cities surveyed sustaining some kind of e-government presence online (Garrett and Jensen, 2010:191). The websites examined were used to furnish contact information, details about city decisions and to facilitate participation in city meetings. Information about voting was not very common though available. Worthy mentioning is the fact that "deliberative functions were the least common of the e-citizenship services, as only one in six (17.3%) sites supported this type of functionality" (Garrett and Jensen:191). In a way their study found out that the local government websites did not have a significant effect on the involvement of citizens in the making of policies.

Garret and Jensen's (2010) study sheds light on a hoary debate concerning the effects of the Internet technologies on the forms of interaction between the government and the citizenry. As the study shows, the elected representatives were providing information about city meetings, upcoming decisions, or official voting records, however they were not using the technology to effectually attract the abilities found in citizen-created resources and citizens seem not to be impressed by the development of online tools which were meant to enable them to get involved in the political process (Garrett and Jensen, 2010:198). Garrett and Jensen's outcomes concur with Bimber's (2003 cited in Garrett and Jensen, 2010:198-199) results which revealed that the information profusion powered by Internet-based communications has not empowered the citizens to influence decision making in the governance system.

A closer look at the results might force one to argue that the Internet lacks the pluralising and exclusionary potentials that some have credited to it. As Garrett and Jensen (2010:199) posit, "technologies such as email and the web have brought neither widespread adoption of direct democracy, nor rapid balkanisation of the local political environment". In other words the Internet technologies in most instances have not resulted in instant changes in the political environments as some say. Coleman argues, that it (2009 cited in Garrett and Jensen 2010:199) notes, "It would be insincere to suggest that the Internet as a communication technology and a political institution advances democracy. Hence, it is not surprising that in

the study the consequences of elected officials' Internet use were consistent with established functional imperatives inherent to the political system (ibid.).

Nevertheless, the transformative potential of Internet should not be completely discarded. This is so because the citizenry and the representatives of governments perceive the Internet technologies as encouraging participation in the political system, facilitating transparency and accountability amongst elected representatives (Tolbert & Mossberger, 2006 cited in Garrett and Jensen, 2010). Nonetheless it is too early to conclude that there is a causal relationship between the Internet and democracy because given a different environment the same technologies might yield different outcomes.

3.3 Critique of the Quantitative literature review

Christopher Kedzie's (1997) study revealed that there is a positive relationship between the application of Internet and democracy in other words the Internet is a predictor of democracy more than the traditional forecasters (Best and Ward, 2009). However, a closer look at the study might force one to argue that the outcomes of the study might have been affected by the period of assessment. The data that Kedzie used in his study is from 1993 a period when Internet was still commencing in the developed world and almost absent or very low in the developing nations. This means that the same research could produce different results when carried out at a later period. Nevertheless, Kedzie's study provides the groundwork for studies that address the relationship between the Internet technologies and democracy.

In a study which explored the global effect of Internet on democracy, Best and Wade's (2009) outcomes revealed a correlation between the use of Internet and democracy. However, the findings also revealed that the link that exists between the usage of Internet and the increase in political participation is conditional, just like Groshek's (2009) study. The democratisation process depends on other factors and not solely on the use of Internet. Best and Wade's study can inform this research considering the current condition of Zimbabwe where the use of Internet may be used to advance democracy but the success thereof might be affected by other factors like the current economic, socio-political conditions.

Moreover, just like in Groshek (2009) and Best and Wade's (2009) study, the success of the use of Internet in Zimbabwe may also depend on the current level of democracy. A closer look at Best and Wade's (2009) study would force one to argue that the data they used did not go further than 2002 and this implies that their study did not embrace more modern-day

participatory technologies, for instance, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube which are now available. Moreover, just like Kedzie, Best and Wade overlooked the impact of mobile phones which could yield better results. Nevertheless, Best and Wade's project is significant for scrutinising the effects of communication technologies and the efforts to democratise many nations all over the globe.

Groshek's (2010) study of seventy-two Eastern and former Soviet states assessed the possibility of association between Internet diffusion and democratic growth. The outcomes of the study revealed that Internet diffusion was not the cause of national level democratic growth during the time frame analysed and also that the effectiveness of the Internet in promoting democracy lies in the capacity of the citizens and their governments to make use of it. Just like the other studies, the major limitation of Groshek's (2010) study is due to the period under analysis; way before major platforms used for activism like YouTube (2005), Facebook (2004) and Twitter (2006) came into play Joyce, 2010 cited in Groshek, 2010). The prospective effects of mobile phones on political protests and democracy is also absent from Groshek's two macro-level studies. One thing common in all the studies reviewed earlier is their dependence on data collected before the espousal of Internet communication technologies which are more participatory. In this regard the researcher's study might produce different results because of the new media technologies which are more interactive than those beforehand. Thus the studies revealed have their strengths and limitations, similarities and differences but are essential in informing the present study.

3.4 Qualitative micro-level literature Review

3.4.1 A comparison of new and old mass media

In their study focusing on the debate surrounding human genome research, Gerhards and Schafer (2009) compared the Internet and mass media communication, analysing whether the Internet communication is better than print media communication in the sense that it allows for more participation by citizens (Gerhards and Schafer, 2009:1)

They differentiated "three stages of the offline and online public sphere as they vary in their structural requirements, in their openness for participation and in their societal impact" (Gerhards and Schafer, *ibid.*). The study's findings indicate that communication online is not meaningfully different from offline discussion in the print media and insignificant evidence to was found to substantiate the notion that the Internet is a better public sphere in

comparison to the print media. As Gerhard and Schafer (2009:13) reiterate, “Internet communication appeared even more unrepresentative and less inclusive than print media communication in terms of its actor structure and issue evaluations.” If the online communication is not representative of the citizens, if it does not include the views of the population at large then it means that those who had an edge in the print media still dominate deliberations on the Internet. Therefore the Internet communication is in no way better than the old mass media. In a way the Internet is still repeating the disparities that existed in the print media.

One of the major tenets of how the public sphere should function as outlined by Habermas is inclusivity. The fact that deliberations on the Internet are dominated by some citizens whilst others are excluded forces one to argue that the Internet does not afford a better platform for citizens to engage in political matters. If the imbalances that existed in the old mass media still exist on the public sphere afforded by the Internet, then the Internet does not offer a better public sphere. Concurrently van Dijk (2006:107–108 cited in Groshek, 2010) debates that evidence so far shows that most of the Internet activity in online forums, polls, communities and pressure groups is increasing but without contributing or affecting the decision making process in official politics. To some extent this shows that Internet technologies are complementing rather than substituting the old media and patterns of behaviour.

In their findings for both Germany and the USA, “Internet communication seemed even more one-sided and less inclusive than in print media communication in terms of its actor structure and issue evaluations” (Gerhards and Schafer, 2009:13). This finding implies that instead of being inclusive the online communications have gone further in sidelining other participants even more than the print media. Thus it has failed to meet the standard of the public sphere which in Habermas’ view was supposed to be inclusive of all the members of the society. In line with the argument that the Internet does not offer a better public sphere, Zimmerman (2006 cited in Gerhards and Schafer 2009:13) argued that in a space constructed by search engines, the way in which attention is directed in online communication is almost as hierarchically structured as it is for print media such that civil society is systematically discriminated against as compared to government actors. As a result Zimmerman concludes that Internet communication is not more democratic than the traditional mass media (ibid.).

In their comparison of the old and new media, Gerhards and Schafer (2009:13) further contend that the public sphere afforded by the Internet is not in any way better than the old mass media because search engines might provide more space to established players and institutions in a way silencing public deliberations. In addition, the Internet might also provide more ground to voices that are more prominent and to expert evaluations and views, thereby reproducing previous power structures that existed in old media (ibid.14.) Commenting on this view Rucht *et al.* (2004:9 cited in Gerhards and Schafer, 2009) argue that the Internet gives precedence to already dominant interest groups and actors and that “sheer wealth of available information would bring about a radical selection process” and this put smaller actors at a disadvantage.

Though Gerhards and Schafer’s (2009) study revealed that Internet communication is not better than the old mass media in any way, their study is of significance to my study. The mere fact that their study was carried out in the developed countries where the old mass media is more open than in the developing countries, particularly Africa might imply that undertaken in a different environment the study might come up with different outcomes. This is because in most African countries, Zimbabwe in particular, the traditional media is controlled by the ruling elite and the Internet might be a better alternative in offering the citizens a better public sphere where they can deliberate on political matters.

3.4.2 Effects of the Internet on civic and political engagement

In a meta-analysis of 38 studies and 166 effects, Boulianne (2009) assessed the assumption that “the use of Internet will contribute to declines in civic life and as well as whether the Internet use has any significant effect on civic and political engagement” (Boulianne, 2009:193). The findings from “the meta-data established that there is little evidence to support the argument that Internet use is contributing to civic decline” (Boulianne, 2009:204). In other words Boulianne’s study confirmed that the Internet does not have an undesirable impact on political engagement, meaning the effect is positive. Though Boulianne’s findings reveal that the influence of Internet usage on public and political engagement seem to increase over time, she cautioned that “the change varies and the effects are larger when online news is used to measure Internet use, compared to other measures” (Boulianne, 2009:200).

Shelley Boulianne’s (2009:205) study further revealed that “increased access to large, diverse sources of political information may help strengthen civic life, implying that the costs of

participation (time, effort) may decrease through the Internet's provision of more information." Her analysis which reveals a positive relationship between the use of Internet and civic and political engagement is important in my study. Nevertheless, Boulianne's (2009) analysis of thirty-eight studies on the use of Internet by the United States may not apply to other contexts, where Internet penetration is very low and resources to develop communication technologies are constrained by strained economies. Of importance to note is that studies done earlier than 1998 may have been too quick in presuming that the Internet had no influence on political participation "as the effect of Internet had yet to manifest itself as a result data collected in 2000 and yonder tend to produce larger effect sizes than data collected previously" (Boulianne, 2009:2005).

3.4.3 Effects of Internet use on political participation: the case of the Belgian youth

In an effort to determine whether the Internet fuels real life political participation or whether intensive Internet use is linked with a withdrawal from public life, Quintelier and Vissers (2008:1) examined both claims on a representative sample of six thousand three hundred and thirty (6,330) sixteen-year-olds in Belgium. They examined young people's behaviour, assuming that young people use ICTs most and are predisposed to the influence of different socialisation experiences (Quintelier and Vissers, 2008:1) The findings of their study indicate that time spent on the Internet does not have an effect on the tendency to participate in public life (ibid.).

While Norris (2001) and Ward and Vedel (2006 cited in Quintelier and Vissers, 2008:1) contend that the use of Internet will reinforce the awareness of public affairs and afford the public with a platform to actively engage in public deliberations, some are sceptical about the social repercussions of the Internet. Some like Putnam (2000) are anxious that Internet use will result in the reduction of real-life interaction and citizens will withdraw from public life (ibid.). However, Quintelier and Vissers (2008:1) claim that both assumptions have been tested mainly among adult population (Gibson, Lusoli, & Ward, 2005; Krueger, 2002; Tolbert & McNeal, 2003 cited in Quintelier and Vissers, 2008:1)), despite the absence of any tangible evidence. Hence in their study Quintelier and Vissers aim to provide a different form of evidence by analysing the impact of Internet use on young people's socio-political participation.

The fact that the results of their study revealed that time devoted online has no significant influence on political participation implies that the presence of Internet does not suggest that

the level of democracy will improve (Quintelier and Vissers, 2008). The citizens might spend a lot of time online but without engaging in political deliberations. Furthermore, Quintelier and Vissers (2008:8) also discovered that both gender and students' educational aspiration together with "a general interest in politics, political efficacy and political knowledge have a positive influence on political participation." This shows that besides spending much time online, political participation depends on other factors, for instance, one might spend more time online, but without the interest in politics or without knowledge of politics, one will not participate in political deliberations. This view concurs with the widespread notion that political perspectives are operational in motivating in citizen participation. Quintelier and Vissers (2008:10) note that while their study revealed a negligible connection between more Internet use and more political involvement, it is still conceivable "that specific forms of online activism like blogging, reading the news, and forwarding political e-mails can positively stimulate offline political participation."

Therefore, from the findings of Quintelier and Vissers' (2008) analysis it can be deduced that specific Internet activities are meaningfully linked to levels of political participation. Therefore the activities that one engages in whilst on line are more important than the amount of time spent online. Thus, of importance to note is the fact that the Internet's influence depend on what it is used for, as a result the Internet might become a vital tool for political organisation. Nevertheless, the main limitation to the findings of their survey is that it is representative of Belgian youth and this trend will not be universal in other cases.

3.4.4 The role of Internet in the Egyptian revolution

The startling events that spread out in Egypt in the late and early February have stimulated extraordinary debate about the role played by communication technologies in advancing democracy particularly in autocratic states (Groshek, 2012:751). In his study, Groshek examined the role of online and mobile technologies in the Egyptian revolution of January/February 2011 through a cross methodological approach (Groshek (2012:750). Interestingly, the incidence of Egypt has been characterised as an "Internet (or Facebook or social media) revolution" and yet it took place in a period of time where Internet was inaccessible in the whole country (Groshek, 2012:751). One wonders how can there be an Internet revolution in the absence of the Internet.

Groshek's (2012:761) findings reveal that "the diffusion of the Internet and mobile phones are likely to have contributed to the Egyptian revolt of 2011, as well as gradual

democratisation since that time” (Groshek, 2012:761). Although the statistical measures evidently confirm the possibility of an Internet enabled and economic prompted revolt, conversely the interviews suggest caution in generalising on “how these events progressed across a large population and through a period of tightly suppressed communication.” Nonetheless, both quantitative and qualitative approaches testified that the Egyptian revolution was not just a result of the Internet, social media and mobile phones but should also be understood in the sense of media effects as suggested by the hypodermic media effects theory (Groshek, 2012:764).

Groshek (2012:764) cautions against describing the proceedings in Egypt as having been triggered by online media. Instead, Groshek (ibid.) argues that “political and technological changes that paved the way for the Egyptian revolution” should be put into consideration too. On the other hand it is problematic to claim that the revolution would have taken place in the absence of the new communication technologies. The outcomes of Groshek’s study support Howard and Morozov’s (2010) view that Egypt experienced similar protests which were coordinated through Facebook in 2008 but they did not result in the defeat of the Mubarak government (Al Jazeera, 2011 cited in Groshek, 2012:764). What becomes important then is to examine what changed from 2008 to 2011.

The appropriate interpretation as noted in the Arab Social Media Report (2011 cited in Groshek, 2012:764) might be that “as the number of Internet and social media users increased, more relevant content was created, and the socio-political situation became more unsteady” (Arab Social Media Report, 2011 cited in Groshek, 2012). Even so, Groshek’s study reveals that the Internet was correlated to the level of democracy in Egypt. On this note, the example of the dictator’s dilemma (Kedzie, 2002 cited in Groshek, 2012:765) “appears to have been writ large in Egypt, where it is significant to elucidate the affirmative relationships of Internet and mobile diffusion to economic development, which was also a fundamental predictor of increased democracy”. Therefore, this outcome in particular advances the idea of reliance upon the media, for without the new media these findings would have not been the same.

Finally, Groshek posits that this instance of Egypt presents the “possibility of greater democratic effects through media in autocratic countries than previously identified” (Groshek, 2011, cited in Groshek 2012:766), even when not fully illuminated in numbers, with socio-political flux as an unintended tool of democratic change. Groshek’s (2012) study

is relevant to my research in the sense that the situation in Egypt, to a certain degree might resemble the situation in Zimbabwe. Just like Egypt, Zimbabwe is an autocratic country where freedom of expression and access to information is restricted through legislation (Manganga, 2012:103). The public sphere is further restricted by the fact that the media in Zimbabwe is mostly government owned (Mutsvairo, 2013). Of interest in Zimbabwe is the fact that there is no difference between the government and the ruling party and as a result opposing views are not given a platform in the government-controlled mainstream media. This does not lead to a healthy democracy because dissent voices are completely silenced. Hence, the case of Egypt gives an example of how the new media can enhance citizen participation in an autocratic country.

3.4.5 The Internet and citizen demand for democracy: an evaluation

In an attempt to test the relationship between Internet diffusion, use of Internet by individuals and the demand for democracy by citizens, Nisbet *et al.* (2012:254) carried out a survey across 28 countries. As postulated, “individual frequency of Internet use and country-level Internet penetration will each be positively associated with citizen demand for democracy and that using the Internet within more open, democratic political contexts may promote citizen demand for democracy more so than accessing the Internet in more closed, authoritarian regimes that monitor or restrict Internet activities” (Nisbet *et al.*, 2012:254). Thus, they asked if either the extent of Internet diffusion or the level of democratisation in a country regulates the relationship between the regularity of Internet use by citizens and their demand for democracy (Nisbet *et al.*, 2012)

In order to examine the assumptions and research questions mentioned above Nisbet *et al.* (2012:254) conducted an analysis of secondary data through the use of “survey data from the 2008 Afrobarometer and the 2006-2008 Asian Barometer surveys.” In their study, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia were given much attention because they are experiencing a remarkable increase in Internet diffusion and also because they consist of several authoritarian states and emerging democracies (Nisbet *et al.*, 2012:254).

The study revealed that the use of Internet and not the level of Internet diffusion nationally is related with greater citizen demand for democratic governance (Nisbet *et al.*, 2012). This finding corroborates Boulianne’s (2009: cited in Nisbet *et al.*, 2012:261) outcomes in a study carried out in the United States which suggests that the democratic potential of the Internet may grow unequal in countries where there is greater access.

In consistence with Groshek's (2009 cited in Nisbet *et al.*, 2012:261) study, Nisbet *et al.* (2012:261) suggest that the link between the application of Internet and the demand by the citizens is stronger in countries that are democratic than in states which are authoritarian. As shown in the study, "states that have a moderate to high level of Internet diffusion, in which the population averagely articulates a high demand for democracy, and enjoy at least a relatively democratic political government are environments where increasing Internet usage is more likely to stimulate democratic change. Kenya, Senegal, Singapore and Zambia may be good examples of such a process" (Nisbet *et al.*, 262). Conversely, states that are very totalitarian, such as Vietnam, are likely to restrain the democratic potential of the Internet regardless of the extent of Internet infiltration or level of demand (ibid.)

Furthermore, as Nisbet *et al.* (2012:263) contend that the adverse association between "democratisation and demand in the model shows that citizens in less democratic countries profess a higher demand for democracy than citizens in more democratic countries, where democratic governance may be taken for granted." The implication of the results is that the application of the Internet technologies might play a more significant role in strengthening and improving developing democracies by influencing the views of the citizens instead of endorsing absolute democratic changes amongst repressive governments (Nisbet *et al.*, 2012). The outcome of their study is in consistence with studies from other of other researchers for instance, Mozorov, 2011; Stockman and Gallagher, 2011(cited in Nisbet *et al.*, 2012) who have confirmed that the autocratic governments have the potential to curtail the ability of the Internet to advance democracy.

Their study is of importance to my study because their survey was based on different countries which are representative of different contexts. This means that their findings can be generalised because their sample was

3.4.6 Effects of Internet use on civil society and political engagement

A study conducted by Feezell *et al.* (2009) examined if online groups help to stimulate citizen participation in political deliberations. In their analysis they used "a multi-method design integrating content analysis of political group pages and original survey research of university undergraduates to assess the quality of online political group discussion and effects of online group membership on political engagement measured through political knowledge and political participation surrounding the 2008 election" (Feezell *et al.* 2009:2). The outcomes of the study show that involvement in political group activities on the Internet to

greater extent forecasts offline political participation by attracting members online (Feezell *et al.*, 2009).

Nonetheless, they failed to establish whether there is a positive influence on political knowledge, possibly owing to substandard online group debates. Feezell *et al.*'s (2009) analysis contributes to a vital debate about the use of Internet for political and public engagement by further identifying the ways in which Internet can be used and the impact thereof. Basically, they surmise that in terms of mobilising involvement in governance processes, Internet groups execute several similar positive public functions just like offline groups (Feezell *et al.*, 2009).

3.4.7 The role of the Internet in political organisation

Bailard (2011) notes that research is already on-going scrutinising when the Internet will (and will not) accelerate political behaviours and coordination. Through this analysis Bailard's makes an outstanding contribution to this endeavour by considering whether the Internet also influences the desire to organise in the first place. Through a "randomised field experiment conducted in the months leading up to the 2010 presidential election in Tanzania, the study explores whether the Internet influenced individuals' perception of the fairness of the election and recount" (Bailard, 2011:1). The accounts of demonstrations, uprisings, and revolutions prompted by disputed election outcomes in countries transitioning to democracy make this an imperative consideration of the Internet's capability to change the way citizens are contented with their government. The findings of the study reveal that the views of the citizens concerning the fairness of both the election and the consequent re-count were influenced negatively by the Internet (Bailard, 2011:1).

Nevertheless, the query of whether the Internet played a role in the months leading up to the protests, in terms of stimulating or, at least, directing the dissatisfaction that ultimately fuelled the movement has not been given much thoughtfulness (Bailard, 2011). According to Bailard, (2011:16) the use of "Internet considerably diminished individuals' perception of the fairness and impartiality of both the election and the consequent recount." What this implies is that the ability of the Internet to accelerate civic action only progress through its capability to cut the expenses of political organisation once individuals are encouraged to act. Instead, through the use of Internet the cost-benefit calculus of civic behaviour can be changed through increasing the variety of information citizens have concerning the performance of their government (Bailard, 2011:16). In addition, those instances in which the Internet

induces citizens to cultivate more undesirable assessments of their governments' performance may change, in some cases, into increased perceived benefits from political action and organisation.

However, as indicated by the finding that members of the disaffected Internet group were also less likely to vote suggests that the Internet's potential to alter the cost-benefit calculus of civic behaviour may, in other instances, actually decrease individuals' tendency to engage in certain political acts. Therefore, "while the mirror-holding and window-opening" roles of the Internet modify the citizens' assessments of their government and political system, it does not follow that these evaluations will bring about noticeable changes in political behaviour and organisation (Bailard, 2011:16). Furthermore, when it does, there is no assurance that this political behaviour and coordination will always be in support of more affirmative democratic ends. Because of that it becomes indispensable that researchers continue to unearth and examine the elements that ascertain when and where the use of Internet will modify evaluations, as well as when and where these assessments will end up in actual political behaviour and organisation (Bailard, 2011:17). Unpacking all factors affecting this relationship will certainly continue to be complex and overwhelming, but doing so will provide a better forecast for the discipline so that it becomes clear when and where the Internet will affect political action positively.

3.4.8 ICTs and citizen participation in Parliament

Kanjo (2009:312) carried out a study in Malawi on "promoting e-democracy and citizen participation through ICT initiatives in parliament." She noted that generally in Africa, the technological change pace is slower than in developing countries, hence she argues that e-democracy cannot be achievable using contemporary technology alone. For that reason, she "proposes an experience-based model for the low-ICT resource countries that promotes the use of multiple ICTs, both traditional (radio, television) and contemporary (computers, mobile phones, internet), as a way of enhancing citizen participation towards issues that are deliberated in parliament" Kanjo, 2009:313) In her chapter she argues that the use of multiple ICTs may be an appropriate approach in low-resource context and this is based on her experience in Malawi where ICT availability and access is still low.

Malawi has a "population of thirteen million people and is largely an agricultural country with only seventeen percent of the population urban based and ICT infrastructure such as computers and the Internet is only enabled in urban areas" (Kanjo and Lwanda, 2008 cited in

Kanjo, 2009:313). In addition, Malawi has “a high mobile phone area coverage, (85% of the population could access a network) but because many citizens cannot afford the handsets, the subscribers rate is only 4.1% (Intelecon, 2007, cited in Kanjo, 2009:313). Moreover, the study revealed that the Internet infrastructure in Malawi is distinguished by high charges, poor service delivery due to low band width and low permeation levels. Notably, “one or two Internet cafes are only available to the public at each of the twenty-seven district’s headquarters; this is mostly at the urban centers of the district” (Kanjo and Lwanda, 2008 cited in Kanjo, 2009). Whilst the world average Internet penetration is 23.8% and average for Africa is 5.6%; Malawi’s Internet penetration is at 1% (Kanjo, 2009). Because of the impediments explained above, there is poor information flow in the country and slow e-democracy processes, and the few e-democracy practices that exist are held by individual non-governmental initiatives. Thus Kanjo (2009) argues that the use of Internet alone is not enough as way of enhancing democracy, instead the use of multiple ICTs may be an appropriate approach in low-resource context.

Commenting on Kanjo’s 2009 study, Dandjinou (2002, cited in Kanjo, 2009:312) argues that “most of the ICT initiatives in developing countries are sponsored by donors and founded on the models and experiences of the developed world.” As a result some of the ICT initiatives do not suit the situation of the developing countries. They disregard the reality that ICT infrastructures and the cultural, political and economic conditions in developing states are not the same, as a result they should scrutinise which ICTs are accessible in a particular situation and this should be determined by that state’s resources. It does not follow that because the Internet was a successful tool in enhancing democracy in the USA, it will also be successful in Zimbabwe. These are two different states, with different contexts acting upon the use of ICTs for democracy; hence the outcomes of the use of Internet for democracy cannot be overstated, they differ accordingly. Thus one is forced to argue that it is inadequate for researchers to claim that the Internet is a crucial tool in the democratisation process and try to apply any ICT tool universally, they must look critically at which ICT is available in a particular setting depending on the country’s resource base.

3.4.9 The Internet, democratic culture, public discourse and citizen participation

In her study examining the effects of ICT usage in South Africa, Kenya and Zambia, Janse van Rensburg (2012:93) advances “that the Internet has significant potential to arouse democratic culture through public discourse and citizen participation.” The three countries

were selected as representatives of sub-Saharan Africa, specifically “focusing on finding evidence-based information about the current influence of information and communication technology usage, looking at Internet usage through computers and mobile phones” (Janse van Rensburg, 2012:93). In her study she also examined the potential and the chance citizens have to effectively assimilate ICTs for the achievement of individual and mutually determined political goals so as to reinforce a broader democratic culture (ibid.94).

Janse van Rensburg (2012) selected the three states in order to obtain information about the widest possible range of examples in a region where ICT penetration and usage differ from very low to high. Moreover, in the sub-Saharan region the Internet is currently believed to have a very low to a very high influence. In addition the three countries were chosen as initial research found indications that all three countries were introducing expedient procedures to improve the availability of ICT infrastructure and Internet usage, most notably for development purposes (Janse van Rensburg, 2012:95). The study also examined why there were different levels of success with the initiative in the sample countries.

In Zambia, the study revealed that while the Internet could be an influential tool in the improvement and consolidation of a country’s democracy, the probability that the Internet would stimulate participation in political matters was very low. As indicated by the findings, there is lack of appreciation of the value the Internet by most leaders, hence the sluggish approach to addressing ICT issues. The leaders do not understand how the ICTs can improve the social lives of the people of Zambia. For instance, Lwao (2010 cited in Janse van Rensburg, 2012:106) argued that with the extremely low level of Internet access prevailing in Zambia, there is no way citizen participation can be reinforced through increasing Internet access. Moreover, computer illiteracy was very high, the inclination to make use of the Internet simply did not exist and the government did not grasp the importance of the Internet for democracy (Janse van Rensburg, 2012:107).

Contrastingly, in Kenya the outcomes of the study showed that there was a close link between democracy and the usage of Internet. The Internet played a crucial role for the duration of the elections in Kenya in 2007 and a Kenyan website named Ushahidi.com was used to spread information countrywide and globally during the turbulent national elections. Ushahidi, (KiSwahili for testimony), is an open source software that allows users to plot important events on a crowd-sourced map. Through Ushahidi the citizens could relay information during incidents of political violence, during elections, as well as natural disasters.

With the use of SMS, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, email, and voicemail users could add events to a map of the occurrences in real-time, allowing the media, government, or emergency services to see events on a map as it happened. This software was born out of the post-election violence in Kenya in 2007 and 2008. Citizens were able to report acts of unrest or politically motivated violence to Ushahidi, which then displayed a map of all the user-reported information despite government censoring or hindering the Kenyan media's reporting or investigations into the violence. On the other hand, politicians manipulated the citizens who had no access to information. Most of them were fed and believed half-truths that could not be verified. Many of these citizens were young and unemployed either in urban slums or rural areas that were not well served with infrastructure to facilitate Internet access (ibid.).

In South Africa cynicism about the Internet's role in democracy was based on premise that diffusion, access and usage, was already high without it contributing to democracy (Janse vans Rensburg, 2012:108). This was as a result of lack of government initiative for the infrastructure to reach the masses of poor South African citizens and for citizens to obtain the aptitude and training necessary to use the Internet efficiently. The use of Internet can enhance democracy though the issue of access and the development of local content is essential to attract citizens to make use of the Internet for democracy in the three African countries. Janse vans Rensburg (2012:113) also came to the conclusion that Internet users could only benefit from digital content specifically developed to cater for their needs and this might require deviating from the general or nonspecific Western models of presenting digital content. The emergence of communication technologies has changed the ways in which many people communicate and share information, yet the effects of the development of social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter or YouTube as well as blogging environments and online discussion fora, have had on political practices remain debatable and not well understood.

The strength of this study is that it has obtained information about a broader spectrum of examples in the region where ICTs penetration and usage vary from very low to high and where the Internet is currently believed to have a low to a high impact. In addition, the fact that the study was carried out in African countries which are in the same region with Zimbabwe could make the outcomes of the study better in informing my research. Of importance is also the fact that the study was carried out recently and it covered the use of platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube which are recent developments in

communication technologies and this makes the findings of the study better in informing my research study.

Moreover, the study draws its findings from countries with different political and socio-economic conditions and thereby allows us to understand the impact of these conditions on the Internet's perceived use for democracy in these countries. However, the study was carried out in countries where the political situation is different from Zimbabwe where freedom of expression, association and movement is severely repressed and access to the mainstream media limited. In addition, the current socio-economic environment in Zimbabwe has declined and this has affected the living standards, patterns of work and leisure, the education system and the market place (Manganga, 2012). These have a bearing on the use of communication technologies and to generalise that the findings obtained in the study carried out in Kenya, Zambia and South Africa will suit the situation in Zimbabwe will be a blunt mistake.

Furthermore, in Zimbabwe the media are mostly government owned and controlled and through the use of draconian legislation the independent media cannot easily criticise the government (Chuma, 2005). On that note dissent voices cannot be given a platform in the mainstream media. Through the use of legislation the government has succeeded in silencing the independent media and in some instances this has led to the closure of independent media houses (Manganga, 2012). Thus, the traditional media has failed to provide a public sphere where the citizens can deliberate on issues that affect their day to day lives. Thus, the present study has sought to examine how the Internet could be applied to enhance citizen participation in the democratisation of Zimbabwe an autocratic state.

3.5 Conclusion

It is crucial to note that several of the quantitative studies reviewed were mainly focusing on Internet diffusion, institutions of the government and political processes, leaving out the individual citizen's attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. The present study seeks to fill this gap by giving more attention to the views of citizens and their perspectives concerning democracy. The literature review of the quantitative studies provides diverse outcomes. Several of the studies statistically identified significant relations amongst Internet technologies and democracy (Best and Wade, 2009; Groshek, 2009; Bailard, 2011); and others not establishing any relationship between technology and democracy (Kedzie, 1997; Groshek, 2010; Loader & Mercea, 2012).

One of the major weaknesses of the quantitative studies examined is that the data analysed was drawn earlier than 2003, prior to the commencing of more user generated media. For instance, social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube were still not available or in the infancy stage such that individuals and civil society groups adopted them into use at a later stage. This might imply that the use of ICTs in the democratisation process will increase in time as the ICTs become widespread. In addition the most of the studies analysed mainly emphasised on the influence of the Internet excluding cellular phones. This study will focus on the use of Internet to enhance democracy whether accessed through the laptops and mobile telephony.

Moreover, most of these communication technologies are still more prevalent and used in the developed countries as compared to their availability and usage in authoritarian states and as a result most of the studies reviewed are from the West suggesting that different outcomes may be obtained from this present study. Moreover, most of the studies reviewed focus exclusively on states that are not authoritarian except for Egypt.

On the other hand, the qualitative literature though ample than the quantitative studies, is not also undisputable. As shown in the literature review, most of the countries where the studies took place are in the West. Most of the studies show that there is a correlation between the use of Internet and democracy. However, the same results cannot be generalised in most of the countries in Africa where authoritarianism is still prevailing. Besides that, Internet penetration is still very low in Africa, for many reasons. Most African leaders are concerned with much more mundane problems such as how to secure food for their people, improving primary health care, or building roads. On top of that most of these governments have limited resources such that there are limitations on what they can choose to do with public resources.

In some of the reviewed studies, Groshek (2009), Best and Wade (2009) and Quintelier and Vissers (2008) maintain that the success of the use of Internet for citizen participation is conditional. This means the success of the application of Internet to enhance democracy depends on other elements for instance, resources, level of education, social capital and the prevailing political environment and these vary from country to country. As a result, supposing that the findings obtained in the USA, Belgium and South Africa will be yielded in Zimbabwe might be a blunt error because the environment in which the Internet is being used is different.

With the situation in Zimbabwe, where the citizens have suffered political repression for more than three decades, the use of Internet to promote citizen participation might enhance the democratisation process. In most of the countries in which the studies were carried out, there is freedom of the press and plurality of the media as compared to the situation in Zimbabwe where the media are heavily censored to the extent that the citizens have no platform to raise and debate issues concerning their governance. In addition, the journalists and the general populace are forced into self-censorship such that what they say against the ruling elite is limited for fear of persecution. Hence the application of the Internet as a tool to enhance citizen participation might be essential as an alternative platform for citizens to engage in political discourse.

In this chapter I reviewed the quantitative and qualitative literature on how the Internet has been applied to enhance citizen participation in different states and also outlined how the literature informs this study. In the next chapter I will explain the research methodology and outline the research design of the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Qualitative Approach

In recognising that digital democracy is a relatively complex subject of enquiry which also involves attempts at making sense and interpreting the concept in a Zimbabwean context, this study used a qualitative research approach. Several factors need to be put into consideration when determining which research methodology to adopt. In this study the researcher sought to examine the use of Internet for citizen participation in Zimbabwe. This is a new phenomenon which requires illumination and inference into the situation so that one can have better understanding. In a similar vein Strauss and Corbin (1990:524) claim that “qualitative methods can be used to better understand any phenomenon about which little is yet known.” Moreover, qualitative research approach can also be used to gain new perspectives on things about which much is already known, or to gain more in-depth information that may be difficult to convey quantitatively.

Qualitative research is a broad field of inquiry that uses unstructured data collection methods, such as observations and documents to find themes and meanings to inform our understanding of the world. Because the researcher wanted to make an attempt to uncover the reasons for behaviour, attitudes and motivations, instead of just the details of what, where and when, the qualitative approach was suitable for this study. Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:8) describe qualitative research methods as methods aiming at determining the dynamic and changeable nature of reality by collecting subjective data, presented verbally by people. In addition, the qualitative approach is a method of examining data without converting it into numerical format, which implies that the researcher seeks to make sense out of the data, not count or measure it.

In qualitative research comprehensive data is gathered through open-ended questions that provide direct quotations and the interviewer is an integral part of the investigation (Jacob, 1988). This differs from quantitative research which attempts to gather data by objective methods to provide information about relations, comparisons, and predictions while attempting to remove the investigator from the investigation (Smith, 1983). As Miles and Huberman (1994: 10) state, qualitative data occur naturally as ordinary events in natural settings. Moreover, Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) posit “qualitative research involves the

study and use of a variety of empirical materials, personal experience, interview and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives."

Qualitative research necessitates that the researcher identify the participants and research locations depending on the possibility of such places and people's capability to provide valuable information on the situation being studied (Creswell, 2008:213). This implies that the researcher does not pick anyone but identifies carefully those individuals or places that she or he supposes will be able to provide useful information for the subject under study. Moreover, qualitative data collection approaches consist of direct quotations from the people whose situations are being studied, thus their experiences, views, feelings and understanding can be captured clearly (Merriam, 2009:85). The present study used the strength of qualitative data to capture the views, feelings and understanding of the Zimbabwean citizens to explore possibilities of using the Internet for the promotion of citizen's participation in the political dispensation of Zimbabwe.

4.2 Research Design

The research design is a comprehensive outline of how the investigation took place. It includes consideration of the research approach which is to be taken, and the research methods, data collection tools and the methods of data analysis that are to be employed (Moule and Hek, 2011:30). In other words the research design includes: how the data was collected, what instruments were employed, how the instruments were used and the intended means for analysing the collected data.

The researcher used the cross-sectional study design. In this type of research design, either the entire population or a subset thereof is selected, and from these individuals data are collected to help answer the research questions (Hall, 2008:172). The researcher in this study did not study the entire population but a small section of Zimbabwean citizens living in South Africa. "Cross-sectional surveys have been described as snapshots of the populations about which they gather data and is called cross-sectional because the information gathered represents what is going on at only one point in time" (ibid.). In other words the data is typically collected at once and for all and in a short period of time. In this study the researcher collected the data in three months.

In the present study the researcher collected data through face to face interviews. This type of study "can be conducted using any mode of data collection, including telephone interviews in

which landline telephones are called, telephone interviews in which cell phones are called, face to face interviews, mailed questionnaires, other self-administered questionnaires, electronic mail and web data collection etc” (Hall, 2008:172). The advantage of using a cross-sectional study design is that it allows the researcher to compare many different variables at the same time and it is also quick and cheap. An outline of how the study was conducted is given below, and this include, sampling, data collection methods as well as data analysis.

4.3 Sampling

The target population in this research were Zimbabwean citizens. The researcher did not go to Zimbabwe due to safety reasons, and as a result the sample was drawn from Zimbabwean citizens living in South Africa as these were the accessible population. According to Creswell (2002) a sample size can be about fifteen to twenty (15-20) interviews. On the same note, Maxwell (1998) and Strauss and Corbin (1998:281) suggest a figure between ten and twelve (10 and 12) as being acceptable in qualitative research study based on the fact that qualitative research is rigorous and detailed in its coding processes. Moreover, Charmaz (2006:114) notes that the sample size can be small with “modest claims” yet achieve saturation quicker. This means that the quality of data produced has “superseded the sample size.” Due to “the numerous factors that can determine sample sizes in qualitative studies, many researchers shy away from suggesting what constitutes a sufficient sample size (in contrast to quantitative studies for example)” (Charmaz, 2006:114). Only a few sources provide recommendations for actual sample sizes for instance;

- Ethnography and ethno science: Morse (1994:225) 30-50 interviews for both; Bernard (2000:178) states that most studies are based on samples between 30-60 interviews for ethno science;
- Grounded theory methodology: Creswell (1998:64) 20-30; Morse (1994:225) 30-50 interviews.
- Phenomenology: Creswell (1998:64) five to 25; Morse (1994:225) at least six;
- All qualitative research: Bertaux (1981:35) fifteen is the smallest acceptable sample (adapted from Guest et al., 2006) (cited in Marson, 2010).

The “numbers are offered as guidance, the authors do not tend to present empirical arguments as to why these numbers and not others for example, moreover the issue of why some authors feel that certain methodological approaches call for more participants compared to others is also not explored in any detail” (Charmaz, 2006:114).

The sample of the present study comprised of both men and women of different ages encompassing the youths, the middle up to around the fifties, so that the data or the opinions and views collected would be diverse.

The researcher used snowball sampling in conjunction with purposive sampling. The researcher collected data on a few Zimbabweans that she located and then asked those individuals to provide information needed to locate other Zimbabwean citizens whom they know. Babbie (2010:208) asserts that snowball sampling “is appropriate when members of a special population are difficult to locate, such as the homeless individuals, migrant workers, or undocumented immigrants. In snowball sampling, the researcher collects data on the few members of the target population he or she can locate, and then asks those individuals to provide the information needed to locate other members of that population whom they happen to know.” In other words ‘snowball’ “refers to the process of accumulation as each located subject suggests other subjects” (ibid.). This method was appropriate for this study because of the availability of the Zimbabwean exiles who left the country because of socio-political and economic situation and are living in South Africa.

Most of the Zimbabweans identified for the interviews were from the middle class and also knowledgeable people who could understand the topic and were willing to give detailed thoughts. These were mainly the working class “who spoke with their feet” and went out of the country due to economic and political hardships (Thornycroft, 2002). The researcher asked those subjects for the names and contact details of other Zimbabweans who would be in a position to provide valuable information wanted for the study. According to Black (2009:226) “through these referrals, survey subjects were identified cheaply and efficiently, which is particularly useful when the research subjects are difficult to locate.” It is important to note that qualitative research to a greater extent depends on participants who are articulate and thoughtful in such a way that they can provide vivid accounts of their experiences (Padgett, 2008:56). Interviews that produce sketchy answers from disinterested respondents are poor sustenance for a study.

The study's objectives and research questions guided the researcher in sampling the participants. The researcher selected a few respondents whom she believed would be able to provide the needed information. Riviere (2013:57) asserts that "qualitative research employs purposive (or purposeful) sampling, in which the researcher systematically selects certain groups, individuals, situations or sites to study on the basis of their relevance to the central research issue." In support of Riviere's definition, Patton (1990:169) cited in Riviere, 2013:57) argues that "qualitative inquiry typically focuses in-depth on small samples even single cases, the logic of inquiry and power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information rich cases or those people from which we can learn a great deal about the issues of central importance to the purpose of the research." Significantly, qualitative sampling should not be carried out to represent a larger universe but for conceptual and theoretical reasons. Hence, the purpose of the sampling was not mainly to represent the population in Zimbabwe at large but for conceptual and theoretical explanations.

4.4 Data Collection Techniques

One of the techniques that were employed to gather data in this study was interviews. The "most common sources of data collection in qualitative research are interviews, observations, and review of documents" (Creswell, 2009; Locke, Silverman, & Spirduso, 2010; Marshal & Rossman, 1999 cited in Thomas *et al.*, 2011:357).

4.4.1 Qualitative Interviews

In order to have an understanding of the use of the Internet for citizen participation in the democratisation process in Zimbabwe in-depth interviews were used to collect the data. DeMarrias (2004:55) defines an interview as a "process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study." A number of people from different groups were interviewed for instance, Lecturers working in different universities, teachers, post-graduate students, journalist, social workers and lawyers and some doing general jobs. These people were asked to give their personal opinions, views and interpretations of how the Internet could be used to enhance citizen participation in the democratisation process of the country.

According to Boyce and Neale (2006:3), an "in-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programme, or situation." In-

depth qualitative interviews use open-ended questions which “allow the researcher to deeply explore the respondent’s feelings and perspectives on a subject and this result in rich background information that can shape further questions relevant to the topic” (Guion *et al.*, 2011). This interview was useful for examining the views and opinions of Zimbabwean citizens in depth within the context of guided conversation that allowed the researcher to gain insight into the use of Internet for citizen participation.

In depth interviews are useful when one wants detailed information about a person’s thoughts and behaviours or want to explore new issues in depth. The questions were worded in such a way that respondents expounded on the topic, not just ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers. Many open-ended questions begin with why or how, which gives respondents freedom to answer the questions using their own words. Moreover, “open-ended questions yield in depth responses about people’s experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. Data consists of verbatim quotations and sufficient content to be interpretable” (Patton, 2002:339). The interviews were used as “guided conversations” rather than “structured queries” as one would find in a survey (Yin, 2003: 89).

The Interviews started with general questions, for instance, asking whether, the respondents had Internet access, where were they accessing it from, how much time did they spend online per day and also what were they using Internet for? These questions were straight forward, not subjective and did not require a lot of thinking. Following the general questions were those that required the respondents to air their views and opinions as to why things are the way they are and what maybe are the causes and how such things can be improved or corrected. For instance the researcher asked the participants whether they participate in online deliberations, if yes how, and if not why? In addition the respondents were asked whether their participation is valued, whether their contributions are taken into considerations? Moreover, the participants were also asked if they were aware of the availability of legislations online, government websites and also whether they participated on activities like the constitution making process. Furthermore, they were asked if they view the Internet as an ideal tool for promoting citizen participation in Zimbabwe. All the questions asked were in line with the objectives of the study. Through these questions the researcher examined their use of Internet for citizen participation, the effectiveness of Internet for promoting citizen participation and how the Internet can be used effectively in the promotion of citizen participation in the political dispensation of Zimbabwe and managed to get their understanding, views and opinions on the subject.

Open ended questions were used following a written set of questions. The responses were audio-recorded and transcribed and were complemented with written notes by the interviewer. Interviews can be useful to clarify or confirm some of the issues arising from primary documents. Interviews are also useful in lighting up the grey areas that cannot be illuminated by documentary evidence or secondary research (Meier, 2011). The face to face interview technique was helpful in building rapport with the participants. An observation made concerning the importance of building rapport with participants was demonstrated by the level of enthusiasm communicated and cooperation received from the participants.

4.4.2 Analysis of documents

In addition to interviews, the study also gathered data from reviewing documents. Both public and private documents that contain information regarding the topic under discussion were used. Government documents: policy documents, for instance the ICT policy, legislation like the ICA, AIPPA and POSA pertaining to information and communication technology (ICT), reports, as well as relevant articles from various authors formed part of the sources of information for this study Bowen (2009:1) defines “document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents both in print and electronic form (computer-based and Internet transmitted) material.” According to Corbin and Strauss (2008) document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge.” In other words, it is a form of qualitative research in which documents are understood by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic.

Documents can provide background information preceding designing the research project, for example prior to conducting interviews. The documents may substantiate interview data, or they may refute them, in which case the researcher is ‘armed’ with evidence that can be used to clarify or perhaps to challenge what is being told (Yanow, 2007:411). My use of both interviews as well as document analysis allowed me to appropriately gain a rich understanding of the topic under study. Myers (2009:161) asserts that documents are relatively cheap and quick to access...they make things visible and traceable. The documents were in the public domain and easily accessible. Moreover, conducting the analysis was a bit less time consuming because in some instances the researcher was not analysing the entire document, for instance, ICT policy document but only applicable passages referring to use of ICT for citizen participation. In addition Merriam (2009:139) posits that “the presence of

documents does not intrude upon nor alter the setting in which the phenomenon being studied occurs, as does the physical presence of an investigator.”

4.4.3 Secondary Sources

The study also relied extensively on information obtained from secondary sources. These sources include government reports, archived data sets, traditional books, newspaper articles and journals found in libraries. According to Stewart and Kamins (1993:1), “secondary information consists of sources of data and other information collected by others and archived in some form.” As Moyo notes (2006:102), the main advantage of doing secondary research is that it uses information that already exists in some form, and hence is less expensive and less time-consuming. These secondary sources were useful in the formulation of the research problem as well as research methods for this study. In this case, primary sources became useful as a supplement to fill gaps in existing knowledge.

Steward and Kamins (1993:3) contend that primary and secondary research can, in some instances, be substitutes for each other, while in others they can be used to complement rather than substitute one another. In this study, these two source categories were used to both substitute and/ or complement each other depending on a particular situation. Nevertheless, the major problem with secondary research is that the analyst does not collect the information, and hence he or she does not have control over the deliberate or unintended biases that it often carries.

Hence, Stewart and Kamins (ibid.17) suggest that secondary information “must be evaluated carefully and weighted according to its recency and credibility.” According to Kalof et al., (2008:162) “credibility is how accurately the data reflect reality.” When collecting data, triangulation of methods and data sources can create a more complete understanding of the group or setting of interest. In the study, the researcher ensured the credibility of the research through combining information gathered through interviews and review of related literature. In addition, the researcher ensured that the information that was used is dated so as to determine how old the ideas are and also review documents that have been published recently.

4.4.4 The Internet as a source

A considerable amount of information essential for this study was obtained from the Internet, including newspaper articles, journal articles and government policy documents as well as

information and communication technology laws passed in the country, to mention but a few. The “Internet has become one of the key sources of information in political and other research” (Burham, Gilland, Grant, and Henry, 2004). As Moyo (2006:102) contends, with governments and organisations increasingly putting documents and other information online, this has provided a cost-effective and efficient way of obtaining vital information which can be easily accessed and downloaded within minutes. Nonetheless, as Burham et al (ibid) caution, Internet sources suffer the same authenticity problems that any other archival sources do, and as such require a systematic approach.

Government, other organisations and civil society websites were used to access some of these key documents. Moreover, search engines such as Google chrome have proved very useful in enabling the researcher to access academic articles otherwise not published elsewhere. One of the major challenges faced with using the Internet, though, is that some websites are always under constant reconstruction, with information either changing or disappearing completely. Hence, the researcher developed an archive of articles accessed to avoid losing important information.

4.5 Data Analysis

The data gathered from interviews and documents was treated qualitatively. The data was analysed manually. These involved “discovering themes in the interview transcripts and documents reviewed and attempting to verify, confirm and qualify them by searching through the data and repeating the process to identify further themes and categories” (Chadwick, 2008:429). The data was transcribed and coded before it was interpreted according to different themes derived from research questions.

According to Taylor and Gibbs, (2010) “qualitative data analysis (QDA) is the range of processes and procedures whereby we move from the qualitative data that have been collected into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations we are investigating.” In simple terms, data analysis entails interpreting what participants said and what the researcher read. The process of analysing data involves moving back and forth. In line with this, Goodwill and Goodwill (1996:142) maintains that “qualitative data analysis is closely tied to data collection, and occurs throughout data collection as well as afterward.” This view is upheld by Burnard et al., (2008:429) who note that in qualitative research, data analysis does not occur after all the data has been collected, but that after every session with a respondent the researcher will start transcribing. It also

entails the writing of comments by the researcher as soon as a session with a participant is ended and these comments can be thoughts, feelings, and ideas for the next stage of data collection. On this note, Goodwill and Goodwill (1996:142) note that “qualitative researchers use the technique of writing memos to themselves during data collection, and this is referred to as ‘memoing’.” The memo can be a summary of data gathered and some vital facts that are emerged during the previous session.

Data analysis also encompasses the coding process. According to Barbie (2010:208) coding is a fundamental procedure in the analysis of qualitative data. Coding is defined as the “process of focusing a mass amount of free-form data with the goal of empirically illuminating answers to research questions” (Hahn, 2008). The coding process moves step by step, progressing from unsorted data to the development of more refined categories, themes and concepts. This method enables the researcher to retrieve the materials that one is interested in, from the massive data one has collected. In the process the data is broken down, conceptualised and put back together in form of news (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:57). In the process of coding, the researcher “organise the information; all the words and phrases, behaviours observed and events recorded into meaningful categories and then the analysis proceeds by looking for patterns or relationships, finally deciding what is important and how it can be conveyed to different audiences” (Goodwill and Goodwill, 1996:144). Eventually, views, opinions, actions, events and perceptions that are corresponding in essence are categorised.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Qualitative research rarely causes serious harm to participants, though this should not be always taken for granted because some phenomenon studied might be sensitive. Observing ethical considerations was important in order to give participants a level of comfort that the research was indeed for academic purposes and not for other purposes, for instance political purposes. The nature and purpose of the study was clearly explained so that the participants could make a decision to participate or not.

A letter informed the research participants about the topic under investigation and what the study intended to find out from them. In addition, the letter also served to inform them of their expected roles in this research and emphasized that their participation in the study entirely depended on their readiness to take part as respondents in the interviews that would be used for data collection.

Informed consent: The researcher was obliged to protect the participants' rights. The participants were not obliged to participate. Their participation was solely out of their willingness. Participants also had the right to withdraw from the interviews at any time for any reason. In other words before the interviews commenced the researcher obtained informed consent from the participants.

Confidentiality: Any individual participating in the study had a reasonable expectation that information provided to the researcher would be treated in a confidential manner. Due to sensitivity of some of the issues raised in the interview, the researcher had to assure participants that access to the information would be only allowed to those directly involved with the research. In addition, the researcher assured the participants that their names would not be used in the research report.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the approach and methods that were used in this study. The study used the qualitative research approach in which the data was collected using interviews and the review of documents. The sample of the study was drawn from Zimbabwean exiles living in South Africa. Snowball sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique, was used to locate a few members of the population who provided information needed to locate other members of the population whom they happen to know. The data was transcribed and coded before it was interpreted according to different themes derived from the research questions. The next chapter explores the relationship between the media and politics in Zimbabwe, the expected role of media in a democracy and how that role has been muffled through undemocratic laws. The chapter also examines how the Internet has emerged as an alternative public sphere.

CHAPTER 5

POLITICS AND THE MEDIA IN ZIMBABWE

The media should be allowed to fulfil its mandate of Fourth Estate: ‘The guardians of democracy, defenders of the public interest.’ (Mick Underwood, 2004, cited in Chatora, 2009:6)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the interface between the media and politics and how the relationship affects citizen participation in Zimbabwe. Moreover, the chapter scrutinises the role played by the media in the democratisation process. It also assesses the reforms that have been executed in the media sector since independence and whether these reforms have stifled or advanced public participation in governance. A discussion on the emergence of the Internet and how it has provided the citizens with a platform for public participation is also included in the chapter.

According to MISA (2013:1) “the media as an industry and as a practice is a fundamental apparatus for the promotion of freedom of expression and access to information by citizens of a country. The media affords the citizens a platform where they can access information and participate in the public sphere. The media facilitates dialogue between the citizens and the government in such a way that the government becomes aware of what the citizens expect from them. Advances in technology throughout the previous years have given rise to the expansion of the media industry and “has seen it grow to the peak as an essential tool for the passing on of information as well as the promotion of freedom of expression the world over, more so in Africa where media density remains low and millions remain without access to media products” (MISA, 2013:1).

Due to their social influence and their function as a counterbalance to possible manipulation by other powers, for instance abuse by the state, in democratic societies, mass media has been referred to as the fourth estate (Fernandez-Quijada & Arboledas, 2013). In this regard, the media is seen as a tool for revitalising the democratic well-being of a country. Nevertheless, in many instances politicians use the mass media to their own ends, an on-going practice that goes back to the dictatorship, and which raises suspicions about the sincerity of the mass media and their function as a public sphere (Fernandez-Quijada & Arboledas, 2013:200).

The above argument is supported by Kaul (2013) who argues that the media has an outstanding “influence on political reality, as it shapes public opinion and lays the foundations for political beliefs.” For that reason, leaders in the government and organisations are particularly sentient about the way the media report on their activities. The media’s role in a democracy is of paramount importance as it is a vehicle for communication that takes place between the general public and their representatives. The Media acts as a watchdog of the government. According to Kaul (2012:5);

The media is said to be the ‘Fourth Estate’. This is so because they act as watchdogs that check and balance the powers of the other three branches of government – the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. In their plight to be the watchdogs, and to perform their noble duties and responsibilities, they are often caught in the web of uncertainties and trapped in the cauldron of ethical quandaries.

In this sense the media acts a watchdog of the branches of government, represents and informs the public and enables public discourse. In playing the watchdog role the media has the duty of censuring those in power. In order for the media to play this role effectively it has to be independent from the government and other economic powers. On this note, “public broadcasters are expected to be more independent and closer to the democratic ideal. Hence the absence of interference from the state in the freedom of communication and expression is a mandatory aspect of democracy” (ibid.).

Generally, “the African media carry contradictions which can be traced back to the colonial period, when newspapers and broadcasting media was primarily employed to serve the needs of the colonial administrators. Together with other colonial social and cultural institutions, these media constituted a colonial public sphere” (Ronning and Kupe, 2005:138). Contrary, the anticolonial coalition also established their own opposing public spheres, which had a different media structure, which operated outside the country (ibid.). As Ronning and Kupe (2005:138) further contend, “at independence the media then were linked either to the legacy of an authoritarian colonial state or to liberation movement with a political agenda that often implied an incongruous attitude to fundamental democratic principles.”

Whilst these movements claimed that they had gone to war “for liberation, independence, equality and democratic ideals, they had often done this on the basis of at least partly authoritarian ideologies (Ronning and Kupe, 2005:38). This inconsistency was very clear in Zimbabwe where the liberation movements professed to demand for majority rule and yet they had a hidden agenda to push for autocratic ideals. Thus in several African states, the new

media policies employed by the new governments after independence were tailor-made to suit their vision of advancing their ideologies at the expense of what they fought for. Thus the media policies expressed this contradiction.

5.2 The role of the media in a democracy

Access to the media has been said to be the cornerstone in a democracy. According to USAID (1999:3):

Access to information is essential to the health of democracy for at least two reasons: first, it ensures that citizens make responsible, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation. Additionally, information serves a “checking function” by ensuring that elected representatives uphold their oaths of office and carry out the wishes of those who elected them.

This argument is supported by Berman and Witzner (1997) who stated that the free access and exchange of information is central to the concept of democracy. Without the liberty to access and exchange information with others the citizens cannot participate in the deliberations that take place concerning socio-political matters. For them to take part in debates surrounding governance issues they need to access information on such issues and contribute their view points. Without access to information the citizens cannot be in a position to hold their representatives accountable. A hostile relationship between the state and the media is sometimes essential and healthy. As the USAID posits:

In some societies, an antagonistic relationship between media and government indicates a vital and healthy element of fully functioning democracies. In post-conflict or ethnically homogenous societies such a conflictual, tension ridden relationship may not be appropriate, but the role of the press to disseminate information as a way of mediating between the state and all facets of civil society remains critical (USAID, 1999:3).

In most instances the media scrutinises the way the government operates and report on the ills of the representatives in such a way that the citizens demands accountability. Unfortunately in Zimbabwe the state owned media is used by the government to promote government policies and ideology whilst the private media sees its role as watching on the government, exposing corruption and more importantly exposing human rights violations (Chatora, 2009:12). In other words the independent media is the one performing the watchdog role.

Media development seeks to support and promote a pluralistic, editorially independent and financially sustainable media sector (Kaul, 2012:5). As Isike and Uzodike (2009) point out

“the objective of media development should generally be to move the media from one that is directed or even overtly controlled by government or private interests to one that is more open and have a degree of editorial independence that serves the public interest.” This implies that if the media is to have any significant role in democracy, then the critical objective of media assistance should be to develop a range of diverse mediums and voices that are reliable, and to create and strengthen a sector that promotes such outlets. If these outlets are truthful, they empower citizens to have access to information that they need to make informed decisions and to participate in society. A media sector supportive of democracy would be one that has a degree of editorial independence, is financially viable, has diverse and plural voices, and serves the public interest (ibid.). The public interest is defined as representing a plurality of voices both through a greater number of outlets and through the diversity of views and voices reflected within one outlet (USAID, 1999).

As stated by Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (USAID, 1999:3).

Significantly, laws and regulations should pledge essential liberties critical for citizen participation, and these include the freedom to access information, share it with others and the liberty to express oneself. In a democracy the media play a central role, a free and fair election is not attainable in the absence of the media. The media’s watchdog role is very important in a society and on this note ACE argues that:

By unfettered scrutiny and discussion of the successes and failures of candidates, governments, and electoral management bodies, the media can inform the public of how effectively they have performed and help to hold them to account (ACE, 2013: 12).

It is through the media that the public can get to know their representatives better. The media should provide information about candidates who aspire to represent the electorates so that the public can deliberate on their strengths and weaknesses and as a result make informed decisions about who should represent them. ACE (2013:9) further reinforces this view by arguing that

A free and fair election is not only about the freedom to vote and the knowledge of how to cast a vote, but also about a participatory process where voters engage in public debate and have adequate information about parties,

policies, candidates and the election process itself in order to make informed choices.

It is of paramount importance for the public to participate in the electoral process and for them to do so the media should provide a platform for deliberations and also with sufficient information concerning different political parties and aspirants so that they can make better choices. Indeed, a democratic election with no media freedom, or stifled media freedom, would be a contradiction in terms. A primary “concern of media coverage of elections is the right of voters to full and truthful information, and their rights to participate in debates and dialogue on policy matters and with politicians” (ibid.). This is very crucial because in many instances political leaders manipulate the public into voting for them by using untruthful information. On the other hand access to truthful information is essential so that the citizens make decisions based on the truth. Thus, the media should ensure transparency in the whole process.

Different political parties and candidates have the right to employ the media to interact with the public. On this note it is important that different political parties are given fair coverage, not a situation where other parties are given more time than others. This role played by the media is very important in advancing democracy. Moreover, the media have a right to scrutinise the whole electoral process and to report freely without intimidation from the ruling elite and this inspection is a significant precaution which can assist in exposing exploitation of the system by the ruling elite.

As the fourth estate of the realm, the media is a significant element of civil society that is influential in stimulating social, economic and political development in any society. This view is supported by Isike and Uzodike (2009:68) when they argue that “an independent and professional media sector builds more transparent and effective governance, promotes fair and open economies, and generates responsible discussion about social and political issues.” In order to play its role effectively the media should be independent from the government so that it does not become a mouth piece of the ruling elite. The media plays a critical role in affording the platform for rational critical discourse to diverse and in some instances oppositional socio-political opinions. The fact that the media scrutinise the activities of those in power makes political leaders more accountable and curb corruption.

It has been a matter of controversy whether the media in Africa have set the agenda for democratic sustenance, thus making them leaders, or if they have collaborated to perpetuate

'democracy without change', as argued by critics of democratisation on the continent, thus making them culprits (Isike and Uzodike, 2009:69). This assertion fits well in the circumstances surrounding the Zimbabwean media, where the media has been applied to preserve the power of the ruling elite at the expense of advancing democracy. Instead the media have been victimised by suffering forms of intimidation, such as death, torture, imprisonment of practitioners and closure of media operations (ibid.69). A closer examination at how the media have been operating in Zimbabwe would force one to argue that the media have become martyrs of democracy.

A report by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies summarises the role that the media plays in a democracy in these words:

The media plays a major role in keeping the citizenry abreast of current events and raising awareness of various issues in any society. It also has an extremely significant impact on the public's views and way of thinking. The media is the primary means through which public opinion is shaped and at times manipulated. If this is the media's role then in normal course of events, it becomes even more vital in exceptional periods, one of which is electoral junctures, when the media becomes a primary player. Elections constitute a basic challenge to the media, putting its impartiality and objectivity to the test. The task of the media, especially national media outlets, is not and should not be to function as a mouthpiece for any government body or particular candidate. Its basic role is to enlighten and educate the public and act as a neutral, objective platform for the free debate of all points of view (ACE, 2013:13).

A closer look at the role that the media has been playing in Zimbabwe since independence is a true opposite of what ACE (2013) outlines. The media has been manipulated so as to function as the mouthpiece of the government and instead of affording the citizens a platform to contribute in political deliberations; it has been employed to silence them. Communication in a democracy is based on a citizen participation notion that does not support a one way communication model but encourages a two-way model of communication a top-down model of public communication in support of a bottom-up model which encompass the participation citizens in the communication process. This means that the citizens are supposed to be given the chance to debate issues and have a say in the decisions that affect them. In other words, those in power must not dictate their decisions to the citizens; instead the citizens must be consulted before decisions are made so that they also contribute in decision making process.

The new ICTs are regarded as the new architecture of alternative media forms and they "seem to put the potential for communication liberation in the hands of the people and out of

the hands of the publishing monopolies” (McQuail, 2003:184, cited in Moyo, 2011:4). This means that the ICTs are empowering the citizens so that they can participate in the governance system and hold those in power accountable. Therefore as he clearly puts it, “most alternative media forms online and offline tend to express personal, group, or community-oriented discourses that characterise their deinstitutionalised, people-centred, participative, and non-capitalised conditions of production” (Moyo, 2011:4).

With the Zimbabwean government controlling both the press and broadcasting media, the role that the media is supposed to play in the advancement of democracy is stifled. Despite the passing of legislation invalidating state monopoly in 2001, “Zimbabwe remains the only country in the sub-region with a de facto state monopoly broadcasting system” (Moyo, 2007:84). This ubiquitous “state media has been used to advance ruling party political interests to the exclusion of the majority of citizens whilst opposition political parties and civic organisations have been systematically denied access to these communication channels, despite the fact that they are, in principle, public media and state control over the media has been fortified by the passing of laws that further limit the already restricted democratic space” (Moyo, 2006:219).

5.3 Media reforms in Zimbabwe since independence

According to Chuma, (2005:47) “like most other social institutions, the mainstream media system inherited by Zimbabwe in 1980 was geared to serve white minority interests (Saunders, 1999; Rusike, 1990 cited in Chuma, 2005). The Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Company (RPPC), a subsidiary of Argus, controlled the mainstream media, whilst the broadcasting sector was state dominated (ibid.). The new government bought off Argus shares to the tune of five million dollars in 1981, and established the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (ZMMT) to administer the group of newspapers under the newly named Zimbabwe Newspapers (1980) stable. The idea of a trust was meant to provide a bulwark between the state and the public press, and was viewed as a unique experiment that in a big way reflected the new regime’s commitment to media freedom (Chuma, 2005:47).

On the agenda of the new ZANU-PF government at independence in 1980 was the reformation of the media. The new government was faced with the difficult task of transforming a media system established to serve the interests of a minority into one that would address citizens of an entire nation. In its 1980 election manifesto, the ZANU-PF party committed itself to observing various fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of

speech (Bvuma, 1998). This promise was articulated in the 1988 Position Paper which stated that,

The participation of the people in the media either as individuals or through their various organisations such as political parties, trade unions, youth and women's organisations, commercial bodies and religious organisations is so necessary in establishing an open society (MOI, 1988:6).

Basically, these were empty promises, considering the fact that ZANU-PF was busy paving the way for a one-party state. Its main rival PF ZAPU, which had since independence been denied equal access to public media had been neutralised through co-optation in the 1987 Unity Accord and under the new government, trade unions and other civic organisations were only allowed to exist under the auspices of the ruling party (Moyo, 2007). On this note, Moyo argues that the promises were just on paper, the promised rights were never fully extended, in practice (*ibid.*).

As Moyo (2006:208) notes, amongst the early steps taken to restructure broadcasting was to restructure the different stations of the newly named Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC). "Radio Harare, the African Service and the Bulawayo-based Radio Mthwakazi were combined to create Radio Two, the English service became Radio One, while Jacaranda became Radio Three" (Khumalo, 1997 cited in Moyo, 2006:208). "Development, nation-building and reconciliation" were stressed and the media was to be utilised to achieve those principles. Another radio station, Radio Four was created in 1984 to serve as an educational channel, broadcasting in six minority languages and minimally in English. Radio Four started off as a non-commercial station with the support from the Frederick Ebert Stiftung, with the government of Zimbabwe pledging to provide funding. Conversely the government never honoured its pledge leading the station to eventually go commercial in September 1996 (Khumalo, 1997:24). An additional television station, ZTV2, was introduced in 1986, covering Harare and its surroundings, but with plans for expansion to cover the entire country.⁵

Following Peters, (1999 cited in Moyo 2006: 209) it can be argued that the coming of independence presented "a suitably solid political force to deflect broadcasting policy from its traditional path of operating as a monopoly strongly controlled by the ruling elite. Nevertheless, the perceived threats to the stability of the new government, from both internal

⁵ Both TV2 and Radio Four were to become a heavy financial liability on the ZBC, as government failed to honour its obligation.

and external enemies, led the government to continue with previous policies of tight control of monopoly broadcasting”. Dissident activities linked to disgruntled former Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) guerrillas in the Midlands and Matabeleland areas also brought back the civil war atmosphere, and the new government used its tight control of both broadcasting and print media to black out the excesses of the national army’s notorious Fifth Brigade in these regions (Moyo, 1996:209). A lot of people lost their lives during these turbulences, but the nation was kept uninformed of the nature and scale of human rights abuses until the publication of the report by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resource Foundation (LRF) in 1997.⁶ Because it was a government voted for by the majority, it justified tight media control as a way of safeguarding national security and also enjoined the media to significantly get involved in the fight against dissidents (Zaffiro, 1984 cited in Moyo, 2006:209).

Both the internal and external threats gave ZANU-PF the necessary grounds to fortify its domination of the mass media and to rationalise the continuance of most of the repressive laws that were passed during the colonial era, including the notorious Law and Order (Maintenance) Act, the Emergency Powers and the Official Secrets Act on the country’s statute books (Moyo 2006:209). Moreover, programmes on both ZBC radio and television were wholly in support of the government and adhered to the government’s agenda of creating a socialist country (Moyo, 2006). Zaffiro (1984:97 cited in Moyo, 2006:210) relates how the opposition Members of Parliament and the public expressed strong disapproval in opposition to what they understood to be a propaganda use of the ZBC in the 1980s, and the denial of access to alternative viewpoints and also for monopolising it.

Thus one is forced to concur with Moyo (2006:212) who argues that though real achievements were made in terms of ‘decolonisation’ and ‘indigenisation’ of the mass media, the democratisation part of the agenda remained largely frustrated and the dominance of government controlled media in both sectors has meant that the public sphere remained restricted to the perspectives of the ruling government. This is so, because nothing really changed as far as media restructuring was concerned. The only thing that changed was that the media was now being controlled by the blacks instead of whites. In terms of the public sphere, nothing changed, those in power still used the media to support their views and

⁶ The report, titled, ‘Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace: A report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and Midlands, 1980-1989’ chronicles the atrocities committed by the army, the intelligence, as well as the dissidents themselves in the two provinces. It puts the number of people killed at between 3, 000 and 4, 000. See http://www.hrforumzim.com/members_reports/matrep/matrepsumm.html, accessed 29 June 2014.

opposing voices were not given space. The mode of communication essentially remained top-down, with the majority of citizens being spoken to without being able to talk back. Moyo (ibid.) notes that at independence, the new government invited a team of BBC experts to “evaluate the existing transmission, training, management, financial and editorial aspects of the ZBC and recommend ways of expanding public service broadcasting to the entire nation. The BBC recommendation stressed the need to wrest broadcasting from partisan control, but it was largely ignored, as evidenced by continued state interference in the day-to-day running of the ZBC (BBC Report, 1980, cited in Moyo, 2006:213). Furthermore, Zaffiro (1984:124 cited in Moyo, 2006) contends that the appointment of loyalists to the ZBC Board of Directors as well as the Corporation’s continued dependence on subsidies from the state, made state interference possible.

Upon considering “the universality of broadcasting as a medium in comparison to the press, the ZANU-PF government was quick to appoint ex-fighters in the liberation war (some had broadcasting experience gained from operating revolutionary radio stations from exile) and other ruling party supporters to control the newly named ZBC” (Chuma, 2005:47). The same manner in which the illicit Rhodesian Front government employed the “then Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation for state propaganda, especially against the nationalists who were prosecuting the liberation struggle, the new ZANU-PF government basically adopted broadcasting as an instrument to mobilise citizens in the direction of developmental goals and for promoting the party’s ideologies” (Saunders, 1991, cited in Chuma, 2005:48). In this regard, one would concur with Moyo (2006) that the so called media reforms that took place soon after independence were not real reforms; the media industry is still largely controlled by the ruling party and has not developed in any significant way.

While the notion of the “Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (ZMMT) of providing a buffer between the government and the public press” was impressive in principle, it was never actually fulfilled (Chuma, 2005:48). The government’s interference in Zimbabwe Newspapers known as Zimpapers started as soon as the ZMMT was instituted and it assumed the form of dismissals or demotions of editors thought to be denunciatory of government, as well as direct intrusion in daily newspaper management, especially by the Minister of Information (Rusike, 1990 cited in Chuma, 2005:48). By doing so the government and the ruling party converted the public press into a mechanism that they would employ to advance their ideology in a way creating a vacuum that was to be challenged by more players in the second and part of the third decade of independence (Chuma, 2005:49). Thus the government

made it a point that they had control in all facets through silencing, dismissing opposing views and also appointing its puppets in high positions, and as a result the role of the media in reinforcing the public sphere suffered.

5.4 The Press

Until the launching “of the *Daily Gazette* in October 1992 by Modus Publications, Zimbabwe’s daily newspaper market had since independence, been dominated by the two state-controlled papers, *The Herald*, published in the capital Harare, and its sister paper, *The Chronicle*, published in the second largest city, Bulawayo” (Moyo, 2005;111). These two fall under the Zimpapers, which in turn falls under the ZMMT. The *Daily Gazette* turned out to be a vital ground for the circulation of dissenting voices especially in the civil society (Moyo,ibid.).

Nonetheless, “the initial boom in the arena of the private press suffered drawbacks when the *Daily Gazette* closed down in 1994 and when the *Weekend Gazette* followed a year later (Chuma, 2005:52). Both papers were closed down due to lack of finances. The government was so critical of independent media. Five years after the closure of the *Daily Gazette*, a “newly established company, Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ), launched the *Daily News*, which became the second private daily to be launched in the country since independence” (Chuma, 2005:52-53). Besides the daily, the company also launched five weeklies in five provincial cities. At its launch in 1998, ANZ was sixty percent owned by a British-based media company, Africa Media Investments (AMI), with local Zimbabwean capital taking up the minority forty percent (ibid.). In 1999 the company’s private placement programme failed to raise the required twenty-six million Zimbabwean dollars stake, resulting in AMI acquiring an eighty-three percent ownership (Chuma, 2005:44).

The ownership structure of ANZ resulted in an outcry from the government, principally for two related reasons. From its inception the paper was highly critical of the government and was edited by an outspoken government critic, Geoffrey Nyarota, who a decade earlier had exposed the Willowgate car scandal, to the embarrassment of the government (Chuma, 2005). In addition, it seemed the government was uncomfortable with the majority shareholder being British, given the increasing hostile relations between the two countries preceding the enforced acquirement of commercial farmland by the state in 2000 (ibid.). Hence, from the onset the *Daily News* became the target of government threats, including from the president himself, much more than any publication in the history of post-colonial Zimbabwe (ibid.). In

other words the establishment of private press was a threat to the government. Instead of celebrating the plurality of the press the government shunned its establishment knowing that the citizens could scrutinise their wrongdoing and expose them through the private press.

During its five years of circulation, “the paper suffered two bombings at its printing press and its offices, the state failing to track down the criminals in both cases, and the police harassed and detained the paper’s staff for cases both genuine and patently false” (Chuma, 2005:53). In 2003 the government shut down the paper, together with its sister weekly *The Daily News on Sunday*, under the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (Chuma, 2005:53). Following the closure of the two sister papers, the government was criticised world-wide because of its intolerance of different perspectives.

Eight months later, the Tribune was also closed down. Instituted, in mid-2002 by a black-owned company, Media Africa Group, the weekly paper assumed a neutral approach, and avoided political controversy as much as possible. However, when the paper’s owner, ZANU-PF legislator Kindness Paradza criticised the media law regime in his first speech in parliament, he drew the anger of the party’s hawks resulting in the shutting down of the paper in May 2004 “by the state-appointed Media and Information Commission on a technicality about the paper’s ownership and name” (Chuma 2005:53). Hence, a closer look at the government-private press relationship would force one to conclude that this period became characterised by intimidation and defamation, tough laws, and the detention and incarceration of journalists. Thus, generally in Zimbabwe the media has witnessed varying degrees of regulation by successive governments; especially between 1965 and 2008 this has affected its role in stimulating citizen participation in the democratisation process (Manganga, 2012:105).

5.5 Declining of one-party state idea

It has been argued that compared to other African states, at independence Zimbabwe was politically the most pluralistic, with several parties represented in parliament (Pasirayi, 2012). However, by 1990, the ruling ZANU-PF party consolidated its position and it was the only party ruling the country since independence. It was only in the 2000 general elections that the first fully-fledged national opposition party gained significant parliamentary representation (ibid.).

Despite its abandonment of the idea of establishing a one-party state at the end of 1989, the ruling ZANU-PF party remained devoted to pursuing the same objective by extra-legal means

throughout the 1990s and into the new century (Kupe, 1997). Conversely an increasingly restless civil society driven by both local and foreign interests came out in opposition to the government and the hostility on the ground led to the branching of the press, which became sharply polarised along simplistic pro-versus anti-government editorial stances (Chuma 2005: 49). Notably, the public press was answerable to Zimpapers, which was controlled directly by government officials through the Ministry of Information and editors were “fired or demoted for not showing enough patriotism; a culture of cheerleading and self-censorship emerged within this press, especially at the company’s flagship, The Herald” (Rusike, 1990; Saunders, 1999 cited in Chuma, 2005:54).

The state continued to consolidate its control on the press, consequently the reportage of elections (both parliamentary and presidential) in 1990, 1995, 1996 and 2000 by the public press was mostly biased in favour of the ruling party (Moyo, 1992; MMPZ, 2000 cited in Chuma, 2005:54). According to Moyo (2004:18) a better way that can be used to assess the government’s obligation to broadcasting reform is to scrutinise how the ZBC covered national elections after 1980. This is based on the assumption that, “in a democracy, no one group or set of interests is systematically preferred over another and that the information available to citizens is accurate and impartial” (Street, 2001:16 cited in Moyo 2004:18). If the above principle was adhered to, the ZBC as a public broadcaster would have allocated the same amount of time to all contesting political parties. This has not been the case in Zimbabwe where more coverage has always been given to the ruling party at the expense of other oppositional parties, for instance, “in the 1990 elections, the ruling party not only violated the requirements of equal access, but also ethical standards of advertising by running intimidating radio and television adverts that likened voting for the opposition to choosing death. One of the ads featured a coffin being lowered into a grave, accompanied by a stern warning: Aids kills, so does the Zimbabwe Unity Movement, (ZUM) vote ZANU-PF” (Moyo, 1992:74-75 cited in Moyo, 2004:18).

Besides being denied access to the voting public by not getting coverage in the state-owned media, the opposition parties were forbidden to convene political rallies in various parts of the country (ibid.). Hence Sisulu (2008:1) argues that Zimbabwe’s rigged presidential elections of 2000, 2002, and 2005 would have been a failure without media restrictions. In 2008 media restraints were lessened for a short time preceding the harmonised presidential, senate and parliamentary elections of 29 March and it is alleged that the head of the state

controlled ZBC was dismissed after being blamed for giving coverage to the opposition, resulting in Tsvangirai MDC's victory (Sisulu, 2008:1.).

This resulted in ZANU-PF's refusal to disclose the results of the election, closing down political space to avoid any public strife, and the announcement of a presidential run-off since none of the contestants had gathered fifty percent or more of the vote. Furthermore, a "campaign of violent retribution and terror was put in place together with structures of violent coercion throughout the country to guarantee victory during the anticipated run-off" (Sisulu, 2008). A closer look at all the years of elections would force one to conclude that the same tactics of denying the opposition parties access to the media has been employed in all the presidential elections till today. What this means is that the ZBC domination inhibits the ability of political parties and interest groups to freely access and propagate information essential for the nourishment of democracy.

In the same manner the apartheid system exploited the power of the media and did all it could to use it for their advantage and suppress it, the Mugabe government also realises that its hold on power is fully reliant on muzzling any independent media voices and substitute them with an antagonistic propaganda movement. Draconian legislation like the AIPPA, the POSA and the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) have been employed to close down media space, and have enabled the government to exert a throttlehold over the media, media houses, and the free flow of information since 2002 (Manganga, 2012:14). The enactment of the AIPPA and POSA restricted the holding of political meetings and rallies by opposition political parties (Manganga, 2012:107). POSA and its amendments criminalised the distribution of political posters, pamphlets or other such material in public places and private homes without permission from the police and a breach of the law attracted a jail sentence of up to five years (Manganga, 2012). As a result, POSA stifled public political engagement, debate and dialogue both in the urban and rural areas necessitating the need for counter-publics. This crippled press freedom and suppressed the independent media. On this note Alexander (2006:10 cited in Manganga, 2012:104) argues that the subsequent closure of space for alternative information:

has dramatically hindered democratic advancement, particularly in rural areas. The existence of POSA means that to hold a simple discussion under a tree, for example, is an illegal act... The closure of the *Daily News*, the only independent daily source of events and opinions, has been a major blow to urban populations.

In Manganga's words, (2012:104) "faced with increasing political opposition at home, international isolation abroad, and an unprecedented economic crisis since 1999, the government has been trying to articulate and sustain a 'grand' and 'dominant' narrative resulting in the shrinking of the democratic space." As a result the citizens have been disempowered such that they cannot engage in deliberations on matters that affect them and cannot criticise the government and hold those in power to account.

In an attempt to describe the prevailing situation in Zimbabwe, Sisulu (2008:1) argues that:

the attacks on press freedom, assaults on the independence of the judiciary, a battery of repressive laws, detention without trial, torture and other forms of state-sponsored violence, the use of "third force" elements such as youth militia, an unrelenting barrage of propaganda and militarisation of the state are common elements of Mugabe's dictatorship and have made Zimbabwe one of the most dangerous places for journalists to operate. As a result many journalists and citizens have left the country in fear of their lives.

Thus the citizens have been robbed of their right to access information and freedom of expression. Their access to the media is constrained such that they cannot access information to make informed decisions, they cannot deliberate on issues with others and as a result they have no say in decisions that affect them.

5.6 Power sharing with opposition MDC

When the power-sharing government was formed between ZANU-PF and the MDC parties in 2009 the citizens had their hopes raised, they looked forward to seeing reformation in different aspects of the society including the media. Unfortunately to a greater extent, their hopes were shattered. According to Pasirayi (2012) the coalition "performed dismally on media reforms and failed to introduce far-reaching changes on the media landscape, break up ZANU-PF's monopoly on the airwaves or bring the repression of journalists to an end." Under the coalition government, Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) still had unrestricted powers, just like before and was still threatening to impound and prohibit foreign newspapers that were not registered through the use of security forces. As Pasirayi (2012) further contends, "taken together with the failure to adopt meaningful political reforms, it becomes apparent that there is a clear and present danger of broad democratic reversal as ZANU-PF becomes more determined to maintain a vice-like grip on the airwaves to halt its political decline and implosion."

Amongst the major impediments in the change from authoritarianism to democracy is that of “unreformed state institutions that remain partisan and serving ZANU-PF interests and as disputed by the then Prime Minister Tsvangirai, ‘residual dictatorship’ is a threat to Zimbabwe’s transitional process and is largely posed by state institutions and public officials who continue to resist change instead of embracing more civic and consociational politics guided by inclusivity” (Pasirayi, 2012). Instead of working together to bring about reformation towards democracy most of the state institutions resisted change and continued to be puppets of ZANU-PF.

The 2013 presidential and parliamentary elections, confirmed victory for Robert Mugabe and his political party the ZANU-PF, and marked the end of the Government of National Unity (GNU). Those hoping that the “signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) in 2008, the formation of the GNU in 2009 and the adoption of a new constitution in 2013 would have brought change in Zimbabwe were sorely disappointed by the election results” (Hamilton, 2013:80). To them, victory for ZANU-PF meant that the few positive changes that were underway through the influence of the MDC were going to be forfeited. Thus according to the GPA’s stipulations, the GNU has now been dissolved, and Mugabe will no longer have to share power (ibid.) The radio and television are the major devices that the ruling party employ to broadcast and strengthen its hegemonic viewpoint. For that reason, the ruling party will not surrender its monopoly of the airwaves so easily. As Hamilton (2013:82) argues, “the partisan exploitation or even abuse of the state media has created the impression of a party in charge and which still enjoys people’s support, even though such mediated reality does not reflect the situation on the ground.” Thus, through exploiting the media, the ruling party portrays a party which has a large following, yet it is not the real truth.

Pasirayi (2012) best describes the prevailing situation in Zimbabwe by comparing it to the Rhodesian media system when he says:

The media environment in Zimbabwe largely mirrors the repressive Rhodesian media system. The Rhodesian state controlled what news and issues the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation (RBC) could broadcast to the public through the Information ministry at one time run by the notorious PK van der Byl, at some point also Foreign Affairs and Defense minister. The legacy of state-control of radio and television broadcasting, supported by repressive legislation, has persisted in post-independent Zimbabwe. The appointment of RF political party functionaries to key positions in the state media and the vilification of certain groups which do not agree with the ideology and views of the ruling elite is now synonymous with ZANU-PF rule.

Of significance to note is the fact that no major reforms took place in the media as far as democracy is concerned. In other words, what changed was the rulership; that is from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe. The media system is still more of the same. From the time when Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980, the state media has solely benefited the affairs of ZANU-PF, not the citizens at large. Throughout the early 1980s the ZBC spearheaded the lambasting of the Joshua Nkomo the liberation icon and the ZAPU leadership, just the way they are treating the opposition party leaders three decades later (Pasirayi, 2012).

A closer assessment of the way the media has been operating will force one to argue that state domination of the media has continued in Zimbabwe, three decades after independence. Hence Pasirayi (2012) concludes that “there has been the ‘Zanufication’ of the media rather than its democratisation in the past three decades.” If ever there are changes that have been implemented, they have been executed to suit the needs of ZANU-PF. The regulations have also further tightened instead of democratising the broadcasting sector.

In agreement with the above argument, Moyo (2006:195) debates that “media policy making in Zimbabwe is to a great degree influenced by structures and practices inherited from Rhodesia, some of which have remained in force until today.” The components of most of the media laws did not change at all; they just changed the names and adopted them as they were. As Moyo (2005:112) notes,

This web of government control of the flow of information extends to broadcasting, which was inherited as a monopoly from the colonial era. While in name a public broadcaster, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, (ZBC) has served essentially as a propaganda mouthpiece for the government of the day since colonialism. The effect of state dominance in the media has been the narrowing of the public sphere and hence an impoverishment of democracy.

Several Acts were adopted at independence without any changes by ZANU-PF and have remained in use for decades. One of the draconian legislation was the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act of 1960 (generally referred to as LOMA), “which provided for the prosecution of the media, journalists and individuals for making statements which might cause fear, alarm or despondency.”⁷ This Act endorsed the detaining of government opponents without trial, banish individuals thought to be a security threat, and prohibit publications that were critical of the RF perspectives. Several newspapers were banished through the LOMA and this turned Rhodesia into a police state (Windrich, 1981 cited in

⁷ LOMA was only retracted in 2002, and was substituted by an equally punitive legislation: the Public Order and Security Act of 2002.

Moyo, 2006:199). The Emergency Powers (Censorship of Publications) Order of 1965 bestowed a range of restraining powers to clamp down on the media as well as individuals and also empowered the Rhodesian government to enact emergency laws as it deemed fit and was used widely to suppress deviant publications (ibid.).

In order to subdue spiteful information regarding its policies and thwart opposition from black nationalists and white liberals, the government enacted the Official Secrets Act of 1970 (Saunders, 1999 cited in Moyo, 2006:199). This Act outlawed the 'disclosure, for any purpose prejudicial to the safety of interests of Rhodesia' and of any information which 'might be useful to an enemy' and the scope of this legislation enabled the regime to forbid any information that was against its cause, whether it was security related or not (Feltoe, 1993; Ndlela, 2003 cited in Moyo, 2006:199). Concomitantly, this array of laws outlawed not only publications defending the cause of the majority Africans but also any form of civic organisation that they attempted to do. Ironically, the use of regulation as a political armament has continued up to the present-day and rather than the law acting to control the decisions of the government, it has been used to magnify that discretion, in both pre-and post-independence times (Moyo, 2006:200).

Owing to the use of prohibitive laws, intimidations, newspaper burning, the bombing of the alternative press, and the extradition of analytic foreign reporters, the Zimbabwean state tread on the heels, of its Rhodesian predecessor. All this is an indication that Zimbabwean citizens do not have access to the media. Their views are not recognised in the state owned and controlled media. As a result, they cannot participate in the democratic dispensation of the country. Therefore, the only available option could be the Internet which is not owned and controlled by the state.

5.7 The Emergence and structure of the Internet in Zimbabwe

Data Control and Systems was the first Internet service provider (ISP) established in Zimbabwe in 1994 and in 1997 the national Posts and Telecommunication Corporation (PTC) built a national Internet backbone to sell bandwidth to private ISPs (Hove, 2015:1000). The licensing and administering of ISPs is done by the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ). Currently the membership list on the Zimbabwe Internet Service Providers Association (ZISPA) web site, last updated in 2007, comprises 28 ISPs (Freedom House, 2013:5). There is also the Government Internet Service Provider (GISP) which exclusively serves the government ministries, departments and

parastatals (Kabweza, 2009). The GISP designed and hosts the Zimbabwe national portal, www.zim.gov.zw.

POTRAZ's leaders are appointed by the president in consultation with the Minister of Transport and Communication (Freedom House, 2013:3). The fact that the members of POTRAZ are selected by the president in consultation with the Minister of Transport and Communication might imply that the regulatory body is composed of the supporters of the ruling party. As a result, POTRAZ has been widely accused of partisanship and making politicised decisions, for instance the termination of TeleAccess's operating license in 2005 (Freedom House 2013:6). In order to have an impartial regulator, its leadership and board members should not be mere political appointees but telecoms and administrative professionals regulating the industry only for the sake of ensuring that the interests of consumers are protected, and that anti-competitive behaviour is checked and corrected. POTRAZ indirectly blocks the establishment of ISPs through the inflated application fees it charges and this has slowed down the proliferation of such businesses (ibid). In addition, the application fees required for operating a mobile phone service are equally exorbitant. Mungadze and Karombo (2014) note that a non-refundable application fee of US\$160000 is required when one wants to get a mobile phone operator's license. In addition, an amount of US\$137, 5 million is required to renew a mobile license for a twenty year tenure. The mobile operators are also set to contribute an annual fee of US\$2500 and contribute US\$1000 towards the country's Universal Service Fund (Karonbo, 2013). These high fees are a barrier to entry for the sector which is already oligopolistic in nature and this hinders competition.

There are three main mobile phone networks in Zimbabwe namely; NetOne, Econet and Telecel (Zunguze, 2009:4). Econet and Telecel are privately owned whilst NetOne is state owned. Only one company, the state-owned TelOne, is registered as a fixed Public Switch Telephone Network (PSTN) operator, consequently running a monopoly in the fixed-line telecoms market (ibid.).

Ownership of mobile and the fixed-line phones in Zimbabwe

	Econet	Telecel	NetOne	TelOne
Owner Shareholding	Strive Masiyiwa founder (majority)	Orascom (60%) Local	Government of Zimbabwe	Government of Zimbabwe

	Listed on Zimbabwe stock exchange	Consortium (40%)		
--	---	---------------------	--	--

Source: TechZim (2014)

The dominant player in the mobile phone market is Econet wireless with (over nine million subscribers) 70% of the market share, followed by Telecel with (above 2,5 million subscribers) 16% and NetOne with 14% (POTRAZ, 2014). The mobile operators; Econet, Telecel and Netone are the ones who have mainly supported the telecoms infrastructure of information and communication technologies in Zimbabwe (Moyo and Kabweza, 2014:10). Although fixed line infrastructure has contributed as well but, to date, lack of resources to maintain it by the sole licensed fixed operator, TelOne, has rendered most of the network unusable and unable to cater effectively for even its paltry 390 000 subscribers (ibid.). As Hove (2015:4) notes that though the Internet was introduced in 1996 “it was only at the end of 2008 that there seemed to be an increase in Internet usage in Zimbabwe.” This increase can only be attributed to cellular phones. “With the introduction of mobile Internet by Econet (one of the first to offer such a service in Zimbabwe), there was a marked rise in access to Internet as most people could get connected” (Hove, 2015:1000).

A private mobile operator, Econet Wireless officially introduced the Third Generation (3G) mobile broadband connectivity which is based on the UMTS technology in 2009 (Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA, n.d). When it was first introduced, the 3G service was only accessible to a few subscribers in Harare but it has since spread coverage to all major cities and towns. TelOne and PowerTel, the state owned operators have their version of 3G which make use of the Code Division Multiple Access third Generation cellular/radio (CDMA2000) technology; though on a much smaller scale, with stable coverage only in Harare and Bulawayo. In addition, Africom also followed suit and also introduced 3G using the CDMA technology, but like PowerTel and TelOne, coverage is limited to Harare and Bulawayo and capacity is severely limited. Though Econet Wireless has provided the most coverage of all the data services to subscribers, its data tariffs are quite high and beyond the reach of most subscribers. Data tariffs by competing providers are significantly lower, for instance, Econet charges US\$98 for a gigabyte while Africom sells the same for only US\$18 and PowerTel charges US\$50 a month for unlimited Internet usage (Moyo and Kabweza, 2014:13). The prices for Internet access in Zimbabwe are set by owners of cybercafes and ISPs; the state has so far not interfered on this issue (Freedom House,

2013:5). Econet's subsidiary Ecoweb provides the 4G Mobile WiMAX services in cities and major towns. Though 4G network is available, upstream bandwidth bottlenecks and the cost of the services have resulted in its slow adoption by mobile users and as a result not enjoying true 4G Internet speed.

Zimbabwe's population is about 15, 576, 901 and the number of those living in the rural areas is about 10, 290, 800 (World Bank: 2015). This implies that 67% of the total population lives in the rural areas whilst 33 % are urban dwellers. The number of Internet users is about 6, 759, 032 meaning that about 47% of the population have access to the Internet (Internet World Stats, 2014). Traditionally, Internet users in Zimbabwe either accessed it from computers at work or a few at home but with the introduction of data services such as 3G, GPRS and EDGE on mobile networks, more people are now using mobile phones to connect to the Internet (Freedom House, 2013:5). Zimbabwe, like many Africa countries, has been flooded by low-cost imitation mobile phones from Asia which are Internet capable and have provided a low cost means for ordinary people to access the Internet (ibid:3). Internet cafes that are now spread all over the country have also been a means of access for many Zimbabweans. Internet cafes charges range from US\$1 for 40-60 minutes of Internet surfing (Zimbabwe Report, n.d).

Estimated market penetration rates in Zimbabwe's telecoms sector

Market	Penetration Rate
Mobile	108%
Fixed	2.8%
Internet	48%

(Source: BuddeComm based on various sources)

While the country has about 108 percent mobile penetration rate, POTRAZ noted that a significant number of Zimbabweans have multiple-active mobile SIM cards. Some people have more than one SIM from the same operator (smartphone, Internet dongle, tablet, dumb phone) or from different operators (dual SIM mobile phones) (Kabweza, 2015). Although

Zimbabwe's mobile penetration has reached 108 percent, the actual head-count of people in possession of these SIM cards is only 60 percent of the population which translates to 8, 4 million people. Hence, the percentage of mobile penetration is based on the number of active SIM cards in the country and not on the number of people owning them. There are over five million mobile data subscribers with ninety-eight percent of those subscribers accessing Internet via their mobile device (Bushu, 2015).

Regardless of the increasing penetration of ICTs across the country, there remains a significant urban-rural divide in access to both Internet and mobile technologies (Freedom House, 2013:4). This is as a result of major infrastructural limitations in rural areas, such as poor roads and a critical shortage of electricity (ibid.). Millions of Zimbabweans are yet to be connected either because there is no coverage in their area or because the services are not affordable. The Internet service providers are concentrated in major cities. Regardless of the growing Information Communication Technology (ICT) sector in the country, which has seen Internet diffusion growing from five to 47 percent in the past five years, the cost of accessing the Internet still remains high.

Mobile Network Operators Broadband Prices

Data Price (US\$)	Econet Wireless Broadband	NetOne Broadband	Telecel Broadband
0.50	5MB	8MB	5MB
1	10MB	17MB	10MB
3	-	70MB	80MB
5	80MB	125MB	150MB
10	200MB	285MB	320MB
20	500MB	670MB	800MB

* All prices are for bundle rates. Source: Techzim 2015

So far there is no national broadband policy. Rutsito (2014) noted that there is lack of clear-cut policy on broadband. No policy to spell out who should provide broadband infrastructure and how that infrastructure should be provided. In other words, the country is operating on a

policy vacuum. POTRAZ acting director general Engineer Marisa noted that “orderly ICT development needs to be guided by sound government policy.” He further argued that “there is a problem of introducing policies well after developments had taken place, hence making it difficult to align the situation on the ground with the policy” (ibid).

5.8 The Internet as alternative media

With the situation in Zimbabwe where citizens’ right to access and share information are constrained in various ways as discussed in the previous sections, the citizens are stripped of their right to participate in democratic discourse. The advent of the Internet brought an alternative platform for them to take part in socio-political deliberations. In his description of alternative media, Atton (2001, cited in Moyo 2007:86) notes that:

Alternative media are about offering the means for democratic communication to people who are normally excluded from media production. They typically go beyond simply providing a platform for radical or alternative points of view: they emphasise the organisation of media to enable wider social participation in their creation, production and dissemination than is possible in the mass media.”

His explanation suits best the situation of Zimbabwean citizens who are excluded from the mainstream media, hence the need for alternative media so that they can be able to engage in democratic communication. In a way the Internet is a better alternative because it enables wider participation, creation and dissemination of information to wider dispersed audiences.

A step further is taken by Atton (2002) and Bailey et al., (2008) in their conception of alternative media by arguing that “alternative media can also be conceptualised more expressively in terms of their counter-hegemonic role in society, which is often expressed in news values that embrace political or cultural radicalism” (Atton, 2002; Bailey et al., 2008 cited in Moyo, 2012:489). Concurring with the above argument is Moyo (2012:489) who argues that “such media often do not only seek to contest or question political and cultural control of the masses by the elite, but also elucidate the ruling elite’s social engineering that is usually portrayed as normal and commonsensical by the mainstream media.” This shows how significant alternative media is in that it has a duty to afford a platform where citizens can challenge and query the views that are presented by the conventional media as the standard. In other words alternative media empower the citizens to confront the existing status quo and its sincerity, not just to accept everything that the ruling elite says in the mainstream media. For instance, “where conventional media demonise and exclude ordinary

citizens who fight for basic human rights, alternative media run by citizen journalists become the supporters of their rights, revealing ideologies representing the oppressed and exploited as outraged, lawless and violent mobs” (Kavada, 2005 cited in Moyo, 2011:5). This implies that dissenting voices that are not given space in the conventional media are given a platform such that at the end of the day they have a chance to share their views and have others listen to their different perspective, thus in a way providing a public sphere for rational critical debate.

Notably, “alternative media whether online or offline has an obligation to serve the community; offer counter-hegemonic discourses to the mainstream, and should be independent from the state and market influences” (Bailey *et al.*, 2008:5-33 cited in Moyo, 2011:3) This is so because once the media is controlled by the state or market influences it becomes almost impossible to be critical of the state or to broadcast views that are critical of the government. The end result is a media that becomes a mouthpiece of the state, whilst denying the community a platform for public discourse. The fact mentioned above that alternative media should be of service to the community does not necessarily means that the citizens should be together geographically “because communities can be founded on interest, and furthermore, digital technologies like the Internet have brought about virtual communities or network societies that outdo the limits of time and space” (Castells, 2000 cited in Moyo, 2011:3). Citizens may be located in different places, for instance, some in Zimbabwe and some in South Africa and America but they can come together online because they share the same history and culture and also discuss issues of interest, in a way forming a community.

In collaboration with Castells’ view, Popple (1995:4 cited in Moyo, 2011:4) posits that “alternative media can function as trans-local institutions attending to and representing the interests of communities of interest not as territorially defined entities, but “as people sharing a common condition or problem.” For instance the Internet is addressing the situation of Zimbabwean citizens who are dispersed in different countries but coming together via the platform afforded by the Internet to share and discuss the issues that are affecting them back home. Despite being separated geographically many Zimbabweans come together on discussion forums, social networks like Facebook and share their experiences and also discuss political issues. Thus scholars like Moyo (2009) and Tettey (2009 cited in Moyo, 2011:4) associate the Internet with “de-territorialised and global alternative media systems and public spheres”. Meaning that the public sphere offered by the Internet is not affected by borders or location, anyone anywhere can be part of the online discussions.

In serving the community, one of the functions of alternative media is “to enable wider social participation in the creation, production, and dissemination than is possible in the mass media” (Atton, 2002:25 cited in Moyo, 2011:4). This means that the alternative media should be widely accessible such that most of the citizens in the community have access to it resulting in more citizens participating. Unlike the conventional media which is accessible to a few who support the mainstream views and in a way participation is limited. Hence, alternative media should be open and accessible to the citizens. Consequently, participation is highly interwoven with the right to communicate, which citizens exercise not only within agreed constitutional limits, but also with a sense of civic responsibility to hold the state answerable to the people (See Dakroury, 2006; Hamelink & Hoffmann, 2008 cited in Moyo, 2012:488). In this sense, the citizens should be able to exercise their right to communicate by participating as responsible citizens so that the state is held accountable in the decisions that they make.

The Internet has come as an alternative platform to the citizens of Zimbabwe who have experienced many years of repression and intimidation and as a result their voices have been silenced completely. According to Moyo (2007:81):

while underground newspapers and ‘pirate radios’ have been some of the most common forms, the advent of new communication technologies in recent years has brought new forms of alternative media with greater possibilities for transnational and even wider citizen participation and empowerment. Zimbabwe’s restricted democratic space has spawned a multiplicity of alternative public spheres that enable groups and individuals to continue to participate and engage in the wider debate on the mutating crisis gripping the country since the turn of the century.

The citizens, both in and outside the country have turned to the Internet as an alternative public sphere and are capitalising on the new media to keep at bay state propaganda fashioned through the conventional media.

Though online newspapers on Zimbabwe like The Herald, The Zimbabwe Independent, and The Chronicle have been existing from the late 1990s, particularly in the form of online editions, the control of the media and the silencing of the citizens through the state media prompted an exceptional mushrooming of foreign based news websites on Zimbabwe across the Internet, promising to reveal the truth and expose the corruption and human rights abuses by the Mugabe government (Moyo, 2007:84). Notably, these new websites are different from

the old in the sense that they are ‘stand-alone’ news websites that are not connected to present print publications (ibid.).

Zimbabwean citizens living outside the country are converging on the Internet to take part in the discussion on the evolving crisis at home. As a result of the dispersion of many Zimbabweans to other countries like South Africa, Botswana, Australia, United Kingdom and America, several news websites have emerged on Zimbabwe. These have been referred to by some scholars as ‘diasporic media,’ which play an essential role in the ongoing “construction and reconstruction of diasporic identities” (Tsagarousianou, 2004 cited in Moyo, 2007:89). Diaspora refers to “the doubled relationship or dual loyalty that migrants, exiles, and refugees have to place their connections to the space they currently occupy and their continued involvement with ‘back home’” (Lavie and Swedenburg (1996:14 cited in Moyo, 2007:89). Though the citizens are scattered in different countries through the Internet they are connected and they get involved in the issues prevailing back home.

The news websites are able to reach Zimbabweans both in the diaspora and at home, thereby creating information flows between homeland and diaspora. Examples of these news websites are the *Zimdaily.com*, *Newzimbabwe.com*, *Zimbabwejournalists.com*, and *Zimonline.com*. *Zwnews.com* is another news website which also provide links to the main alternative Internet based radio stations (SW Radio and Studio 7) as well as publications such as *Zvakwana/Sokwanele*, *The Zimbabwean* and the Australian-based *Zimbaweansituation.com* (Moyo, 2007:100). The shared goal amid these websites is the endowment of alternative perspectives on the crisis in Zimbabwe as well as refuting the propaganda churned through the state-controlled media.

Certain websites have gained a good reputation in terms of providing information and opinion on Zimbabwe that they can be regarded as ‘mainstream alternative media’ and as such their impact does not end with the diaspora populations but it reaches those at home also (Moyo, 2007:91). Many times these news websites set what is topical for the conventional media in Zimbabwe by coming first with the stories partly due to the speed and instantaneous publishing facilitated by new Internet technologies (ibid.). Moreover, the other reason for “coming with ‘breaking news’ is that the state controlled media tend to skirt around what are considered sensitive topics, while the ‘independent’ press has been intimidated into having to exercise extra caution before publishing potentially sensitive stories” (ibid.). Thus the

emergence of the Internet has empowered citizens in such a way that they can access news or information that could have been inaccessible without alternative media.

The Internet is providing the Zimbabweans with previously inaccessible opportunities to comment and produce their own news and information that is able to influence political processes. However, as Mano (2010:57) argues, the new media has also produced vigilante journalism, a vindictive and revengeful form of gathering and disseminating news and information. For instance, “at the height of the Zimbabwe crisis (2007-2008), the news website, *ZimDaily*, led a vigilante campaign to publicly name and have perceived relatives and children of Zimbabwean ruling party officials deported from ‘Western’ countries” (ibid.). The whole idea was to help in solving the political and economic crises in Zimbabwe. The editors refused to question the ethics and morality of the exercise and thus, encouraged by the website’s editors, Zimbabwean users of the website took the law in their own hands and published addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information about anyone thought to be related to those in government in Zimbabwe. They launched a weblog, titled Fair Deal, in an attempt to make users of the website participate in naming and shaming children and relatives of Zimbabwe’s rulers whom they accused of ruining the country.

According to Bowman and Willis (2003:9 cited in Mano, 2010:58) “the advent of new technologies, especially Internet and mobile phones has created new possibilities in the field of expanding, undermining and enhancing existing journalism and more ordinary people have been empowered to have an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analysing and disseminating news and information”. In a way the Internet technologies limit the role of gatekeepers, consequently enabling those with no say. However, depending on the context, it can result in ‘vigilante journalism’ which Mano (2010:58) describes as a “vindictive form of journalism driven by a mob-justice philosophy that is inimical to democracy”. Therefore, Mano (ibid.) argues that while it is true that the Internet has opened new possibilities for challenging power, vigilante journalism on the Internet, as practised by Zimbabwean ‘netizens’ in 2007 and 2008, has also emerged as a double-edged sword that can both stimulate and undermine democracy.

Contrary, Peel (2008 cited in Mano, 2010:60) suggests that “Zimbabwean Internet forums constitute a microcosm of Zimbabwean diversity which deconstructs the authoritarian nationalism that has been a signature of Mugabe’s rule”. Through the Internet the online forums have been afforded an opportunity to criticise authoritarianism which has prevailed in

Zimbabwe for a very long time. In the same way Mavunga (2008:1 cited in Mano, 2010:60)) points out that by “2008 it was clear that Zimbabwe was already in its fifth year of cyber-guerrilla warfare in which online newspapers and Internet radios were using the Internet to attack the Mugabe dictatorship where, the government and anti-Mugabe hackers had been trading long-range artillery fire for three decades.” This shows that the Internet has accorded the citizens with an alternative platform to debate on issues which were not questionable at all in the mainstream media.

As digital technologies become more accessible and affordable, more citizens are able to coordinate, organise and advance their interests easily, hence Zimbabweans who are widely dispersed all over the world can meet and discuss their fate on the platform afforded by the Internet. With prospects for independent journalism diminishing due to the government’s media unfriendly laws (Mhike, 2009), several Zimbabweans in the diaspora set up mostly pro opposition web-based magazines and these have freely and openly reported on issues affecting the country, allowing the nation’s citizenry to participate in debates aimed at finding solutions to problems at home. Political parties have increasingly turned to new media technologies both for internal organisational purposes as well as for direct communication with members and voters. Ott (2011) believes the Internet allows the citizenry to challenge the status quo. Better still, Mutsvairo (2013) declares without hesitation that despite economic difficulties the country has experienced over the last decade, Zimbabwe has “one of the highest Internet penetration rates in sub-Saharan Africa.”

Despite these promises the Internet is still very much controlled and accessed by members of an elite club, mostly those who live in the major cities, thereby excluding the rural folk from participation. Buttressing this viewpoint is Nyaira’s (2009:12) assessment that:

The only problem in using online media for a country such as Zimbabwe, and indeed much of Africa and the Third World, is that these countries are not wired enough to allow the majority of citizens, who live in poor rural areas, to access the news and be part of the public discourse on events which affect them.

As a result of these disparities in Internet access, most of the rural dwellers are left out of the deliberations. Yet in many instances they are the ones with so many grievances. While not every Zimbabwean citizen has access to the Internet, the nation’s expatriates have used their own access to spearhead campaigns that helped shape events at home. Electronic mailing lists, chat rooms and blogs focusing on the political crisis emerged before, during and after

the March 2008 vote. For instance, ahead of the elections, opposition candidate Simba Makoni, maintained a profile on social networking site *Facebook*, and the then opposition senator David Coltart, reached out to voters on his personal website to gauge their sentiments on the potential boost from the Web. They were equally upbeat. Zimbabweans abroad sought to use their Internet spotlight to "educate" others back home (ibid.). In the case of Zimbabwe, new media may certainly be helping advance democratic change, but it could also be argued that it takes a combination of factors. These include the political climate in the country, infrastructure, access to the Internet, and illiteracy.

Of great importance to note is that the mobile phones seem to offer better alternatives as tools for civic action in developing countries such as Zimbabwe when compared, for instance, to Internet access through computers. Matsheza (2011:29) points out that "the cellular phone is the most easily available telecommunication tool which offers new possibilities for democratic organisation and political action." This is because of the unique socio-economic context of developing countries. The contexts are distinctly not the same because in developed countries landline phone infrastructure and a highly urbanised infrastructure are a common feature whilst these are largely unavailable in many developing countries like Zimbabwe. The cost of landline connection is often times out of the reach of most of the population, and even when people can afford the services, they have to wait for long periods of time before they are finally connected (UNDP, 2009). In addition, landline subscribers usually have no assurance of continued uninterrupted service. Moreover, the cost of computers is unaffordable to many whilst the infrastructure for landlines has dilapidated and there are no funds to upgrade them. On this note, "mobile phones have demonstrated to be effective as a solution to these problems. Setting up a mobile base station in remote areas is considerably cheaper than laying down the lines for landed connections and the income barrier to communication has been reduced by more efficient network equipment and the increasing affordability of handsets" (UNDP, 2009). In this context, mobile service providers do not merely complement the use of landline phones as has been the case for developed societies; instead, they serve as an effective substitute for landed connections (Matsheza, 2011:22).

5.9 Use of Internet by civil society and Social Movement Organisations in Zimbabwe

The civil society has operated under a more constrained environment in Zimbabwe. Remarkably, the suppression on Trade Unions in Southern Rhodesia left a legacy of state

intolerance towards civil society which has continued up to the present day (Nhema, 2002:6). The coming of independence in 1980 did not bring much absolution either. As Moyo writes:

Instead of rectifying the situation at independence, the ruling ZANU- PF party sought to take maximum advantage of an un- and –under-developed civil society by claiming that it was the sole legitimate representative of the people. Under the guise of this claim, the party declared itself as the umbrella organisation of all social movements and went about destroying civil society in the name of the revolution. All ‘legitimate’ organisations were challenged to join the ruling party as a way of proving their revolutionary commitment (Moyo, 1992: 6).

Although the civil society was not completely barred, and not harassed as it was during the colonial era, the effect of the co-optation process after independence has been to create a submissive civil society. Moreover, laws such as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), not only cripple but also criminalise forms of civic activity, including the holding of assemblies, meetings or marches without prior police clearance, going on strike, and engaging in acts of civil disobedience. The “Act restricts freedom of expression, movement and assembly, and makes it a punishable offence for anyone to undermine or make any abusive, indecent, obscene or false statement about or concerning the President or an acting President, whether in respect of his person or his office” (Section 16 (2) cited in Moyo, 2004:26).

Quite a lot of activists, opposition politicians, newspaper editors and their journalists have been charged under this Act since its commencement in 2002 (Moyo, 2004:26). This has also resulted in the exodus of media workers to other countries since the Act restricts their operations. In addition, the Non-Governmental Organisations Bill passed by Parliament in 2004, seeks to restrict organisations working on governance and human rights issues and to register all NGOs in the country with an NGO Council. In a way, this is complementary to existing laws that limit the activities of civic organisation in the country.

According to Hufnagel (2009) “in the aftermath of the 2008 elections in Zimbabwe the world had to witness incredible atrocities against civilians and participants of the Zimbabwean democracy movement. Many social movement organizations (SMOs) fighting for democracy disappeared, while those that survived encountered severe impediments to their work”. The participants of the democratic movement and the civil society were being persecuted by the ruling party because the opposition had won the presidential elections. It became difficult for them to continue their activities but because of the advantages of the Internet some “kept on

actively campaigning and courageously withstanding the repression as witnessed via the Internet” (ibid.). Through the use of newsletters and blogs on the Internet, the civil society informed all people world-wide about the Zimbabwean situation. Evidently, “the time and place of more than two thousand reported cases of violence published on the Internet in the direct aftermath of the elections” was published through the interactive map of Zimbabwe (Hufnagel, 2009). Thus the Internet functions as a survival tool for the civil society and the social movements even amidst efforts of government repression.

With the emergence of the Internet in 1997, the situation is changing slowly due to the advantages that the Internet offers. Some of the restrictions discussed are still hindering citizen participation through the use of the Internet such that the potential of what the Internet offers has not yet been realised fully. The civil societies in Zimbabwe make use of the Internet, especially in the “field of political participation, to provide voter education, enhancing the awareness of rights and responsibilities of citizens, lobbying and advocacy, often aimed towards developing a more informed citizenry who can hold elected representatives more accountable” (Bratton et al., 2007). In short they use it to create awareness about certain issues and help the citizens advocate for change.

There are several civil society organisations (CSOs) or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating in the democracy and governance arena in Zimbabwe. The civil society in Zimbabwe has gradually moved into the online world. Notable for their use of the Internet and other new media are the “Kubatana Trust of Zimbabwe, which includes a NGO network organisation called the NGO Network Alliance Project (NNAP) and Sokwanele.com (full name Sokwanele – Zvakwana meaning ‘Enough is Enough’, the website of Zimbabwe Civic Action Group) (Shafika, 2007:584)). Kubatana is comprised of two hundred and forty NGOs and community service organisations which are involved in cyber activism focusing on democracy and human rights issues in the country, educating citizens against the abuse of power by the government and also provides Internet space to these organisations via an online directory (ibid.). This gives smaller NGOs without any resource a presence on the World Wide Web. As indicated on their website the organisation has been publishing civic and human rights information in Zimbabwe for more than ten years and more than three thousand people visit their website daily. Some forty of them came together in 1997 and formed the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) (Makumbe, 2009:12). The NCA is an organisation that represents the interests of various groups, including churches, civic

organisations, trade unions and NGOs involved in educating the general public on the need of a new constitution.

For instance, in the 2000 referendum 2000 the NCA campaigned against the draft constitution and people voted against it. As Sithole (2001) notes, the “defeat of a draft constitution backed by President Robert Mugabe was stunning and the opposition's unexpectedly strong showing in the June 2000 parliamentary elections may have marked the beginning of the end of ruling-party hegemony in Zimbabwe.” This shows how a strong civil society can influence the decision of the citizens though events after 2000 show the weakening of the civil society due to government restriction and intimidation on their activities. Nevertheless, “the role of civil society in raising public awareness on issues of democracy, human rights and good governance has been commendable” (Makumbe, 2009:11). Commenting on the activities of the organisation, Moyo (2011:3) notes that “Kubatana’s virtual community of bloggers can be said to be ‘blogging for democracy’ because they tell stories about the everyday experiences of citizens living in a volatile and perilous political environment.” This implies that the organisation is making use of the Internet to enhance citizen participation in the democratisation process.

Notably, their activities have been made easier through the platform accorded by the Internet in which a vast amount of messages can be broadcasted to many citizens at once, within a few minutes with a wider reach despite long distances and different geographic locations at relatively low cost. The organisation has “proved adept at spreading their messages via a range of media, sometimes converged, for instance, a combination of Internet based and mobile technology” (Kubatana.net). The Kubatana.net also uses a mailing list server and e-mailed newsletters to citizens in Zimbabwe and its members abroad. However, many Zimbabweans in the rural areas have no access to e-mail. In order to address this problem Banks (2010) notes that:

We developed an SMS subscriber that is 14, 000 strong and we use sms to share news headlines, notifications of events and encourage a two-way dialogue. We pose questions on social justice issues and ask our subscribers to respond with their views and opinions. In turn the SMS responses are collated and published in the weekly e-mail newsletter or on the community blog.

In this manner Kubatana is trying to reach out to the masses. Nevertheless, there is also another challenge as they try to communicate with the masses. Banks, (2010) points out that the high level of illiteracy is a major restraint to the access of

information by citizens. In a bid to address this problem Kubatana developed an interactive voice response (IVR) system that is called Freedom Fone. Through the use of Freedom Fone, activists and organisations can make short segment radio style programming available over mobile phones and landlines. As a result members of the general public can call a number and listen to information on elections, HIV AIDS, and news headlines to name just a few. Several forms of media have been merged on their sites, for instance, video clips of what has been happening in Zimbabwe, for example people brutally assaulted during election time (Human Rights Watch, 2008). They also make use of Twitter messages.

Though the civil society and interest groups in Zimbabwe have been using the Internet to advance democracy in the country, Majome, MDC-T legislator for Harare West has accused the civil society organisations (CSOs) of being divided, weak and confused mainly because of political interference and their dependence on international funding to the extent of failing to carry out proper constitutional education, leaving political parties to do the educating and campaigning (Majome, cited in *Nehanda Radio*, April 2014). This she spoke in line with the recent constitution making where she argues that the CSOs sabotaged the constitution making process by failing to distribute the copies of the draft charter (ibid.).

She added that there has been no proper constitutional education since the weakening of the NCA and the subsequent decline of its membership base in 2008 making the public awareness process an uphill task for many civil organisations. Professor Lloyd Sachikonye, a university of Zimbabwe lecturer also echoed Majome's sentiments adding that CSOs were weakened by their alignment to political parties leaving the politicians to do the task. In other words, the CSOs were too cynical, detached and were not proactive to the process, leaving the Parliament and political parties in control of the process. "We used to have a robust civil society in 2002 backwards but it was compromised in 2007 to date" Professor Chikonye said (*Nehanda Radio*, April 2014).

The Internet has become a significant tool for independent activists, especially those who may be critical of the mainstream views. Considering the serious violations of human rights in Zimbabwe the Internet is being used to report the issues globally. The Internet helps propagate news that would otherwise be inaccessible in the country. For instance in Zimbabwe most of the news about Zimbabwe is being reported by media houses outside

Zimbabwe such that people outside the country learn more about what is taking place much earlier than those inside.

Because of the mass e-mail facility and its ability to send messages to a large audience, at a lower cost, lobbying is also made easier via the Internet. Moreover, social-networking sites, like Facebook.com, are also facilitating communication between groups easily. Hence, through the use of the Internet the civil organisations in Zimbabwe can now meet, organise, lobby on line without meeting virtually and access information, and broadcast it cheaply. Through the use of the Internet, the civil society has managed to by-pass some of the constraints imposed by laws like the POSA and AIPPA.

Provided there is an enabling environment, the CSOs can serve as vehicles for citizens' voices. "Civil society needs government to be open, responsive, and accountable. And an active civil society, acting not only as a check and balance on government but also informing political debate is essential and indispensable to politically sustainable development (Judd, 1992:7 cited in Fortman, 1994:73). Notably, CSOs require a conducive legislative atmosphere, where the law safeguards their rights and activities. Citizens must feel that they can rightfully join and register associations with the approval of government. Good governance cannot be achieved by governments alone. Citizens and CSOs must enthusiastically claim and affirm rights, and initiate efforts to arouse broad participation in governance processes for governance to be good. This requires citizens to voice pressing social, economic, political challenges and opportunities, and contribute toward a shared vision for development.

Moreover, good governance entails partnership with the government to create space and mechanisms for citizens to play a meaningful role in public decision-making. When citizens feel that they are consulted and their contributions are co-opted in the final decisions, they are likely to comply. Lack of political will poses a major barrier in some countries, though creative approaches from civil society groups can be successful in inspiring citizens to actively participate in the governance systems to enhance democracy. With the restricted environment in which the mainstream media operates in Zimbabwe, the Internet has somehow afforded the civil society an alternative platform to carry out their tasks although the government still meddles in their activities through regulations.

As Castells (2008:78) argues, "the relationship between the state and civil society is the cornerstone of democracy." As the citizens come together to deliberate and express their

views so as to influence political institutions, the civil society becomes the organised expression of these views and in the absence of an active civil society capable of structuring and guiding citizen debates over various ideas and differing interests, the state becomes disconnected from its citizens. Resultantly “the state’s interaction with its citizenry is reduced to election periods largely shaped by political marketing and special interest groups and characterised by choice within a narrow spectrum of political option” (Castells, 2008:79). This argument to a greater extent describes the situation prevailing in Zimbabwe. To some extent, the civil society has been reduced to a toothless dog through the application of draconian legislation and the state’s interaction with the citizens has also been reduced to election periods. Though the civil society is trying to harness the Internet so as to effectively perform its role of intermediating between the citizens and the government, it has not been easy with the government interfering in what they do online.

5.10 Conclusion

For the Zimbabwean public sphere to flourish rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association should be guaranteed practically and not on paper. Such a warranty provides a conducive atmosphere in which the Zimbabwean citizens can engage in political deliberations without fear. Although “most African states have endorsed international instruments that protect human rights, in most instances, the enjoyment of such rights is not guaranteed” (Abioye and Mnyongani, 2009:182). This is the situation prevailing in Zimbabwe where to some extent the concept of the public sphere has been eroded because the rights and freedoms of citizens are not assured.

Post-independence Zimbabwe has not done well in facilitating the political public sphere. In most cases, the government has purposefully denied citizens these rights and instead of making the public sphere open to the citizens, state supremacy has been employed to make it inaccessible through enacting punitive Acts that stifle citizens’ freedoms. In many instances, partaking in the political public sphere has exposed citizens to harassment, imprisonment and even to death (Abioye and Mnyongani, 2009:182). However, the coming of the Internet has given the citizens a ray of hope in that the Internet could afford them a public sphere where they can access information and deliberate on issues that affect them.

This chapter discussed the connection between the media and politics and how the relationship has an impact on citizen participation in Zimbabwe. It also examined the role of media in a democracy. Additionally, the chapter assessed the reforms that have taken place in

the media sector since independence and whether these reforms have stifled or advanced public participation in governance. The emergence of the Internet and how it has provided the citizens with a platform for public participation was also discussed. The next chapter presents the research findings.

CHAPTER SIX

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Participation can involve consultation in the development of policies and decision-making, elections and other democratic processes. Participation provides governments with access to important information about the needs and priorities of individuals, communities and private businesses. Governments that involve the public will be in a better position to make good decisions, and these decisions will enjoy more support once taken. While there may not be direct links between democracy and every aspect of good governance, clearly accountability, transparency and participation are reinforced by democracy, and themselves are factors in support of democratic quality. – LINC program manual, Sudan

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study only. The analysis of the findings will be presented in the next chapter. The first section of the chapter presents data obtained from legal Acts and policy documents whilst the second section presents data obtained from interviews.

6.2 Review of documents

In addition to the interviews, the study also gathered data through the review of documents. In this study document analysis was mainly conducted by drawing upon three government legislations that affect the use of media for citizen participation and also by drawing upon the Zimbabwe ICT policy. The researcher only analysed the sections of the documents which relate to the topic and not the whole document. These documents are relevant to the study because the way, for instance, legislation govern and regulate the use of media and Internet determine or in a way affect how the Internet or media is applied by the citizenry to participate in the governance processes. Furthermore, the way policy documents mandate the application of ICTs reflect the willingness of the government in letting the citizens to apply such for democracy. These policies and legislation in fact give a reflection of whether the government of Zimbabwe endorse the usage of Internet for public participation or whether citizens have grabbed the opportunity to use them to increase their involvement in public matters when the government did not intend them to be used for such purposes. Hence, the successes and failures of applying the Internet for citizen participation cannot be discussed without reflecting on these documents.

The Zimbabwean citizenry have experienced threats and the endorsement of an assortment of contentious, suppressive and constricting laws, which have contributed to the deflating of the democratic space and the functioning environment of human rights supporters and activists (Kubatana.net). In addition, “instead of protecting the populace, the amendments to key existing laws and the enactment of new laws in Zimbabwe have provided government with tools with which it can deal with the perceived enemies of the state and the proponents of regime change” (Mapuva and Muyengwa, 2012:129). The following discussion gives an understanding of the effects of enacting such laws and requirements and also the responsibilities of the government of Zimbabwe in terms of its constitutional, international and regional human rights law obligation (MISA-Zim, 2013). These laws and some extrajudicial tactics not only neutralized the public and private media as spaces of civic engagement and public debate, but also had a constraining impact on freedom of journalistic practice and other constitutionally guaranteed civic liberties and human rights (Moyo, 2011:2).

6.2.1 Interception of Communications Act (ICA) (6 of 2007)

The inception of the Interception of Communications Act of 2007 added to the number of laws which have condemned the enjoyment and promotion of citizens’ rights in Zimbabwe, particularly freedom of expression and right to receive and impart information among other rights. This affects all communication, that is the receiving and imparting of information through any media, be it via the mobile phone or the Internet.

The purpose of the Act as stated in the overview is:

To provide for the lawful interception and monitoring of certain communications in the course of their transmission through a telecommunication, postal or any other related service or system in Zimbabwe; to provide for the establishment of a monitoring centre; and to provide for any other matters connected with or incidental to the foregoing (Interception of Communications Act (6 of 2007:2).

Through the instituting of the Interception of Communications Act, the government made it legal to monitor and censor all communication and gave the state security minister the power to issue warrants for interceptions (Kwenda, 2009). An example of the power of this Act was illustrated when Vilakazi Mavhudzi made history by becoming Zimbabwe’s Facebook arrest when he posted this comment on Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai’s Facebook page:

I am overwhelmed; I don't know what to say Mr. PM. What happened in Egypt is sending shockwaves to dictators around the world. No weapon but unity of purpose worth emulating, hey (Biriwasha, 2011/Kubatana.net).

Mavhudzi's comment led to his arrest by the police and was imprisoned and charged with "advocating or attempting to take-over government by unconstitutional means" (Biriwasha, 2011/Kubatana.net). In addition, the way the government reacted to Mavhudzi's comment suggests that it is taking no chances on social networking sites and also signal a new role for social media in Zimbabwe's politics (ibid.). Through the application of this Act, citizens have been robbed of their right to express themselves freely. They cannot freely engage in political deliberations or comment on what is happening around them or in other countries for fear that the government will snoop on their communication and arrest them. Any comments that are critical of the government be it on social networking sites or e-mails can be traced back to their sources and result in torture or arrests of citizens.

According to Freedom House (2013:6) through the ICA the "the Zimbabwean Reserve Bank installed an e-mail content filtering system that blocked e-mails containing the words 'Morgan Tsvangirai' or 'MDC' and other political content." This means that anyone working for the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe cannot receive e-mails containing such content, even if one is a member of the MDC. Furthermore, the government has consistently shown "a desire to control digital communications, particularly during times of high political tension, such as elections or other potentially volatile situations, for instance, around the time of ZANU-PF's December 2009 party congress the authorities issued a warning to operators against allowing subscribers to use their networks for political purposes, which came in response to a mass circulation of text messages that had castigated the ruling party" (Freedom House, 2013:7). In response, Econet cautioned its subscribers not to use the service to send political messages or else the service will be cut off (ibid.). This clearly shows how the service providers are always threatened that if they allow subscribers to circulate messages that are against the ruling party's ideology they lose their licences. Of importance to note is that the use of blackberry is not allowed in Zimbabwe because it cannot be intercepted.

The interception of communication has been justified as appropriate for national security purposes. The definition of 'national security' in Section 2 is vague and needs to be reconsidered. National security has been defined as "matters relating to the existence, independence and safety of the state" (Interception of Communications Act (6 of 2007:3). According to Mapuva and Muyengwa (2012:141) "the Act violates the human rights of

Zimbabweans and many international Conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which states that one should be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, or to attacks on his integrity or reputation and that everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interferences or attacks". In line with this, an exception to intercept communication is only when the government perceive a threat to national security. In addition, the state can only apply the exception to intercept communication if it is a "democratic state" (MISA, 2013). It is clear that the government has in many instances intercept citizens' private communication pretending to guard national security when in actual sense the intension is to silence and limit the citizens' freedom of expression.

According to MISA, (MISA-Zimbabwe, 2013:7-8) "in Zimbabwe's broadcasting law the definitions of 'national interest' 'national security' tend to be narrowly defined and limited to the governments interests only. These narrow definitions of the aforementioned themes are problematic in that they serve as an excuse for government to clamp down on freedom of expression citing violations of the national interest. The criminalisation of not following the 'national interest' in broadcasting content serves to undermine freedom of expression as well as to nurture a culture of state immunity within the broadcasting industry." The definition of national interest is not clearly demarcated, such that whenever the government does not find actual reasons to restrain citizens from expressing their views, for instance, they always do it in the 'national interest.'

Despite the fact that Section 20 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe "guarantees freedom of expression, press freedom, access to information as well as the protection of sources of information, the policy direction that the government has taken has not been conducive for the recognition of these rights within the media sector, either in the broadcasting or print media industry" (MISA-Zimbabwe, 2013:4). It is true that the constitution stipulates these rights but practically, the citizens are not free to express themselves and they do not have access to some information that the government holds. Hence, MISA (2013:4) strongly argues that it is imperative that "the government and the responsible Ministry revisit its policy position on freedom of expression and freedom of information, which currently hinges around 'nationalism against imperialism' as the sole legitimating claim to seek freedom of expression." The citizens must be given the platform to express themselves and have their views weighed and deliberated upon.

Section 12 of the ICA (6 of 2007) stipulates that “service provider must ensure that its’ postal or telecommunications systems are technically capable of supporting lawful interceptions at all times.” In addition, it is mandatory that the service provider “install hardware and software facilities and devices to enable interception of communications at all times or when so required, as the case may be and that its services are capable of rendering real time and full time monitoring facilities for the interception of communications” (ibid.). In such a situation, the citizens are not free to deliberate on political issues for fear of being tracked. At the same time the service providers fear losing their operating licences if citizens use their services to criticise the government. Hence, in such an environment citizen participation in the public sphere is constrained.

6.2.2 Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) (5 of 2002)

The stated objective of the Act is summarised in its preamble as follows:

To provide members of the public with a right of access to records and information held by public bodies; to make public bodies accountable by giving the public a right to request correction of misrepresented personal information; to prevent the unauthorised collection, use or disclosure of personal information by public bodies; to protect personal privacy; to provide for the regulation of the mass media; to establish a Media and Information Commission and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental to the foregoing (Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (5 of 2002:5).

AIPPA imposes limitations on freedom of expression on journalists and the whole populace. Section 64 of the Act entitled ‘Abuse of Freedom of Expression’ criminalises “usage of mass media channels to commit a criminal offence or publish a false record” (Jafari, 2003:3). Of significance to note is that the explanation of “falsehood is left to the Commission and the Minister of Information’s disposition” (ibid.). Journalists and many other citizens have been prosecuted in line with the above clause. The definition of falsehood lies in the hands of the Minister of information and any information that is critical of the ruling party can be regarded as false, resulting in arrests or intimidation. These sections of AIPPA have been employed to “constantly to detain journalists who publish stories which are critical of the government” (Jafari, 2003:3).

Section 61 of the Constitution maintains that every citizen has the “freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference, and freedom from interference with his correspondence.” However, AIPPA does not uphold these rights and yet

the constitution is the supreme law of the land and all national legislation emanate from, and should adhere to it. Concurring with this view are Mapuva and Muyengwa (2012:125) who argues that “key legislative provisions have curtailed civil liberties, contrary to the constitutional provisions which seek in theory to promote civil liberties, human rights and citizens’ participation in governance.” Instead of promoting the civil liberties so that citizens can participate freely in public discourses the AIPPA has been used to rob the citizens of their right to information. As Jafari (2003:4) notes, “in Section 20 (2) (a), exceptions are made in the interest of ‘defence, public safety, public order, the economic interests of the State, public morality or public health.’ The Act goes a step further, however, and restricts freedom of expression on the basis of accuracy of information as perceived by the state” (ibid.) This implies that information published might be true but because it is against the ruling ideology or is denouncing the ruling elite, it can be regarded as inaccurate. Anyone who bothers to have a different opinion can be lynched through this Act.

According to Jafari (2003:4) “the provisions of AIPPA violate Zimbabwe’s obligations under international law.” Zimbabwe is a member of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which several liberties including “freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through other media of his choice” (Article 19 cited in Jafari, 2003:4). As Jafari (ibid.) further argues, “the only restrictions that maybe imposed are those that provided for by the law and aim to protect the rights or reputations of others, national security, public order, public health, or morals.” This implies that the restrictions that maybe imposed on the rights stipulated by the ICCPR should be vindicated as central for attaining one of these purposes.

6.2.2.1 Access to information

AIPPA establishes a general right to access information held by public bodies (Section 62). Martin and Feldman (1998 cited in Mapuva and Muyengwa, 2012:139) argue that access to information is “the ability of the citizen to obtain information in the possession of the state.” This implies that every citizen has a right of access to any record, including a record containing personal information that is in the custody of the state or any public body. “As its name implies, AIPPA formally establishes a right to access information held by public bodies though this right is so limited by exclusions and exceptions that its practical impact has been extremely limited” (Article 19/MISA-Zimbabwe, 2004:3). Instead of empowering the

citizens to have access to information, the Act has been successful in achieving the opposite. As a result, Moyo (2007:277) argues that the Act was misnamed because it achieves the complete opposite of what freedom of information law is expected to achieve. Zimbabwe has also obligations as a state party to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR). Article 9 states that "every individual shall have the right to receive information," and "every person shall have the right to express and disseminate his opinions within the law." Hence Jafari (2003:3) argues that "by withholding registration from some independent journalists and prosecuting others for publishing allegedly false information, AIPPA violates the Constitution, making its legal applications dubious."

Under AIPPA, journalists should be registered under the Media and Information Commission (MIC), which has the power to give or deny licences to both journalists and media stations alike (Mapuva and Muyengwa, 2012:140). Moreover, the Media and Information Commission has "wide range of regulatory powers over the media, including in relation to refusals to disclose information, registration of the media, accreditation of journalists and monitoring media content (Section 9(3) and 39)" (Article 19/MISA-Zim, 2004:6). Accreditation of journalists only last for twelve months but it may be renewed upon the discretion of the MIC. A closer look at this clause will make one to argue that a journalist cannot report freely on government activities if he or she is worried about the nullification of his or her registration (*ibid.*). This places a limitation on what the journalist can report on, negative reporting on the government issues can result in denial of accreditation.

In addition, MIC is "governed by a Board, all of whose members are appointed by the Minister responsible for information, after consultation with the President (Section 40)" (*Ibid.*). The fact that the members of the board are appointed by the Minister implies that he appoints those that are loyal to the ruling party; as a result the board is not independent and cannot be impartial in its decisions. It is not possible for the Minister to appoint people who objectively criticise or oppose the activities and decisions of the ruling party. This suggests that MIC is not an independent body capable of making independent decisions (Moyo, 2007:278). Meaningfully, "the requirement that three of the five members of the Media and Information Commission should be nominated by journalists' or media associations was removed by the 13 October 2003 amendments leaving all the power in the hands of the Minister" (Article 19/MISA-Zim:6). Therefore, the discretion of who becomes a member of MIC, who gets licensed, who can register a media house, all lies in the hands of the Minister of Information.

Moyo (2007:277) argues that one of the key demands from media freedom advocates was the introduction of freedom of information or access to information to ensure that journalists and members of the public are able to get information they need particularly from public officials. The AIPPA of 2002 should, therefore be seen as an attempt to address that demand yet it achieves the complete opposite of what freedom of information law is expected to achieve (ibid). This is because it obstructs free flow of information and makes the operations of journalists more risky.

Foreigners and non-resident Zimbabweans are not allowed to “own shares in Zimbabwean media outlets, even though they may be minority shareholders in companies which own media shares and only Zimbabwean citizens or permanent residents may be employed by local media outlets” (Article 19/MISA-Zim, 2004:7). All these restrictions on who can own shares in the media and who can be employed by the media are ways that have been employed by the government to control the public sphere.

Significantly, AIPPA has negatively affected the country’s relationships with other states because it does not allow foreign diplomats to make speeches at their National Day events (Mapuva and Muyengwa, 2012:140). Section 79(4) “prohibits foreign diplomats from making political statements unless such statements support the status quo or the existing political dispensation” (ibid.). In a way, this Act has been enacted to curb any form of opposition and even foreign nationals are not an exception. The Act also “requires all bodies which disseminate mass media products to obtain a certification of registration and dissemination include “sale, subscription, delivery, diffusion or distribution” (Section 66 cited in Article 19/MISA-Zim, 2004:7). The mass media products include an “advertisement, any part of a periodical publication, any electronically transmitted material, or audio or video recorded programme” (ibid.). This registration makes it easy for the government to have an upper hand on what is published, distributed and so on. Consequently, those involved in distribution or delivery of such products comply with the laws for fear of losing their licences. According to Mapuva and Muyengwa (2012:140) “civic organisations are not allowed to be involved in the politics of the country or to make political statements or to leak any information outside the country.” One is forced to argue that the government through the use of AIPPA has succeeded in silencing all sections of the society and also what type of information ultimately reaches the citizens.

6.2.3 The Public Order and Security Act (POSA) (1 of 2002)

The objective of the Act as stated in the preamble is to make:

provision for the maintenance of public order and security in Zimbabwe; to amend the Citizenship of Zimbabwe Act [Chapter 4:01], the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act [Chapter 9:07] and the Miscellaneous Offences Act [Chapter 9:15]; to repeal the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act [Chapter 11:07]; and to provide for matters connected with or incidental to the foregoing” (POSA, 2002:3)

The POSA was approved in January 2002, as a replacement of the Law and Order Maintenance Act of 1960 (LOMA), one of the draconian pieces of legislation retained from the Rhodesian era (Mapuva and Muyengwa, 2012:135).

6.2.3.1 Effects of POSA on Freedom of Expression

Section 16 (2) of POSA makes it a serious offence for a person to challenge or make any “abusive, indecent, obscene or false statement” directed toward the President or acting President, whether in respect of his person or his office (cited in Moyo, 2007:280). Furthermore, section 15 of the Act outlaws the making of “any false statements damaging to the government, or any oral or written false statements that may, inter alia, adversely affect Zimbabwean defence or economic interests, or undermine public confidence in defence and law enforcement agencies” (Jafari, 2003:2). Outstandingly, what constitutes a “false statement” is left up to the executive to determine (ibid.). Eventually, in some instances citizens who take their stand and criticise those in high offices can be accused of coming up with untruthful allegations.

In agreement with the above argument, Kagoro (2005:25) argues that by controlling “the public media, print and electronic, these politicians define for the citizens what is to be true, what has to be true, who is entitled to know such truth, and the form in which it should be expressed.” As a result of this Act, the government has assumed domination over all legitimate channels of expression and information in a bid to become the only source of information within the country (ibid.). This provision of POSA “does not only affect any local or foreign journalist writing about Zimbabwe, but also severely hinders human rights groups and other advocacy organisations that serve as a check on the government” (Jafari, 2003:2).

Section 12 of POSA stipulates that “any person who makes public statements reproving the actions of the police or suggesting that they should defend the rule of law may be a target for prosecution” (ibid.). The implication of this is that citizens can not criticise or disapprove the actions of those in power and in a way cannot hold them accountable. This has affected citizen participation in Zimbabwe because the citizenry, the media, non-governmental organisations have been disempowered in such a manner that they cannot scrutinise and criticise those in power, as a result critical debate practically ceases and those in power cannot be held accountable of their actions. As Mapuva and Muyengwa (2012:135) clearly argue “these sections have been used by the state to silence journalists and individual voices of legitimate criticism, despite the fact that freedom of expression is guaranteed in the constitution.”

6.2.3.2 Effects of POSA on freedom of Assembly

Section 4 of POSA, under the title "Public Gathering" has been mostly employed against opposition rallies, including the activities of civil society bodies (Mapuva and Muyengwa, 2012:136). The conditions for holding public gatherings are stipulated in Sections 24-31, one of them being that anyone who desires to organise a public gathering must notify the police four days in advance (ibid.). Interestingly, the clause does not state that the police should grant permission. Furthermore, Section 25 empowers the police to “place boundaries on the gathering or ban it entirely if they have reasonable grounds for believing the gathering will result in public disorder.” In many instances these requirements are deliberately misappropriated by the police force in order to deny opposition parties the right to convene their rallies. Mapuva and Muyengwa (2012:136) contend that in most instances the reasons given by the police for barring gatherings are totally insubstantial. For instance, “they can claim that the responsible authority is not available or that ZANU-PF has booked the same venue, or that the gathering is likely to provoke disorder” (ibid.). In all this, POSA has stripped off the citizens of their freedom to assemble.

Practically, though the civil society can use the Internet to educate the masses and make them see the ills of the government, protests cannot take place because through POSA, they are criminalised. Virtually, through POSA the police can prohibit any public gathering at will. Anyone who organises a public gathering without seeking approval “from the state may be fined and imprisoned for up to six months according to section” 24(6) (Jafari, 2003:3). Thus, though the organisation of protests have been made easier through the use of Internet the

government of Zimbabwe has managed to out rule or curb them on the ground through enacting POSA.

6.2.4 Zimbabwe National (ICT) Policy 2005

Section 4 of the ICT policy under the title e-Government stipulates that e-Government uses ICTs to provide, online: “Convenient access to government information and services and for delivery of public services” (Zimbabwe ICT Policy 2005:19). Access to government information is essential so that citizens can be aware of the operations of government of officials so that they can hold them accountable. Moreover when citizens have access to information it is most likely that they make informed decisions.

Furthermore, among the policy statements in Section 4 (1), are the stipulations that the government shall “ensure that every government ministry and parastatal has an updated informative and interactive website and make e-government services available to all citizens” (ibid). However, most of the respondents of the present study lamented the fact that most of the government ministries websites do not have anything to offer. The researcher also visited the government ministries websites and found out that most of them are not interactive. The websites only provide information about the mission statement and recent events that have transpired in that ministry. Basically, the communication is one way and not interactive. Moreover, as indicated again they are not user friendly in terms interaction. On this note, Ruhode (2013:91) argues that “the portal should make available an array of online services including government information publicity, government and citizen interaction, government service for individuals, government service for business, culture services, etc.) Citizens cannot freely interrogate the ministries on how they operate because for one to inquire or comment on issues, one has to write his name and e-mail address which can be used to track them.

Furthermore, Section 5 entitled e-Governance stipulates that e-governance includes the use of ICTs in the following areas:

- “Participation in the decision making processes by the citizens, e.g. formulation and implementation of economic and social policies,
- Making government more accountable, transparent and effective,
- Facilitating the electoral processes, and

- Maintenance of law and order” (Zimbabwe ICT Policy, 2005:19)

Under sub section 5.1 titled policy statements, it is stipulated that the principle of universal access should be promoted and the government should “develop on-line projects that provide information on governance across all levels of society and the policy states that the government should strengthen governance and legal frame work that promotes participatory democracy and accountability” (Zimbabwe ICT Policy, 2005:19). In order to address the issue of universal access, the president and other leaders have been donating computers to schools. However, most of the e-government initiatives have been without success because they have been put in place at a time when the country is facing a lot of challenges, both economically and politically. Ruhode (2013:93) clearly points out that “inadequate electricity is the main hurdle in rolling out ICTs to the whole country. Mobile phone operators require electricity to power their base stations around the country, and so do Internet Service Providers for their Internet and e-mail servers.” Thus without enough supply of electricity universal Internet access cannot be attained.

Moreover, in a bid to promote the principle of universal access POTRAZ obliges telecoms operators to contribute 2% of their gross turnover to a fund called the Universal Service Fund (USF), “whose intended objective is to promote development of telecommunications services in un-served and under-served areas throughout the country” (Moyo and Kabweza, 2013:32). Although the funds are being collected from operators, to date no development projects have been carried out in underserved areas. As stated by MISA (2008 cited in Zunguze, 2009:20), “there is no provision for public scrutiny of how USF have been administered and used. There are calls for the above-mentioned draft ICT bill to include such provisions and mandate the regulator to ensure that the funds are disbursed to universal services projects on a regular basis.” In a way not much has been achieved as far as promoting universal access is concerned.

Significantly, the same subsection stipulates that the government should strengthen governance and legal framework that promotes participatory democracy. This is the real opposite of what is happening on the ground. The legislations that have been put in place by the ZANU-PF government work against participation by citizens and silence them from holding those in power accountable. As indicated in the interviews, most of the respondents noted that consultation of citizens during formulation of policies is very minimal and in most instances their views are not included in the decisions that are made at the end.

The ICT policy stipulates that “ICTs should contribute significantly to the reduction of social, political and economic inequalities, increase national productivity, enhancement of wealth creation and entrepreneurship and increase in efficiency in public administration and should strengthen democratic values and promote equality and the interest of marginalised groups like youths, the disabled and the elderly” (ICT Policy, 2005:18-19). Therefore, the policy stipulates all that is required to enhance participation in the democratisation process but the implementation thereof is lacking, hence democracy suffers. The participation of citizens in the political matters would have been at an advanced stage in Zimbabwe if the stipulations in the ICT policy had been implemented.

6.2.5 Registration of Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) card

The Statutory Instrument 142 of 2013 on Postal and Telecommunications (Subscriber Registration) Regulations stipulates that: “telecommunication companies are now required to set up a central subscriber data base (POTRAZ, 2013).” As indicated by the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ), the move would help in combating crime, increase security for users, and “combat transmission of messages or making of telephone calls that are or do the following: a) grossly offensive, obscene or threatening in nature. b) Spread falsehoods for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to any other person. c) Making a series or combination of telephone calls without reasonable cause, for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or anxiety.”

6.2.6 State surveillance for national security purposes

This law is a subordinate legislation which was passed on the grounds of authority bestowed on the Interception of Communications Act of 2007 and is aimed to enable more state surveillance. According to the Statutory Instrument 142 of 2013 “telecommunications providers must each establish a subscriber database of all SIM card holders, connecting their phone number to their name, address, gender, nationality and passport or ID number” (Nyst, 2013). This means that any form of communication that the owner of the SIM card engages in will be able to be traced back to its origin. With this law enforced, there is no way a citizen can supply certain information anonymously. To a certain extent this law is against the right of citizens to privacy. On this note, service providers are required to hand over copies of this data to the government so that the government establishes its own database. Access to the database will be available for the purpose of law enforcement, upon the written request of a

law enforcement agent, or for “safeguarding national security”, as well as for “undertaking approved educational and research purposes” (ibid).

As Mckenzie (2013) argues “the government justifies these measures as necessary to safeguard national security, but human rights activists in Zimbabwe argue that this poses a threat to citizens' privacy and free expression.” The demand that citizens register their SIM cards, and that mobile service providers de-activate unregistered subscribers, is part of Zimbabwe's new regulation for subscriber registration issued by the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority. The implication of this is that citizens can no longer engage themselves in any communication that requires anonymity because they can be tracked.

According to Matambanadzo (2013) the service providers are obliged to “produce their subscriber register to the authorities free of charge upon request.” This places citizens at the risk of being targeted and misuse of private information. On this note, Nyst (2013) argues that “an individual's phone number could potentially be matched with their voting preferences or health data, enabling governments to identify and target political opposition.” Nevertheless, the government has justified the registration of SIM cards for security reasons pointing out that the move will help to reduce the application of telecommunication services to commit crime.

Civil society groups have spoken out against this move “by the Zimbabwean government to join its African peers in mandating SIM registration, although most of them have chosen to remain anonymous” (ibid.) It is of importance to note that because of the repressive environment in Zimbabwe, many dissenting voices had often taken advantage of communicating anonymously because they fear arrests or harassments perpetrated by the ruling elite. As a result the requirement to register SIM cards is another blow which has seen the citizens' right to freedom of expression restrained.

Nevertheless, The Herald Reporter, Matambanadzo (2013) argues that the “registering of SIM cards is not peculiar to Zimbabwe alone. In South Africa there is a government regulation, the Regulation of Interception of Communication and Provision of Communication-Related Information Amendment Act (RICA) that makes it mandatory for every subscriber to register.” The cell phone numbers, identification numbers and the addresses of subscribers are captured. Other countries in Africa like Kenya are following suit.

It is questionable why activists have called foul on SIM registration in Zimbabwe but not Kenya or South Africa. What it comes down to explain is that countries like Zimbabwe are already very limited in their Internet freedom and freedom of expression; and because their government is much more autocratic and repressive than the other governments we look at countries such as those that have institutions in place to protect privacy and freedom of expression.

While this is a welcome move by governments, that is, if it is done in good faith, for most Zimbabweans, people will give in hesitantly given the high level of mistrust. Most citizens do “not trust the government anymore with their personal details in fear of surveillance” (Kubatana.net, 2013).

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO forum argues that the “SIM registration database law represses twin rights to privacy and expression and that this raises new challenges to the already embattled rights to privacy and free expression in Zimbabwe, increasing the potential that the repressive state will spy on its citizens and further clamp down on free speech.” Thus through statutory instruments the government has been successful in hushing dissent voices.

Lawyers also say the instrument is illegal as it impinges on citizens' rights enshrined in the country's new constitution including the right to privacy of communication (ibid). On this note, Human rights lawyer Chris Mhike suggests that the government should strike a balance between subscriber's rights and its needs to combat crime and terrorism. "For the release of information to be fair and reasonable in a constitutional democracy, it must be a precondition that a court order be secured. Since that precondition is missing, this latest legislation remains highly susceptible to abuse and misuse from authorities and those with access to the central subscriber data base” (Kubatana.net, 2013).

The enactment of this law has resulted in the criticism of the Zimbabwean government for introducing a law that will enable its secret agents to access citizens' emails, text messages and mobile phone records. Statutory Instrument 142 of 2013 is an impediment on the right to privacy provided for in Section 57 of the Zimbabwean Constitution. Section 134 (b) of the Constitution clearly stipulates that “statutory instruments must not infringe or limit any of the rights and freedoms set out in the Declaration of Rights” (Zimbabwe Constitution). The clause is very clear for it says “a statutory instrument ‘must not’ infringe or limit rights or freedoms contained in the Declaration of Rights. Emphasis is placed on the words must not to

demonstrate that the prohibition of using a statutory instrument to limit rights specified in the Declaration of Rights is mandatory” (Magaisa, T. Law Lecturer).

In summary, the legislations discussed above have been enacted by the government to try and control the use of new media for citizen participation. Through the implementation of such Acts like the ICA of 2007, AIPPA and POSA of 2002 and the Statutory Instrument of 2013, the citizens have been robbed of their right to information and freedom of expression. Furthermore, whilst the ICT policy spells out clearly the role that the ICTs should play in advancing democracy, the situation on the ground is different. Although the Zimbabwe ICT policy outlines how the government should embrace ICTs and augment citizen participation and the Zimbabwean Constitution spells their rights to information and expression as citizens, the legislations on the other hand strip the citizens off those rights. This has resulted in the shrinking of the public sphere and the suffering of democracy. These laws are impinging on effective participation of citizens resulting in the closing of political space. The combination of the three legislations, POSA, AIPPA and ICA leaves the citizens powerless and silence them completely. Though the policy highlights the role that ICTs should play, the implementation thereof is lacking.

6.3 Interviews

In this study the researcher interviewed Zimbabweans exiles living in South Africa. The focus of the study and the security situation in Zimbabwe did not allow the researcher to conduct the study in the country. As a result the sample of the respondents was drawn from the Zimbabweans who are living in South Africa. In order to locate the respondents the researcher used snowball sampling. The researcher identified Zimbabweans living in Mafikeng who then identified other Zimbabweans who were living in other places in South Africa. Some of the respondents interviewed were living in Mafikeng, Johannesburg, Polokwane, Thohoyandou, Kimberly, Potchefstroom, Pretoria and Lichtenberg.

The aim of the interview questions was to get the attitudes and views of the Zimbabwean citizens towards the use of Internet for citizen participation in Zimbabwe. These respondents left Zimbabwe as a result of the political and socio-economic problems that the country has been experiencing and as a result came to South Africa in search of jobs and also for refuge. Amongst the respondents were different professionals, most of them teachers. Some were post-graduate students, studying whilst working, lecturers at different universities, journalists, social workers, project manager, lawyers, accounts clerk, and some doing casual jobs.

The ages of those who participated in the interviews ranged from twenty-five to fifty years. Twenty out of the thirty participants were male and only ten were female. At first some of the respondents were hesitant to participate in the interviews, however the researcher guaranteed them anonymity and that the research was to be used for academic purposes only. The interviews commenced with questions about the participants' Internet use habits whilst they were still in Zimbabwe followed by use of Internet for citizen participation and then its potential successes and obstacles in the Zimbabwean context.

6.3.1 The Nature and Extent of Internet Use

All the respondents (100%) interviewed said that they had access to the Internet while they were still in Zimbabwe. Most of them accessed the Internet via mobile phones whilst seven out of the thirty respondents noted that they would visit the Internet cafes whenever they wanted to use the Internet. Three of the participants, teachers who were working in the rural areas noted that they could only access Internet when they came to their homes in the urban area because there was no network in some of the rural areas where they had been working. Having established that the participants had access to the Internet, the researcher wanted to know what they used the Internet for. Responding to the question on what they used the Internet for, a twenty-five year-old male Engineer stated:

The Internet is really amazing. I used it to search for jobs in the comfort of my home and also for academic research purposes. Through the Internet I communicated with my family and friends, through e-mail and social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter (29/11/2013).

The Internet was used for diverse purposes amongst the respondents. Besides the response from one of the participants highlighted above, the other respondents' use of the Internet ranged from reading online news, connecting with family and friends through e-mail, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Whatsapp, social and academic research purposes and even for entertainment purposes. It emanated from the responses that all of the respondents were aware of, and had an understanding of social networks. The responses from most of the respondents showed that they did not pursue one activity, but performed different activities at the same time. The amount of time spent on the Internet by the participants who lived in urban areas ranged from one to three hours per day. In addition, all the respondents (100%) indicated that they belonged to social networks. This was a clear indication that social networks were frequently used and had become part of people's daily lives.

All the respondents (100%) indicated that they belonged to social networks, ranging from Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Whatsapp. Eighty percent (80%) revealed that they used these social networks to communicate with friends and family and did not engage in political deliberations on social networks. Only twenty percent (20 %) of the respondents indicated that they used social networks to communicate with friends, family and engage in political discussions and or comment on issues posted on the platform. Those who acknowledged that they engaged in political deliberations said that they always did so anonymously. When asked what he used the Internet for, one of the respondents a Law student explained:

I used the Internet for academic and social research and also engaged individuals in matters of governance on social media platforms (21/01/2014).

Commenting on the same question, a professional Social worker had this to say:

I mainly used social media to communicate with my family and friends and of course by following the debates on social media such as the popularly known 'Baba Jukwa'⁸ Facebook page (05/02/2014).

Of interest is the fact that some of the respondents who revealed that they engaged in political deliberations noted that they did so only with their friends and not with the community at large. This means that they were not comfortable to discuss political issues with outsiders, other than their friends and families for fear of being sold out. Only ten percent of the participants indicated that they used the social platforms to engage in political debates with individuals in governance.

Having established that the respondents had Internet access and were active Internet users the researcher probed them as to why they did not use it to actively participate in matters of governance. The respondents had different reasons why they did not engage in political discussions on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. Most of them revealed that they were afraid of deliberating on political issues online for fear of being tracked down and victimised by the agents of the ruling political party. For instance, a lady Teacher in her early thirties commented:

The Internet is not invested in, in the sense that if someone expresses him/herself online or criticise the government the Central Intelligence Officers (CIO) will deal with him/her if not being sent to jail.

⁸ 'Baba Jukwa' - A suspected ZANU PF mole operating under the pen name Baba Jukwa on Social Media platforms has reportedly caused a storm among politburo members with his exposes of sensitive internal issues discussed during closed-door meetings.

Some of them referred to the ongoing issue surrounding Baba Jukwa Facebook page, in which a number of citizens have been tracked down, arrested and some extradited from other countries where they have been living. Though in some instances people did not use their real names when posting views on social networks like Facebook and Twitter, they were being stalked down.

Although most of participants applauded the Internet for affording a public space for deliberations, only three of them said that they engaged in political issues debated online. As a 48-year-old Lecturer who lived in Pretoria claimed, “If you want to be free in Zimbabwe you better not to get involved in politics in any way (12/02/2014)”. The respondents were particularly careful concerning their activities online, especially when it involved political matters.

The ability of new technology to detect any device creates significant new privacy challenges. Citizens used to take advantage of communicating anonymously, without governments being able to trace their identities and this used to safeguard free expression, with more people speaking out on issues of public interest. However, with the advancement in technology such is no longer possible because people can be tracked down. As a result citizens fear to deliberate on sensitive matters online.

Moreover, besides the fear of being tracked down, most of the respondents stated that participation in deliberations on social networks was to some extent not worthy because their contributions were not taken cognisance of. This was clearly articulated by a forty-five-year old man who was teaching in Johannesburg when he notes:

I did not participate because I knew my views would never be taken into consideration. Whether I posted my views or not on the social networks, nothing would change (22/02/2014).

In addition to the above claim another interesting response came from a female Lecturer who had this to say:

Most people pay in order to access Internet, and to use it for some government survey seems a waste of their money when there is no guarantee that one's views will be considered (24/01/2014).

Consultation only does not effect change or should not be the end. When the government has consulted the citizens on matters that affect them, their views should be incorporated in the final decisions that are made. Because the citizens feel that after consultation their views are

not included in the decisions that are made by the government, they view their engagement in political deliberations as useless. They want their contributions to have an effect or to be incorporated in the decisions made at the end. Citizen participation in practice suggests that citizens must have confidence in the governance system believing that their contributions can influence decision making and ultimately effect change where necessary.

6.3.2 Government websites as facilitating citizen participation

One of the questions that the researcher asked the participants was whether the government ministries had websites that they used as a platform to engage the citizens online. A response that the researcher got from one participant, an Engineer was “I did not come across any such facility by any ministry (29/11/2013)” and another from a Teacher was “They did but very few people were interested so these websites were of little use (16/02/2014).” It was startling to note that only three out of the thirty (10%) respondents were aware that the government ministries had websites considering that many of the respondents were from urban areas.

The fact that most of the citizens were unaware of the existence of the government ministries websites implies that the use of these websites to enhance citizen participation was very minimal or did not exist. On one hand the low level of awareness and use by citizens clearly demonstrates ineffectiveness on the part of the government; on the other hand it showed ignorance on the part of the citizens. The government should engage in an awareness programme such that the citizens are made aware of such platforms that can be implemented to enhance citizen participation. Because the government claims to be democratic such programmes should be increased to show that it cares about the rights of the citizens.

Of significance to point out is the fact that even the small percentage (10%) that acknowledged the existence of the government ministries websites reiterated that interaction with the government via the websites was just in theory. They expressed dissatisfaction with the technical challenges and inadequacy of information offered by the government websites. They mourned that practically the communication via the websites was one way. The citizens who were bold enough to query the activities of the ministries did not always get feedback. As one of the participants noted:

The interaction afforded by the government ministries websites was just way below standard. Most of them did not allow for citizens’ input. As a result, I became very passive as far as politics and issues of governance were

concerned. I wrote to the Ministry of Information several times but got no feedback. I just gave up (23/11/2013).

This shows how the citizens were frustrated because of lack of interaction and feedback when using some of the government websites and as a result they became passive citizens who were manipulated by the government and did not have a say in critical decisions.

Asked whether they engaged on deliberations on other websites besides government ministries websites, for instance, online newspapers like *The Herald* online, has a section for comments after a news article. All the respondents highlighted that they read online news from different media houses, both Zimbabwe based online media houses and also foreign based news websites. Having established that they visited these websites the researcher probed them if they commented on issues raised on those websites. One of the respondents stated:

I always visited different online news sites because some news, such as negative coverage about government or some officials could only be available on the Internet. You could not get any of the coverage from the television or newspaper or on the online edition of the government online edition. The traditional media was government owned and their news was always one-sided. They did not have guts to report real scandals. I enjoyed reading what other people thought about with regard to certain issues but I didn't comment on online discussions (14/02/2014).

On the same note, another respondent a Social worker highlighted that she visited these online news websites on a daily basis because she enjoyed being updated on current issues but when asked if she deliberated and contributed her views on the comments and views section, she pointed out:

There are so many stories online these days. Some of them might not even be true. But most netizens won't bother to verify these stories. In most instances people argue online and even attack one another using abusive language. I understand the deliberations not to be constructive at all; they are just a waste of time hence I did not contribute (15/10/2014).

Most of the Interviewees acknowledged their use of these websites was just for reading news and other peoples' opinions but they did not use them for interaction. Another respondent a Law student commented:

I enjoyed posting my opinions anonymously online and criticised corruption of the government. But still there are things I could not talk about for fear of reprisal (28/10/2014).

It was clear from the responses that they visited news websites but the willingness to participate was hindered by the highlighted facts, one of them being that some did not regard the discussions as meaningful and some feared reprisal.

6.3.3 Citizen participation

Firstly the researcher wanted to make sure that the respondents understood what citizen participation meant. Interestingly, all of the respondents showed that they had a clear understanding of citizen participation and what it entailed. When asked about what he understood by the phrase citizen participation, a former Journalist explained:

Citizen participation entails the general public taking part in issues affecting them, playing an active role in shaping the way they are governed and in the formulation of legislations. In other words, it is about the involvement of the citizens in matters that concern their daily lives (19/01/2014).

In this regard, the government has to engage the public in order to achieve a democratic society. This also means that the government is not supposed to impose on the public, but rather through consultations be at par with the majority. Basically citizen participation demands a condition whereby citizens are empowered to take part and influence the way they are governed be it political, social and economic, through platforms that are afforded by the media and in this instance through the Internet. Another participant, a Lawyer who is a doctoral student responded to the same question by saying:

My understanding of citizen participation is that citizens get to be part and parcel of governance and decision making through social media platforms. This is through engaging in matters of national importance raised on government sites. It also means engaging Ministers in their individual capacity on the social platforms they post issues relating to governance. Citizen participation will thus be directly by responding to issues on government sites and indirectly by engaging individuals who are influential in the government in their personal capacity (21/02/2014).

All the participants undoubtedly showed that they have an understanding of what citizen participation is and what it requires. They understood that as citizens they have a say in every sphere of life be it political or socio-economic to mention but a few. It is however worth mentioning that most the respondents indicated that their participation in political matters in Zimbabwe was mostly limited to voting.

Having established the fact that the respondents understood what citizen participation was all about, the researcher was eager to enquire whether they participated in online socio-economic

and political deliberations that affected their day to day lives. A former Lecturer at one of the state universities had this to say:

I had absolutely no say in the governance of the country and I did not participate because I knew my views were never taken into consideration. Voting in elections did not give one a say as those in political office always represented their own interests. I always had better things to do than making contributions that did not make a mark. No one needed my voice so why should I contribute (29/11/2013).

Another interesting response from a Nurse who was in her late forties when asked whether she participated as a citizen was:

I only participated through voting during elections. Once you have a government in place it thinks for you. Elections are essentially a way of saying give us the mandate to think on your behalf (31/01/2014).

As evidently shown in these responses, most of the participants were of the opinion that participation in political deliberations was a waste of time because they felt that whether they participated or not, their views were not considered, hence their participation was in vain. As most of the respondents reiterated, citizen participation in Zimbabwe was mainly exercised through voting. However, an outstanding response came from a Lawyer worker who replied:

I voted for the party I wished to represent me and my interests, and also voted for or against suggested or proposed laws in the country's constitution. I participated in matters of governance through engaging individuals in governance on social media platforms especially those from the MDC (29/01/2014).

This shows that though most of the respondents regarded their participation as in vain, some were using the Internet for political deliberations though their percentage was low.

6.3.4 Participation in Legislation making process via the Internet

Several legislations that govern operations of different bodies are available on the different government websites. The researcher asked the participants whether citizens took part in the formulation of legislations and one of the interview respondents, a Pharmacist noted:

In principle yes but in practice no. The Members of Parliament by virtue of having a constituency their views equal those of the constituencies (27/02/2014).

Another confirming response from a female participant was:

Participation in formulation of legislations is partly or in theory. Some bills were passed by the government without consulting the general populace. The referendum was voted no and amendments were done and passed without people's say (25/11/2013).

What this meant was that the views of the members of parliament were taken to represent the views of the community at large. Most of the respondents agreed that minimal consultation was done before some bills were passed. In other circumstances there was no consultation at all. However, they were quick to point out that in most instances their views as citizens were mostly not incorporated. Asked whether the legislations were available online, only fifteen (15%) percent of the respondents were aware that they were online. As one participant a Journalist noted;

Of late the government tried to make bills available to citizens electronically though quite a significant number of them were not exposed to it, or were somewhat ignorant and did not realise the importance of the exercise. More so, the government takes time to update the electronic versions such that the ones available online might have been amended a long time ago but are not updated online (03/02/2014).

Responding to the same question, an emotional Teacher in his early forties had this to say:

Whether the legislations were available online or not, to me it did not change anything. Even if I accessed them I could not change anything. The best way was to ignore and let the government do as they please because taking part or not they would still do as they please (13/01/2014).

Most of the respondents (75%) said that they were not aware whether the legislations were available online and they were not concerned. This condition of things in Zimbabwe is as a result of frustrations on part of the citizens. In some cases citizens are ignorant of such things because of lack of Internet access which is mostly accessed by urban dwellers. However, whether they access Internet or not, some citizens have been frustrated by the way the government handles them and as a result they do not want to take part in political deliberations for fear of reprisals.

Consultation before bills are passed is essential in a democracy. The populace should be allowed to participate in the legislation making process. When asked whether citizens were consulted before legislations were passed, a Social work Lecturer reasoned:

Citizens were consulted but it was largely a tokenistic form of consultation that was done to sanitise decisions that would have been made already before the consultation process begins. Political considerations were what get to be taken into account so one's participation would not change anything as long as

the view challenged political interests entrenched in the corridors of power (12/02/2014).

In other words, consultation of citizens during the constitution making process and passing of bills was minimal. At the same time inclusion of the citizens' views also depended on the fact that the views were aligned with the preferred dogma. As a result, citizens were frustrated and shunned participation which was fruitless.

6.3.5 The participants' understanding of the role of Internet in promoting citizen participation

Most of the respondents acknowledge that the Internet might play an essential role in promoting citizen participation. As one of the respondents, a Teacher in her mid-thirties explained:

The Internet allows people to debate freely without fear of victimisation and retribution and the citizens are also exposed to a variety of information from different sources (15/11/2013).

On the same note, one of the participants a communication PhD student pointed out that:

The Internet has obviously impacted on 'being a citizen', looking at how the concept of citizenship is closely associated with public opinion formation. In this era of citizen journalism, where everyone has the capacity to write about what is happening around them in their areas on the Internet, the fate and quality of democracy has definitely been taken into the hands of the reading public. In that regard, questions of what we expect from the news as a citizenship medium, and questions of how citizenship is promoted and encouraged more generally are of paramount importance, and have been changed by the Internet (26/02/2014).

Most of the participants were aware that the Internet could provide a platform where citizens can engage in different discussions and of course expose the citizens to a wide variety of information sources. The Internet has opened up the platform to alternative voices which provide the public with different versions and analysis of events. In a way the Internet has managed to draw interest to a variety of issues that require attention.

To show that he was aware of the role the Internet can undertake in promoting citizen participation in the Zimbabwean democratisation process, a former Journalist explained:

The Internet could be used to listen decisively to the voices of the minority and the powerless. Since voting for views one is aligned to is part of a democracy, others do not have an opportunity to vote because of age or domicile at the time of voting. The Internet can afford those disadvantaged to

vote online. Views of the citizens are not stifled and there is no fear of reprisals because one would have aired their views. The Internet can also provide a platform for honesty since one can engage with the government anonymously without any fear and speak truth to authority (19/01/2014).

In other words the Internet can give a voice to the voiceless. Many citizens cannot use the platforms provided by the traditional media due to lack of resources or because they are not given the platform because they do not support the government ideology. Though many people might access the radio, citizens' participation in radio is only as receivers of messages and not as producers of those messages though many people can access the radio. The Internet might afford many citizens with the opportunity to air their views and participate but the economic limitations associated with it come into play especially that of access. In a way if applied in a permitting environment the Internet can empower the citizens and even those previously marginalised by the traditional media.

When asked about his perception of the contribution of the Internet in promoting citizen participation, a twenty-eight year old university student said:

The Internet could be beneficial to the public if the government could take an initiative by posting questionnaires requiring citizens' views and opening up on matters relating to governance. This can be done on social media platforms in a friendly environment. Online discussion forums could be used to further citizen participation in the governance system (09/01/2014).

This indicated that at least amongst the respondents some understood that the Internet could be possibly used to provide a platform in which the government could engage with citizens in such a manner that promotes two-way communication. Through the deliberations that can take place on social media citizens can post their views in a friendly environment. Thus the respondents acknowledged that the Internet could perform a significant part in advancing citizen participation in the development of democracy Zimbabwe.

Though most of the participants viewed the role that can be played by the Internet in a positive manner, one of the respondents a Researcher at a certain university cautioned the application of the Internet as conditional when he said:

Used properly it could be a powerful tool to enhance citizen participation but it is open to abuse. Views expressed on the Internet maybe those of teenagers who are always on the Internet and who may not be able to make informed decisions. Even non-citizens may participate. It also excludes a whole section of people especially the rural populace who are disadvantaged in so many ways such that they do not access the Internet. Hence, the Internet could be a powerful tool for good or the opposite. It depends on its use (05/11/2013).

Thus he viewed the role that can be played by the Internet in facilitating participation in Zimbabwe as conditional. What determines the outcomes of using the Internet relies on how it is employed.

Responding to the same question, a female Lawyer in her late thirties highlighted that:

The Internet could play an essential role in promoting citizen participation especially if the awareness of it could be ensured and the citizens both in the urban and rural areas would enlightened on the need and importance of their participation. In a way the Internet could increase the number of citizens who participate in important activities for instance, those who may not be able to access the physical ballot boxes due to geographical constraints could be able to cast their votes wherever they are and as a result the outcomes could be a truer picture of what the citizen body desires (27/02/2014).

Another interesting response on the same question from a postgraduate communication student was:

The Internet has definitely afforded the move from information scarcity to information abundance, a process which has provided access to more information than ever before. If information is the pre-requisite of knowledge, and if knowledge is power, other things remaining equal, this trend corresponds to a power-shift from the traditionally information-rich elite to the no longer so information-poor mass. It is in this way that everyone has access to information and can contribute to the public sphere (12/02/2014).

These responses indicated that some of the respondents had an understanding that the Internet could increase the access of information that the citizens required to make informed decisions and also augment the participation of citizens in deliberations that affect their governance.

6.3.6 How is the Internet being used in Zimbabwe to increase citizen participation?

Did you see the Internet as a major factor in improving democratic participation in Zimbabwe?

Mixed reactions emerged from this question. Thirteen respondents were quite clear the Internet has no major role to play in supporting the Zimbabwean democratic process. They all gave different reasons for their standpoints but one thing that was clear was that they seemed to agree that not everyone was as interested in politics and the media. Their assumption was that the Internet in Zimbabwe was firstly used for various other purposes, such as making financial transfers, entertainment, academic research, socialising and business transactions rather than for political reasons. One respondent a Law student in his late twenties pointed out that:

Politicians, particularly those from ZANU-PF were so traditionally minded and it was even suspicious if half the cabinet had email addresses or even well-versed with the use of Internet (11/02/2014).

Most of the respondents reiterated that people used Facebook, for example, to discuss issues related to their social lives. Zimbabweans, they claimed, were too tired of politics to be discussing it every day on the Internet. The Internet, they added, made it easier for people to communicate but it “could not decide what has to be discussed” as one of them said. Four respondents, however, gave the Internet a thumbs up. They said authoritarians would not withhold information as they had, in their view, historically done. As one of them, a Teacher, commented:

People with access were using it to share information on important issues of governance especially through social sites where different agendas were set and shared amongst citizens but it should be noted that access was limited to mostly the illiterate and urban dwellers (25/02/2014).

They highlighted that masses were being educated and made aware of prevailing injustices; people were using the Internet to post their views on issues of importance in the development, policy and governance sphere. These views were sometimes used to inform actions that happened in the country. They also mentioned that citizens were debating current issues on social networks and also websites established outside Zimbabwe. Nonetheless, it was also pointed out that the citizens were abusing the privilege by attacking others on the Internet and also by using vulgar language.

6.3.7 The Internet and freedom of expression in Zimbabwe

One of the questions that the interview participants were asked was whether they had freedom to express themselves when they were deliberating online. A thirty-six year old female Lawyer explained:

You could only express yourself freely if you were conforming to the ruling party’s ideas. Dissenting voices could land some people into trouble except when one was a known politician then they would expect him or her to express his views in line with his political persuasion (17/11/2013).

Though the Internet affords a platform for public deliberations, most of the respondents said that they were not free to deliberate on political issues online except when the matter deliberated was in favour of the ruling elite. It was easier to contribute one’s views if one was aligned to the ruling party’s ideology. This shows that freedom of expression online was

restricted to some extent in Zimbabwe. Another respondent, a 33year old communication student, when asked if she had the freedom to express herself on the Internet had this to say:

Those who did not fear anything and had the guts to express themselves did so without fear, but there were those who still fear the consequences of expressing themselves, given the nature of the laws in the country (08/11/2013).

This means that the citizens had to weigh the consequences of discussing politics online, or the sensitivity of the topic under discussion before they would engage in debates online. When Zimbabwean citizens who participated in online discussions did not anticipate a serious punishment for engaging in certain topics online, he or she would not refrain from posting articles online that would be critical of the government. Nonetheless when citizens would sense the possibility of serious retribution associated with online deliberations, they would stay away from contributing to any online debates.

Another respondent, an Accounts clerk, when asked if he had freedom to express himself as a citizen said:

In other matters yes, but not much in the political circles, however the social networks were becoming more and more powerful avenues for self-expression. The only question was if these messages were hitting the right audience (29/01/2014).

Interestingly, a male university Lecturer in his mid-forties responded to the same question in this way:

There was a false sense of freedom. We had freedom to express ourselves but sometimes there was no freedom after we expressed ourselves. In short freedom of expression came with serious consequences (19/02/2014).

Most of the respondents agreed that they did not have the liberty to express themselves online. It was there on paper but practically limited to a greater extent. Citizens could be free to deliberate on matters that were not so sensitive politically. They would not cross the line, otherwise criticising the ruling elite resulted in negative consequences. Moreover, as one of the respondents commented above, citizens deliberated and aired their views but it was not clear if those concerned followed up on the comments.

6.3.8 Impediments of Internet use for citizen participation in Zimbabwe

One of the respondents a Lecturer was quick to highlight one of the constraints of using the Internet to enhance citizen participation as:

The unintended participants may participate for instance, non-nationals and also those below the age of eighteen may participate in legislative issues. Participation via the Internet also excludes all those who do not have access to it. Most of the citizens pay to access Internet and to use it for some government survey seems a waste of their money especially when there is no guarantee that one's views will be considered (02/02/2014)

Because the age of those who engage on online deliberations cannot be detected it becomes a challenge in matters where the issue of age is important. For instance, as highlighted by the respondent, those under the age of eighteen are not allowed to participate in legislative making. But because the Internet cannot detect the age of the user such citizens can participate. On the same note, the respondent also highlighted that because the citizens pay to access Internet, using it to engage in political debates when they are aware that their views will not be considered make them to shy away from participating.

Most of the respondents highlighted that lack of Internet access was one of the prime impediments to citizen participation in Zimbabwe. As a forty-four year old high school teacher enlightened:

Not all people have access to the Internet. The majority of the citizens are poor and live in the rural areas where they do not access the Internet because of network problems, lack of resources and lack of electricity (23/02/2014)

This means that many of the citizens were left out of the online deliberations even if they would have desired to participate. Their views and contributions are not incorporated and as a result they are left out in important decisions that affect their day to day living.

The issue of lack of access to Internet was explained in different ways by the respondents as one of them a communication PhD student explained:

Access to the Internet was also denied by government which was somehow wary of citizens using communications tools. While some governments are keenly trying to increase ICT penetration, others like Zimbabwe tend to block or monitor citizens' Internet usage or spy on their online communication. Another thing is that Internet service providers and Internet cafes were obliged to hand over data on customers' online activities to the governments upon request. Such government intervention schemes might dampen those who might be engaging in transparent online activities (22/11/2013).

As she clearly explained, because the government interfered in citizens online deliberations, the citizens were afraid of reprisal and refrained from participating online. In other words the citizens were not free to air their views and criticise the government and this was a setback on the usage of Internet to augment citizen involvement in matters of governance.

One more respondent, an Accounts Clerk, had this to say when asked whether there were limitations correlated to the use of Internet for citizen participation in Zimbabwe:

Yes, Internet access was still privy to a few, mostly urban dwellers. More so people were still reserved on how far they could express themselves for fear of being victimised. Most Internet users rarely looked into governance and legislation matters; they were more into social networks (11/02/2014).

He reiterated what had been said by others on the issue of access but went on to mention the problem that most Internet users were still using it to engage in social deliberations and not on issues of governance and legislation.

Apart from the constraints mentioned above another Journalist and a Pharmacist raised the following issues:

Ministries did not post their views for citizens to contribute using the platform. In addition, some online news publications tended to publish falsehoods and this made it difficult for citizens to rely on online communication (20/02/2014).

Poor network or Internet facilities and services, abuse of the Internet especially by the adolescents and the probability of hacking and editing of the citizens' decisions made citizens shun online political deliberations (27/02/2014).

The researcher also enquired from the respondents whether they viewed the Internet as an ideal tool for citizen participation in Zimbabwe. In response to that question one of the Journalists retorted:

Yes in the sense that it provided an escape route especially for those who were concerned about the day to day issues affecting their country and were really eager to participate but could not get the platform in the traditional media. With the situation at hand where Zimbabweans are scattered across the globe, people can still deliberate on crucial matters through various network groups, individual postings, share ideas and debate on issues pertaining the governance of the country. It is also assuring to note that some polity hands are also part of the forums and the citizens are given a forum to air their views, praise and criticise where necessary (29/01/2014).

Responding to the same question on whether the Internet is an ideal tool for engaging citizens on political deliberations in Zimbabwe, another participant a post graduate communication student commented:

Of course, the interactive nature of the Internet does make it possible for the widely dispersed citizens to share the information they need to carry out their different businesses as well as that of the government itself. It is the Internet

that is the most accessible tool to enter into the political realm, and therefore has given the citizens the audacity to voice and retrieve at least some of the power over their own lives and goods that have been previously abused by those in authority. However, considering the political environment of the country, the Internet is not and cannot be fully utilised for citizen participation (23/02/2014).

Another participant a Teacher, responding to the same question had this to say:

Yes. In a country where people are punished for expressing different political opinions the Internet is an ideal tool for citizen participation. This is so because it allows one to hide his identity if he does not want to be exposed. It reaches a wide audience at once and allows one's opinions to be viewed by many other citizens who share the same views (07/11/2013).

One third of the respondents viewed the Internet as an ideal tool to enhance citizen participation in Zimbabwe. As stated in their responses, they regarded the Internet as the best alternative since it was difficult for citizens express their views in the mainstream media. Because of the wide dispersion of the Zimbabweans all over different countries and also the interactive nature of the Internet, some respondents acknowledged that its use could be ideal to bring citizens together and deliberate on issues that affect their country. In addition the fact that they can share their opinions with a lot of other citizens despite their location makes the Internet suitable as a tool to enhance public participation. However the respondents also highlighted that considering the political environment of the country, the Internet cannot be fully utilised for citizen participation.

On the other hand were participants who viewed the same question differently. Two thirds of the respondents who took part in the interviews viewed the Internet as not ideal as a tool to enhance the participation of citizens in deliberations that takes place between the governed and those in power in Zimbabwe. One of the interesting responses from a Researcher at one of the local universities was:

Not in Zimbabwe, maybe in other developing countries. Everyone is trying to survive and sitting on the Internet to make one's voice heard would not be a priority (20/02/2014)

Another respondent a Teacher argued so strongly that the Internet is not ideal as a tool for citizen participation in Zimbabwe. He contended that:

The Zimbabwean community cannot speak with one voice. There are so many sell outs around such that whenever one suggests something instead of other citizens supporting the idea, they submit your name to the authorities and as a

result you get punished. Because people belong to different political parties, they cannot speak with one voice (11/02/2014).

This has a negative impact on citizen participation. Citizens are no longer at liberty to air their views for fear that they will be handed over to authorities. There are so many factions even within one party such that members of the same party cannot agree on one thing. As a result, citizen participation suffers.

Commenting on the same question, some of the different responses that came from the participants were:

It was not the ideal tool since a significant fraction of the citizens were not yet acquainted with the technologies and that the services leave a lot to be desired in terms of efficiency and robustness(14/11/2013).

No, it is just a lot of hot air, we need action on the ground and not on the Internet, democracy cannot be attained through the Internet only (29/11/2013).

No, because even if people give suggestions on Internet they are never taken seriously or taken into consideration (23/02/2014).

Not exactly, looking at the percentage of the population that can access Internet which stands at just below fifty percent as compared to around seventy percent of the population who live in rural areas where there is minimal or no access (23/02/2014).

Most of the respondents agreed that considering the fact that most of the citizens do not have access to the Internet implies that it is not ideal for enhancing citizen participation. Because the larger population is rural based applying the Internet to augment citizen participation means that those who are mostly in needy will be left out.

Finally the researcher enquired whether there were any special skills or special training needed for citizens to be able to use the Internet for citizen participation. In reply to this enquiry, a thirty-three year old PhD communication student stated:

Yes of course, there is a majority who do not know how to access the Internet in the first place despite having the means to do so, for example, using the cell phone. Some citizens have Internet enabled cell phones but due to lack of knowledge on how to get on to the Internet, they only use them for making and receiving calls. People also need to be computer literate (27/02/2014).

Thus she believes that there is need for citizens to be computer literate and know how to access the Internet. People might have gadgets that are Internet enabled like some smart phones but still do not know how to get on to the Internet such that they end up using the cell phone for making calls and receiving text messages only.

However, most of the respondents view the issue of skills in a different way. Eighty percent of the respondents reiterated that there are no special skills required for one to be able to use the Internet. One respondent, a female Lawyer spelled this out clearly when she said:

Not exactly special skills but people need to be trained to access certain sites. Otherwise access to the Internet is quite simple for the averagely intelligent people. It is just a matter of exposure; most of the required skills can be learnt as one uses it (09/02/2014).

In addition to the above opinion, a Social worker in his mid-thirties responding to the same question commented:

Not really because people are social beings. When a facility comes into existence they tend to gain knowledge from one another on how to use it. There are millions of Zimbabweans who were using the Internet on their mobile phones without having received any form of formal training but just from learning from others who had the knowledge (29/01/2014).

Hence, though twenty percent of the respondents were of the opinion that in order for citizens to make use of the Internet they need skills on how to access and use the Internet, most of the respondents (eighty percent) viewed the issue of skills as not really serious. They highlighted that just learning the basics from others will suffice if one was really interested in using the Internet.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings from the interviews and the documents. The interviews revealed some confounding and compromised views and attitudes of the citizens towards the use of Internet for citizen participation in Zimbabwe. The findings indicated their patterns of Internet use, their understanding of citizen participation and the role that the Internet can play in augmenting citizen participation. Moreover, their views on freedom of expression online in Zimbabwe were also presented, whether they view the Internet as an ideal tool for public participation and also the constraints associated with the use of Internet for citizen participation in Zimbabwe. In addition, analysis of the policy document and legislations has shown how the government has made use of legislations to control the use of ICTs to enhance democracy. In the next chapter the researcher discusses and analyses the findings presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 7

INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Until Twitter is relevant to my grandmother in Binga then social media is irrelevant. Fungai Tichawangana

7.1 Introduction

This chapter interprets and analyses the findings of this study. It integrates the data gathered through the interviews and documents with the literature reviewed previously in Chapter 3 and the theoretical discussion in Chapter 2. The discussion includes an interpretation of the results as well as a comparison with and contrast to other related studies referred elsewhere in this study. Through the information obtained from the respondents it is evident that citizens are engaging in online deliberations via the Internet in Zimbabwe although the use of Internet for political deliberations is still low and is dependent on several factors.

One of the greatest advantages of the Internet is the ability to allow people to assemble, even when they are geographically dispersed, and communicate with several individuals at the same time, in an affordable manner (Steenkamp, 2011:2). The location of citizens is no longer essential for citizens to engage in deliberations, what is now important “is the location of the site, in other words the site is the place where citizens meet and interact online for example the location for the members of the MDC virtual community would be the MDC website or the MDC Facebook page” (ibid.). Though the use of Internet may vary from place to place and from group to group, still it is possible to draw at least some primary conclusions regarding its role in advancing citizen participation based on the experiences to date.

The application of the Internet for political purposes could still be less substantial than its role in the arena, however in many instances activists are increasingly using the Internet to connect each other and rally for specific purposes, whether it is in communicating with chosen representatives or planning civic demonstrations (Steenkamp, 2011) The former USA Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton (2010:3) advocated for the promotion of Internet access as an essential element of United States foreign policy, affirming its role in facilitating the discovery of new facts and putting pressure on governments to be more answerable.⁹

Nonetheless, Grojec (2013:7) contends that “the effects of the Internet on democracy are not very clear as they have been made out to be and the increasing worldwide popularity of the

⁹ Hilary Clinton, “Remarks on Internet Freedom,” *U.S. Department of State* (2010): 1–9, Available: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/01/135519.htm>

Internet has made this supposition all the more dangerous”. Below follows the interpretation and analysis of this study’s findings on the use of Internet to enhance citizen participation in Zimbabwe.

7.2 Citizen participation and citizenship

Allegedly the application of ICTs and the Internet in particular has been understood to be a “remedy for curing the perceived democratic ails” (Henrik, 2013:3). Several scholars propose that the Internet will possibly assist in revitalising democracy by allowing greater interaction between citizens and governments in the quest to ensure a booming democracy (Coleman & Blumler, 2009; Loader & Mercea, 2012 cited in Henrik, 2013:3). Calista et al., (2010) and Seggaard (2010) note that some governments have been enthusiastic to implement e-democratic solutions to strengthen their democratic credentials and this solution has also been tried in the several countries in the West as well as in Africa (Torpe & Nielsen, 2004; Haug, 2007; Olsen & Solstad, 2012). Nonetheless, one of the principal issues is the extent to which the governments encapsulate the prospects offered by the Internet and related ICTs to implement measures that empower the citizens to get involved in the political decision-making (Henrik, *ibid.*).

The findings of this study reveal that the Zimbabweans understand very well what citizen participation is all about and what it entails. Interestingly, all of the respondents showed that they had a clear understanding of citizen participation and what it demands. They explained that the government has to engage the public in order to achieve a democratic society. This also means that the government is not supposed to impose on the public, but rather through consultations be at par with the majority. Basically citizen participation entails a condition where citizens are empowered to take part and influence the way they are governed be it political, social and economic, through platforms that are afforded by the media and in this instance through the Internet. They understood that as citizens they have a say in every sphere of life be it political, socio-economic to mention but a few. Moreover, the ICT policy stipulates that ICTs should be employed to enhance “participation in the decision making processes by the citizens, e.g. formulation and implementation of economic and social policies, and for making the government more accountable, transparent and effective” (Government of Zimbabwe ICT Policy, 2005:19). It is however worth stating that most of the respondents indicated that their participation in political matters in Zimbabwe is mostly limited to voting.

Most of the participants were of the opinion that participation in political deliberations is a waste of time because they felt that whether they participate or not, their views are not considered, hence their participation is in vain. As most of the respondents reiterated, citizen participation in Zimbabwe is mainly exercised through voting. Notably, a point of emphasis is the fact that voting is part of citizen participation but is not all. In support of this Mutsvairo (2013) argues that citizen participation should not be ill conceived but should be a process that does not consist only of making voting choices but holding politicians responsible for the decisions they make. In reality voting should come after a series of deliberations in which citizens discuss matters affecting them and come up with decisions that require voting. Concurring with this view Ani (2013:207) argues that:

Deliberation, beyond mere voting, should be central to decision making and that, for a decision to be legitimate, it must be preceded by deliberation, not merely the aggregation of pre-existing fixed preferences. I agree with arguments that when adequate justifications are made for claims/demands/conclusions, deliberation has the potential to have a salutary effect on people's opinions, transform/ evolve preferences, better inform judgments/voting, lead to increasingly 'common good' decisions, have moral educative power, place more burden of account-giving on public officers, and furnish subjects/losers/outvoted with justifications for collectively binding decisions.

As noted in the above assertion, deliberation is fundamental to decision making. Prior to voting, citizens should be given a platform to deliberate on issues, weigh and examine the motives for a decision to be made. In other words, it is a careful consideration of a situation such that citizens make informed decisions. Engaging in deliberations does not mean that all citizens will have to agree on the same views but that citizens are given a chance to air their different views and being listened to such that at the end of it all they understand why their views some views holds more water than others. Deliberation is principal in the conception of the Habermasian public sphere which informs the deliberative democracy theory (see chapter 2). In other words, deliberation concerns consensus decision making and or majority rule. It also implies having representatives to sincerely debate on legislation, ensuring that unfair distribution of power does not happen.

For a decision to be legitimate and democratic, deliberation of issues should come first and not just the aggregation of preferences that occurs in voting. In other words, authentic deliberation should first occur, one that is free from misrepresentations of unequal political power. Citizens should be given a platform to deliberate on issues until they reach consensus

so as to make informed decisions, and if this fails, voting can be done using majority rule. Thus through the platform provided by the Internet the citizens “need to debate more thoroughly with and concerning their representatives to make better-informed choices about them, as well as about other matters of public interest” (Ani, 2013:207). Nonetheless, as most of the participants voiced out, in the Zimbabwean political arena, the citizens are not participating fully in deliberations because they are not being afforded the platform to do so.

The relationship between the media, the citizens and the government is best described by the notion of citizenship which has been based on at least four assumptions, from the ancient Greek city states, namely that:

Citizens are interested in politics and must be well informed; citizens have equal rights to speak and participate in decision-making; and all decisions are submitted to public discussion (Kivikuru, 2006:56 cited in Banda, 2006:3).

This means that the public should be able to access relevant information such that they would be able to partake in deliberations that affect them and their views incorporated in decision making processes. In turn this construction of citizenship is informed by the concept of the public sphere as postulated by Habermas who conceptualises the public sphere as an open terrain in which citizens freely discuss matters of public concern (ibid.) (Habermas, 1991; see chapter 2). As Banda (2006:4) argued, Habermas’ notion of the public sphere has its own deficits, for instance, who defines rational debate? Moreover, it is not clear what the acceptable degree of involvement is and also whether only one public sphere exists. However, it is crucial to note that Habermas’ theory is just an explanatory device. What is significant is the fact that the Habermasian public sphere has assisted in constructing “citizenship more in terms of an active human being endowed with freedoms and rights to participate in political deliberation” (Scammel and Semetko, 2000 cited in Banda, 2006:3).

The above construct of citizenship as explained by Kivikuru (2006) together with the concept of the public sphere as explained by Habermas (1991) clearly show how citizen participation is limited in Zimbabwe. For citizens to engage in deliberations, they need to be well informed. Moreover, the citizens need to have the freedom to express themselves and participate in decision making. They need to criticise those in office freely without fear of reprisal such that those in office are held accountable. This view corresponds well with Haider (2009) who argues that “equitable information access and freedom of expression are essential aspects of a truly democratic society.” The decisions that leaders make should be

submitted to public discussion (Kivikuru, 2006). Contrary to the conditions stipulated above the Zimbabwean consultation process in most cases is just in principle but not practical. As indicated by the findings of this study presented in the previous chapter, in most instances the citizens are not given a chance to deliberate on some issues and are not free to express themselves. Thus, even though the ICT policy stipulates the use of new technology to augment citizen participation, the implementation thereof is lacking.

It has been argued that active participation and citizenship are mutually reinforcing conditions of a truly democratic society (Barber, 1984; Flew, 1997). Citizen participation can therefore be taken as a measure of the degree of democratisation of a particular country. In other words the way the government engage the citizens is a clear indication of whether the government is democratic or autocratic. Furthermore, better policy outcomes are seen as the product of “a never-ending process of deliberation, decision and action” (Barber, 1984:151). This means that the more the government engage citizens in political, social and economic deliberations, the more the citizens will be receptive to the ultimate decisions because they would be indirectly involved in the process of making those decisions.

The United Nations observes that “active participation requires time to inform oneself about issues, attend meetings and vote” (cited in Chikerema, 2013:87). This implies that active involvement goes further than merely choosing from alternatives that have been already decided on. Active involvement means that choices are made after thorough discussions of all possible avenues. On the other hand “passive participation largely pertains to such choice making and even manipulation of the masses by those who will have critical decisions in the first place” (ibid.). Because citizens are not given room to deliberate on issues that concerns them they have come to shun politics and have lost interest in the programmes of national interest and as a result the democratisation process is at stake. This view is supported by the United Nations (1967) which notes that “if people are continuously expected to be passive recipients of government programmes, policy and projects, they tend to shun participation and lose interest in the programmes which lead to failure and underdevelopment of local communities” (cited in Chikerema, 2013:87). To some extent, this is what is happening in Zimbabwe.

7.3 Citizen participation in the constitution making process

Several authors argue that the media emulate the society in which it operates. In other words, the weaknesses and strengths of the society are reproduced in the media. The media can take

the role of both an ally and a foe, in the constitution and legislation making process. If citizens are not involved in the constitution making process, they are not likely to be satisfied with the outcomes. According to Saki, (2010) “extensive consultation, publicity and education around both process and content of the constitution and legislations are fundamental for the purposes of legitimacy.” In this process the media’s role is just as central as that of the citizens’ participation. A constitution is the Supreme Law of the land; it is the body of rules or laws written which determines the organisation of government, the distribution of powers of various organs of government and the general principles on which these powers are exercised (Constitution of Zimbabwe). This important document may contain mention of the fundamental rights of citizens, functions of different organs of the government, their power and mutual understanding, the procedure of the amendment of the constitution among others.

The constitution making process is understood to be an opportunity to build consensus between the government and the citizens, and to resolve major differences. However, the constitution making process in Zimbabwe left most of the citizens unsatisfied. The constitution makers should be committed to a credible and transparent process where the concerns of the citizens are consulted and their views are taken account of. Instead of consulting the citizens the government does not educate the citizens of the contents of the constitution, and yet they compel them to vote.

This implies that the citizens vote for something that they do not understand and something that has already been decided upon, the consultation is done for formality’s sake. The constitution making process involves the constitution makers to actively listen to, accurately capturing and analysing, and seriously considering the views of the citizens.

Of importance to note is the fact that the interval between the agreement on the draft constitution and the referendum was very short. Makumbe (2009) noted that at the beginning of the constitution making exercise the watchfulness of civil society was to be fundamental if a rightfully democratic constitution was to be drafted and embraced. However, civil society organisations such as the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), the International Socialist Organisation (ISO) and the Democracy Institute (DI) among others that insisted for more copies of the draft and more time to be given to the people to analyse the draft were demonised and deprived of adequate media space to voice their concerns (Zembe & Masunda, 2013). In regard to this Sachikonye (2013:181) notes that there were only six

weeks in which to distribute copies of the draft and for voters to study them before the referendum on 16 March and there was limited time to debate the contents of the Constitution and the distribution of draft copies was inadequate. In like manner, Zembe and Masunda (2013: 6) argue that the citizens were not given adequate time to read through and familiarise with the Draft Constitution and in addition, the Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee (COPAC) produced insufficient copies of the document due to financial constraints. One regional observer mission stated that:

Some members of the public in remote areas decried not having had access to the actual COPAC draft constitution on which they were supposed to decide during the referendum. COPAC distributed about seventy thousand (70 000) copies of the Constitution as against more than five million voters. Some members claimed that most of the information in the Draft Constitution had not been translated into their vernacular languages ... (SADC 2013:11).

On the one hand most of the citizens did not have access to the draft constitution because the copies distributed were very few, on the other hand those who got the copies of the draft constitution were not given enough time to study and understand and debate the contents thereof before voting. Ihonvbere (2000) reinforce this point when he argues that in most constitution making processes in Africa, an overwhelming majority of the general public never see the constitution and they never have the opportunity to study and understand it.

Moreover, some of those who got the draft constitution could not understand it because it was written in English. Though the level of literacy is high in Zimbabwe, using local languages would be beneficial to a number of citizens. Despite all these unfavourable conditions, the citizens were compelled to vote. In other words, what this simply means is that the involvement of the citizens in debating and contributing their views in the constitution was not considered important, what was important was their 'yes' vote. Manyeruke and Hamauswa, (2013:14) note that the outreach consultation meetings that were envisioned to gather the views of the people were largely characterised by chaos and struggle for political power and influence as political parties devised strategies to advance their own political views. This implies that instead of educating the citizens on the contents of the constitution, the political parties were busy advancing their political ideologies and fighting for followers.

Manyeruke and Hamauswa (2013:127) contend that the majority of Zimbabweans are not in control of the constitution making process, instead the constitution is a product of protracted negotiations amongst the most influential political elements and not a people-driven constitution. This means that the views that are mostly represented were not from the general

populace but from a few influential people. In regard to this Zembe and Masunda (2013:5) argue that in Zimbabwe's case, the Global Political Agreement (GPA) leaders created the impression that the process was to be people driven and participatory but the reality was that the product was a private and negotiated truce by the GPA parties, and its making was not different from its predecessor, the Lancaster constitution, which Sachikonye (2004) labels as no more than a compromise between conflicting interests. Zembe and Masunda (2013:6) contend that whilst all the GPA political parties made use of state apparatus and institutions like the public media to campaign for a yes vote, those who campaigned for a no vote were not granted the platform to do the same.

The reality on the ground is that the people of Zimbabwe have little say and control in the current constitution making process. Political parties are transporting and carrying out their continuing differences and scuffles under the cloak of the constitution making process. This was largely an outcome of an implicit strategy by ZANU-PF and its war-veteran allies to intimidate speakers during outreach meetings to follow the 'party line' on such issues as presidential powers, checks and balances and devolution (*ibid*). A major constraint was that free expression and frank debate were discouraged, even penalised, by these elements. The state media, especially radio and television, but also some newspapers, were biased in their reporting on the process, largely backing a ZANU-PF position (Manyeruke and Hamauswa, 2013).

Madhuku (2010:14) notes that "constitution-making involves the direct participation of the people through a referendum, thus reducing the role of the legislature to the mere formality of enacting the constitution as approved by the people." What this suggests is that those guiding and steering the constitution making process should ensure that citizens are consulted and that their approval is safeguarded in the whole process. As such, "every Zimbabwean citizen whether residing within or outside the country should take part in the constitution making process in order for the final document to be referred to as people driven" (Manyeruke and Hamauswa, 2013:200). Nevertheless, the Zimbabwean citizens living outside the country were only given a chance to contribute to the constitution making but denied the privilege to vote. Thus one can argue that whilst the citizens residing outside the country were empowered by being granted the chance to contribute their views. In the constitution, they were disempowered by being denied the right to vote. Knowing very well that the citizens living outside Zimbabwe would vote 'no' they made sure they are not allowed to vote. The centres for consultation outside Zimbabwe for instance, in South Africa, meetings were held

in Johannesburg and Cape Town only and yet Zimbabweans are all over. Consultations could have been made easier by making use of the Internet. Zimbabwean citizens could have contributed in large numbers online.

Hence, one is forced to conclude that voting only is not enough as a way of citizen involvement in the making of the constitution, when the citizens' views are not incorporated and more importantly when the citizens do not know what they are voting for. Instead of forcing the citizens to vote, the government should educate and inform the citizens about what the constitution entails and provide a platform for them to deliberate and contribute their views. Instead the citizenry should have been made aware of the contents of the constitution so that they make an informed decision of whether to accept or deny the constitution or make alterations to the constitution. Moreover, the constitution making process includes providing feedback about how decisions were made and how views from people were being considered.

Remarkably, during the 2013 Constitution making process nothing much was done in an effort to make the public aware of the significance of the constitution. As Manyeruke and Hamauswa (2013:211) posit, "the media could have been another viable alternative channel for the public to express their views regarding what they wanted to be included in the envisioned new charter." In addition raising awareness could have been done through the radio since it is widely accessible in the country. "Regrettably in the three years since the formation of the inclusive government [under the GPA], the media remained under siege by the state via repressive legislation" (Zhangazha, 2011:7 cited in Manyeruke and Hamauswa, 2013:211). This resulted in the majority of the citizens not participating and in victory for the ruling party.

7.4 Involvement of citizens in legislative making process

Several legislations that govern operations of different bodies are available on the different government websites. The study revealed that citizen participation in making of laws is just in theory. The Members of Parliament by virtue of having a constituency their views equal those of the constituencies.

What this means is that the views of the members of parliament are taken to represent the views of the public. Most of the respondents agreed that minimal consultation is done before some bills are passed. However, they were quick to point out that in most instances their

views as citizens were mostly not incorporated. Most of the respondents were not aware that legislations were available online.

Of late the government has tried to make bills available to citizens electronically though quite a significant number of them are not exposed to it, or are somewhat ignorant and do not realise the importance of the exercise. More so, the government takes time to update the electronic versions such that the ones available online might have been amended a long time ago but are not updated online.

Besides being unaware of the availability of the legislations online most of the respondents also reiterated that they were not concerned. This condition of things in Zimbabwe is as a result of frustrations on part of the citizens. In some cases citizens are ignorant of such things because of lack of Internet access which is mostly accessed by urban dwellers who constitutes only thirty-three percent of the whole population. According to the World Bank (2015) Zimbabwe has a population of about 15, 576, 901 people. Of that total population 10, 290, 800 (67%) live in the rural areas whilst 5, 286, 101 (33%) people live in urban areas. Approximately 6,759,032 people or 47, 5% of the total population access the Internet (Internet World Stats, 2014). Considering the fact that Internet is widely accessed in the urban areas, it is most probable that less than 20 % of the rural population has Internet access. With that in mind, it is almost impossible that the Internet could boost the democratisation process in Zimbabwe if the majority of the citizens do not have access to it. Consequently if their views are left out in the political deliberations then it means they are not represented. However, whether they access Internet or not, some citizens have been frustrated by the way the government deals with them and as a result they do not want to take part in political deliberations anymore for fear of reprisals.

Consultation before bills are passed is essential in a democracy. The citizens should take part in the legislation process. The findings of this research indicated that citizens are consulted but it is largely tokenistic form of consultation that is done to sanitise decisions that would have been made already before the consultation process begins. Political considerations are what get to be taken into account so one's participation will not change anything as long as the view challenges political interests entrenched in the corridors of power. On this note, Sachikonye et al. (2007:54) corroborate that "citizens are hardly consulted on legislative issues as Ministers of Parliament (MPs) tend to concentrate on projects that deliver political capital to them."

In other words, consultation of citizens during the passing of bills is minimal. At the same time inclusion of the citizens' views also depends on the fact that the views align with the preferred dogma. As a result, citizens are frustrated and shun participation which is fruitless. Hence, to some extent the government is to be blamed for not doing its part in making the citizens aware. On the other hand to some extent the citizens are to be blamed also for lack of interest in matters of public interest.

Sachikonye et.al (2007:54) confirms that "Zimbabwe has no clearly defined policy on development, democracy and human rights though it is a signatory to international human rights conventions like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Convention, the Convention against Torture, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, among others." Of interest is the fact that Zimbabwe is a member of these conventions but not out of choice, the government signed up to these conventions after citizens have lobbied it to do so and in line with international norms" (ibid.) The implication is that citizen participation in the formulation of policies is very limited.

7.5 Social networks and citizen participation

Most of the respondents indicated that they accessed the Internet mainly through their mobile phones and some via laptops too. The Internet was used for diverse purposes amongst the respondents. For instance the respondents used the Internet for academic purposes, reading news, connecting with family and friends through e-mail, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Whatsapp and even for entertainment purposes. It emanated from the findings that all of the respondents have a knowledge and understanding of the social networks. It was also clear from the findings that most respondents did not pursue one activity, but performed different activities at the same time. The amount of time spend on the Internet by the participants ranged from one to three hours per day. In addition, it also emerged from the findings that all the respondents (100%) belong to social networks. This is a clear indication that social networks are frequently used and have become part of people's daily lives. Nevertheless, most of the participants denied using the social networks for political deliberations.

Regardless of the fact that most government officials do not open up for citizens to participate actively in decision making, some government officials do so. Several government officials are found on social media platforms and they engage citizens in meaningful ways (Mutsvairo, 2013:188). One example is the Minister of environment and water resources, Mr

Kasukuwere who holds a Sunday evening discussion on Facebook on matters relating to his ministry. Former Ministers, David Coltart, Tendai Biti, Obet Gutu and Nelson Chamisa are amongst others who engaged citizens on the Internet (Mutsvairo, 2013). Ahead of the 2008 elections, opposition candidate Simba Makoni, maintained a profile on social networking site Facebook, and the then opposition senator David Coltart, reached out to voters on his personal website to gauge their sentiments on the potential boost from the Web (ibid). They were equally optimistic. The efforts of these government officials who employed the Internet to engage the citizens were sustained by Zimbabweans abroad who sought to use their Internet spotlight to educate others back home (ibid).

The manner in which social network sites function is not restricted to communication and displaying profiles amongst network members only; they have since opened their interfaces to third party applications, leading to an increase in what users can do on social network sites (CLG, 2008). For instance, newspaper headline applications can be put on social networks to allow users to navigate to the main newspaper site from their network (Maher, 2007). For example, the *Mail & Guardian* posts headline stories on Facebook thereby giving interested Facebook users a link to the main newspaper site for more news stories.

Blogs have grown into a common feature in social network sites too. They provide comments or news on certain subjects and usually combine texts, images and other links to other blogs (Blood, 2000). Through the use of blogs citizens can debate and discuss current issues; supporting the flow of informational resources within network members. In a way, the nature of social networking sites has gone further than supporting social communication to the point of being a platform that can allow for the flow of resources that endow people in different ways (Moyo, 2010). For example, when mainstream media failed to operate at their maximum in an eventful period such as the 2008 presidential elections, blogs proved themselves ideal for sharing information in the complex political situation and in no time after political rallies took place posts on the events would be made available to the public (Moyo, 2010).

Through blogs, Zimbabwe's recent elections have been discussed in detail to the government's ire and bloggers have enthusiastically taken on such media roles such as monitoring, expanded people's access to information and opened up public debate in a manner that traditional media have failed to do because of government interference (Ndhlovu 2009:7). Though most of the participants in this study indicated that they do not use Internet

for political issues, a few indicated they do. However, some of the literature used indicated that most of the citizens who engage in such debates on blogs are out of the country.

In addition to being watchdogs of the state, blogs are also monitoring mainstream media, pointing out their distortions and blunders. Zimbabwean blogging has become an outlet for those whose voices have been silenced in the past. Moreover, blogs have become a form of emancipation for the side-lined whose opinions are not in line with mainstream editorial policies (ibid). One may conclude that despite still being for the elite, technological culture has taken centre stage in the politics of news production and dissemination especially by Zimbabweans in exile.

The Zimbabwean exiles are playing a prominent role in trying to advance democracy at home through the use of Internet. There are several websites run by Zimbabwean exiles and these are indeed helping foster political participation. These websites are empowering Zimbabwean expatriates in different countries to participate in political and social activism and have introduced a completely different and unparalleled information-gathering and information-sharing continuum (Moyo, 2007:90). However, according to the findings of this study these websites are not helping much to enhance citizen participation in the country's political processes. One cannot fault the websites or the brains behind them for failing to do their work. There are several reasons why they fall short of achieving their goals, if encouraging the masses to participate in political engagement is indeed one of their aims. Zimbabwe has a distinctive political context, one that is often misread by people, especially and perhaps mostly, by those who think they have the solutions.

The Internet, it seems, offers plenty of opportunities in terms of mobilising, informing and disseminating information to the citizens in Zimbabwe. However, when applied to the situation in Zimbabwe its potential has not been fully exploited. Nonetheless there is no doubt that to a lesser extent, it has changed the dynamics of participation (Mutsvairo, 2012). Of great importance to note is the fact that Zimbabwe is a completely different case from Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East. In general, even though they have information about what is going on around them, the majority of Zimbabweans are afraid to even participate in a peaceful demonstration (Mutsvairo, 2012) because they fear the consequences of doing so.

As the findings indicate, new media thus empowered Zimbabweans with information, but political participation requires more than just access to information. While they may be exposed to information, the biggest threat to full and enhanced participation lay in their

ability to overcome fear of the unknown. As Mutsvairo (2012) posited, seemingly the citizens are fighting and perhaps winning a cyber-war against Mugabe, but that does not change the status quo in Zimbabwe. One quotation from an interviewee summarises what appears to me as the general view about active participation in Zimbabwe politics: “To live happily in Zimbabwe, stay out of politics”. In other words, the masses are afraid. The fear factor plays a crucial role in keeping the Mugabe regime intact. If one read newspapers, one will of course find articles about citizens being abducted or tortured by the secret service (ibid). The security agents have been used by the government to snoop around citizen communication, abduct and even torture those who are found to be opposing the ruling party. In support of this view Chatora, (2009:9) highlights that “persecution of the Media, Journalists, Civil society and Human Rights activists, and democratic forces has become the norm, and this has seen an escalation of gross human rights abuses and the democratic discourse being undermined.” As a result citizens are careful of what they say in public and in most instances they shun engaging in political discourse.

The responses that the researcher got from the participants clearly indicated that most of the respondents belonged to social networks and used them for communicating with friends and family members and not engage in political debates. Of interest is the fact that some of the respondents who revealed that they engage in political deliberations noted that they do so only with their friends and not with the community at large. Only ten percent of the participants indicated that they made use of the social platforms to engage in political debates with individuals in governance. The respondents had different reasons why they do not engage in political discussions on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, to mention but a few social networks. Most of them revealed that they are afraid of being tracked down and victimised. Some of them referred to the current issue in which a number of citizens have been tracked down in relation to the ‘Baba Jukwa’ Facebook page. Though in some instances people do not use their real names when posting views on social networks like Facebook and Twitter, they are being tracked down. On this note, Mendel et al (2012:7) argue that:

The Internet enables the collection of new types of personal information. Technological advances have resulted in tools for collecting and understanding types of information which in the past would have been impossible or unfeasible, for instance, tracing of messages without names to its origin.

This ability of new technology to locate any device creates significant new privacy challenges. Citizens used to take advantage of communicating anonymously, without

governments being able to trace their identities and this used to safeguard free expression, with more people speaking out on issues of public interest. However, with the advancement in technology such is no longer possible because people can be tracked down. As a result citizens are not free to deliberate on sensitive matters. They are afraid of the consequences of criticising those in the government and as a result they resort to self-censorship or desist from engaging online political deliberations.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that the use of social networks to deliberate on political issues is not the entire solution. That only cannot bring democracy to Zimbabwe. In the same vein, Regan-Sachs (2013) strongly argues that “whether social networks remain a political release valve or the first wave in a sea change for the Zimbabwean society depends on the populace's ability to shift their discontent from online to on the ground.” Without putting the online deliberations into action the circumstances prevailing in Zimbabwe will remain the same. Hence, there is more to the situation in Zimbabwe than just accessing Internet and participating in social networks. In agreement with this view Smith contends that “even if a slight majority of Zimbabweans actively choose change and summon the courage necessary to overcome the harassment, intimidation, and widespread repression they have routinely faced over the course of the past three decades, then nothing will stop democratic progress from taking place. That will remain the bottom line in Zimbabwe, regardless of whether Baba Jukwa remains popular on social media or not” (Smith cited by Regan-Sachs, 2013). Thus participating in social networks is important but without taking a step further to implement the discussions the situation remain the same.

7.6 Lack of confidence in the governance system

Moreover, most of the respondents reiterated that participation in political deliberations online be it on social networks or other platforms is not worthy because their contributions are not taken cognisance of. This was clearly articulated when most of them stated that they do not participate because their views are never taken into consideration and as a result posting their views and opinions will not change anything.

It is crucial to note that citizen participation in practice suggests that citizens must have confidence in the governance system trusting that their contributions can influence decisions and at the end of the day effect change where necessary. If citizens realise that their input is ignored they shun participation. This view is reinforced by Mataruse (2012:25) who argues that:

In Zimbabwe there is a general lack of trust in the political system; trust in the sense that if citizens meaningfully participate in public and political life, the system would reflect citizens' views, opinions and aspirations. There is a sense in Zimbabwe that the system has let the citizens down.

The citizens have lost trust in the government such that they no longer want to participate in any activity related to politics. For instance, in a survey conducted by the National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO, 2011) in Zimbabwe on service delivery in a particular area, the survey established that most citizens did not participate in local government because the local authorities did not react to residents' concerns and complaints where service delivery was concerned. They found that over time, the delivery of basic social services by the local authority had deteriorated regardless of whether citizens participated or not (ibid). Considering such state of things, it would seem reasonable for citizens to deliberately refuse to participate in public affairs.

Notwithstanding some of the noted instances of socio-political deliberations online by citizens, public participation is still low in Zimbabwe due to some of the constraints outlined. Hence, if participation means going on the Internet or onto platforms like Facebook, Twitter engaging with fellow citizens and the government, and sending emails to politicians, questioning their positions in order to ensure transparency, then Zimbabweans still have a long way to go before they can solidly conclude that the advent of the Internet has boosted their online political activism.

Nevertheless, if participation simply involves accessing and sharing online political information with friends and relatives, then Zimbabweans are already undertaking that. On a sad note, the majority of the citizens are not participating. In fact, the majority of the rural dwellers have no idea what Facebook or Twitter is, hence Tichawangana (2013) argues that "until Twitter is relevant to my grandmother in Binga then social media is irrelevant." Binga is one of the remotest areas in Zimbabwe and in a way Tichawangana implies that if those in the rural and remote areas are not part of the deliberations or are not aware of the platforms that they can employ in order to deliberate in issues that affect their day to day living, then the social networks are still irrelevant as platforms of political deliberation.

The findings on the use of social networks for citizen participation in Zimbabwe also indicate that access to the Internet or to the social networks does not guarantee that the citizens will use them for engaging fellow citizens and the government in political deliberations. The findings indicate that most of the respondents have access to social media and are making use

of the social networks for other things like communicating with friends and family and not for political deliberations.

These findings concur with those of Groshek (2010) who assessed the possibility that Internet diffusion might be associated with growth in democracy. The findings of Groshek's (2010) study revealed that on its own, the Internet is just a tool and cannot cause democracy; it is in the hands of the user of Internet to facilitate its positive results. For instance, the citizens are accessing the Internet and the social networks in Zimbabwe but most of the interviewed citizens indicated that they were not using them to enhance their participation in political debates. Hence the effectiveness of the Internet in promoting democracy lies in the capacity of the citizens and their governments to make use of it.

Moreover, the findings of this study also corresponds to the Janse van Rensburg's (2012) study which examined "the capacity and opportunity citizens have to successfully integrate ICTs into the accomplishment of self and communally identified political goals in order to strengthen a broader democratic culture." The findings of the study Janse van Rensburg (on South Africa) indicates that the Internet diffusion and access, if not usage, is already high without it contributing to democracy (Janse van Rensburg, 2012:108). Thus, the level of Internet use does not determine its use to advance democracy. As shown by the Internet statistics in Zimbabwe presented in chapter 5 Internet diffusion has increased in especially via mobile phones but that does not imply that people are using it for political discussions. Hence, to some extent even if Zimbabwe had 100% access, it would not mean that people will use it to engage in politics or it would not be politically relevant. After having seen that the availability of the Internet does not imply that citizens will apply it to enhance citizen participation in the next section the researcher will discuss citizens' participation in e-government.

7.7 Lack of awareness of e-governance initiatives

Electronic government (e-government) "is defined as the act of delivering services through the Internet, telephone, information kiosks, wireless devices and other communications systems" (Colesca & Liliana, 2009 cited in Chaterera, 2012:93). In this study, e-government refers to services offered by the government through the Internet.

The findings of this study on the use of government websites to enable public participation indicated that there was still minimum usage of government websites as a platform of

communication between the citizens and the government. The respondents stated that some of the websites were not interactive and the information available was not always up to date whilst others were not accessible due to server errors. If the websites are not being used then it becomes wastage of resources.

Notably, most of the respondents were not aware that the government ministries have websites and yet most of them had web presence. The implication of this is that the websites are not being used to promote interaction between the citizens and the government authorities. One wonders how the citizens can participate in the governance system when they are not even aware that the government ministries have websites. The low level of awareness and use by the citizens clearly demonstrate ineffectiveness on the part of the government, and this result in the rejection of these initiatives by the citizens. Notably, the ICT policy, “endeavours to narrow the digital divide through enhancing public awareness and education on ICTs” (Zimbabwe Government, ICT Policy 2005:4).

Enhancing public awareness on the use of ICTs is one of the objectives of the ICT policy and yet practically it seems the citizens are not being made aware of the facilities available that they can employ to boost their participation in issues that affect their day to day living. On the other hand, the fact that the citizens are unaware of the existence of the government ministries websites also indicates ignorance on the part of the citizens.

The use of Internet to advance democracy is on the rise and has become prominent in such a way that it has the potential to transform profoundly how the governments interact with their citizens. Chaterera (2012:93) notes that government websites are expected to offer substantial benefits to citizens as well as to governments. Some of the professed benefits of government websites embrace, but are not limited to improving services to citizens, improving the efficiency of government agencies, strengthening the legal system, improving the quality of life for disadvantaged communities and encouraging public participation (Pacific Council 2002). However such benefits, can only be realised if websites are effectual (Asiimwe & Lim, 2010).

The “Internet provides an opportunity for governments to interact with their citizens via government websites which provide a platform for efficient communication and access to public information” (Asiimwe and Lim, 2010:1). Access to information on the government websites “is essential because it ensures that citizens make responsible, informed decisions instead of acting out of ignorance or misinformation and it also serves a checking function by

ensuring that elected representatives uphold their oaths of office and carry out the wishes of those who elected them” (USAID, 1999:3). The websites “are a useful tool for transparency and democracy because they enable citizens to easily interact with their governments” (Asiimwe and Lim, 2010:1). Moreover, they also serve to check if the ministers or the government representatives are fulfilling their duty as stipulated in the websites.

The Zimbabwe national portal, www.zim.gov.zw, was designed and is hosted by the Zimbabwe Government Internet Service Provider (GISP) whose experience in Internet services dates back to 1997 (Chaterera, 2012). Most Zimbabwean government ministries have websites which provide information about their mandate and also have a contact form which can be used by citizens to air their views and present their queries in e-mail form. A closer look at the form that is provided for citizens to use for asking questions or for passing comments on the websites, might force one to argue that citizens are intimidated not to query the ministries. This is because before one can send questions or comments, one needs to fill in his details, inclusive of name and e-mail address and this is compulsory. This can intimidate citizens and force them to shy away from communicating in case they query sensitive issues and this can result in them being tracked down.

In as much as obtaining feedback is crucial, the government must guarantee the privacy and security of information provided by individuals (Mundy and Musa, 2010). Participants in this study expressed a general lack of trust in using online transactions. As a result there is unwillingness on the part of the citizens to use these websites because they fear that if they criticise the government their comments or views will be stalked back to them. In other words there is no privacy. This view concurs with what Carter and Belanger (2004) suggest; that e-government initiatives can only be successful if citizens are willing to use the services provided, otherwise these efforts would be a waste of time and resources.

Of interest is to note that some important ministries like the Ministry of Media, Information and Broadcasting Services, Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development do not have websites. These are important ministries which are supposed to have websites where citizens can access information about their services, their policies and bills to mention but a few. As Ruhode (2008:1) observed; “citizens have to physically avail themselves at government offices in order to get basic information, complete and submit a form or to get any other service. Ministries of Home Affairs, Higher Education, Local Government, Gender Affairs, Legal and Justice, Small and Medium Enterprises are

examples where people physically visit government offices for services that could be provided online through the Internet.”

The few respondents who indicated that they were aware that the government ministries have websites echoed that interaction with the government via the websites is just in theory. They expressed dissatisfaction with the technical challenges and inadequacy of information offered by the government websites in Zimbabwe. As a result, most of these respondents stated that they did not depend on the information provided by the Zimbabwe government online, and would rather visit government offices or make a telephone call. Practically, the communication via the websites is one way. Those citizens who are bold enough to query the activities of the ministries do not always get feedback. Because they do not get feedback on their queries they feel it is useless to air their views or question those in power.

They are frustrated because of lack of feedback and as a result they become passive citizens who are manipulated by the government and do not have a say in critical decisions. Concurring with this view, Chaterera (2012:104) argues that “a website that does not allow for feedback on the concerns of users becomes meaningless and irrelevant to the users.” It is useless because the communication is one way; there is no space for the citizens’ input hence irrelevant.

According to the United Nations (1967);

If citizens are continuously expected to be passive recipients of government programs, policy and projects, they tend to shun participation and lose interest in the programmes which lead to failure and underdevelopment of local communities (cited in Chikerema, 2013:87).

In a way if citizens believe that their contributions are not included in decision making or do not make any difference, they are most likely to avoid participation and this has detrimental effects on democracy. “Because of the current low level usage of government websites, the potential benefits of the websites in enhancing interactive government-citizen communications are not attained” Asimwe and Lim, 2010:9). As a country with a large and dispersed population the use of websites as a platform to increase citizen participation would even empower citizens living outside the country to access information about the performance of the ministries back home and also contribute in decisions that advance development in the country. Concurring with this view Chikerema (2013:88) notes that

citizen “participation in every aspect of governance is thus a decisive factor for the smooth functioning of democratic institutions”.

A closer analysis of the information that is available on the websites suggest that the government ministerials largely use their websites to inform citizens on on-going decision making processes, thereby strengthening the traditional representative democracy rather than deepening the democratic involvement of citizens or deliberative democracy. Participation should also mean that the gap between the political representatives and the communities they represent is shortened. That is still not the case in Zimbabwe. Politicians remain rather untouchable and it is still too early to think that the Internet is helping make them accountable for their decisions and actions (Mutsvairo, 2013).

The socio-economic condition has also been a major setback to the use of Internet in Zimbabwean government ministries and this has affected the availability of gadgets like computers in the different ministries’ offices (ibid). This unaffordability of gadgets that connect Internet affects citizens also such that whether the ministries have websites or not it is of no use to the citizens because they cannot access them. “Inadequate economic resources and low levels of literacy play a negative role to development” (Ruhode et al., 2008:3). On the other hand some of the leaders in the government are so traditional in such a way that they do not emulate the use of computers. However, policy makers should take advantage of the nation’s high level of literacy and implement ICT based services (ibid.).

Thus, the fact that some government ministries have websites alone is not enough to boost citizen participation. As it is in Zimbabwe, government ministries have websites but still most of the citizens are not using them as a platform to contribute their views and influence decision making. An examination of the websites by the researcher resulted in her concluding that though the websites exist, most of them have little to offer. In a way, the implication of this is that the prevalence of Internet does not mean anything if the citizens and the government are not willing to use it and deliberate on issues that affect them, be it socially, economically or politically. Hence, this study corroborates findings by Best and Wade (2009:258) (see chapter 3) in their study where they assert that, the Internet does not oblige citizens to view political matters at all if they are not interested, as a result these citizens become disconnected and democracy suffers. Moreover, the availability of Internet does not automatically mean that those who were not engaging in politics prior to the coming of

Internet will do so now because of the presence of the Internet. Thus as Loo (2007:21) argues:

The democratising effect of the Internet is only as effective as allowed by a country's communication, political, legal and institutional structures, the public discursive culture and the citizens' readiness to actively engage in the political deliberations through the use of the Internet as a media for engagement.

This implies that if the Zimbabwean communication, political, legal and institutional structures do not accommodate deliberation as essential in the socio-political processes of the country then the democratising potential of the Internet is in vain. Moreover, if the citizens are not also willing to employ the Internet technologies for participation, then the effects of the Internet to advance democracy are minimal or in vain. Thus the government of Zimbabwe must educate the citizens on what Information they get on the websites, and encourage them to contribute their views on matters of governance and give them feedback when they contribute so that the citizens feel that they are part of the decision making process. The government must also create a conducive environment for citizens to participate without fear of reprisals. In like manner, the citizens must also be willing to participate given the platform to do so. In addition, the citizens must be proactive and seize the opportunity offered by the Internet, to educate themselves and make maximum use of it. They should not always wait for the government to spoon feed them. Waiting for the government will not help in any way especially when they know that the government is not for the idea.

7.8 The prospective role of Internet in promoting citizen participation as understood by the respondents

It emerged from the findings that most of the respondents acknowledged that the Internet may play an essential role in promoting citizen participation. In other words, despite the fact that most of them indicated that they do not use the Internet for political deliberations, they are well aware that the Internet has the potential to boost the democratisation process. Most of them agreed that the Internet expose the citizens to a variety of information from different sources and has opened up the platform to alternative voices which provide the public with different versions and analysis of events. In a way the Internet has managed to draw interest to a variety of issues that required political attention in Zimbabwe. While the government was able to deal with "unpatriotic" reporters working in the print industry because they could be easily located, to locate those posting stories on the Internet proved an overwhelming task

and at this point, user generated content is no doubt a threat to mainstream media and the government (Ndhlovu 2009:6)

One of the respondents highlighted that if accorded the platform the Internet could be used to listen decisively by those in power to the voices of the minority and the powerless. Since voting for views one is aligned to is part of a democracy, others do not have an opportunity to vote because of age or domicile at the time of voting. The Internet can afford those disadvantaged to vote online. Views of the citizens are not stifled and there is no fear of reprisals because one would have aired their views. The Internet could also afford a platform of honesty if one could engage with the government anonymously without any fear and be able to criticise the functioning of the government. However, with the situation in Zimbabwe where anonymity online is not guaranteed, the citizens shun sensitive political deliberations.

In other words the Internet gives a voice to the disadvantaged. Many citizens cannot use the platforms provided by the traditional media due to lack of resources or because they are not given the platform because they do not support the government of the day but the Internet could afford many citizens with the opportunity to air their views and participate. With the situation at hand where a huge number of Zimbabwean citizens have left the country seeking greener pastures in countries such as Britain, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa (Molokele, 2009), the Internet could afford a platform for online deliberations and voting. Nevertheless, under Zimbabwean election laws, nationals living abroad are not allowed to vote (Mutsvairo, 2013:184).

Despite this setback, a Britain based community of Zimbabweans used the Internet as a tool to discredit the Mugabe government and encouraged relatives in Zimbabwe to vote for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (ibid.182). Facing a grim future because of a struggling economy back home and angry that Mugabe had denied them the right to vote, Zimbabweans abroad hammered friends and relatives with anti-Mugabe messages through the platform afforded by the Internet.

The Internet has unlocked new prospects for challenging power in Zimbabwe which have not been possible before the age of the Internet. Many Zimbabwean websites which have been created outside Zimbabwe by the citizens in the diaspora have accorded the Zimbabweans a platform to debate issues and also to criticise the government. For instance, at the peak of the Zimbabwe crisis (2007-2008), the *ZimDaily* website led a vigilante operation to publicly name and have supposed relatives and children of Zimbabwean ruling party officials

extradited from Western countries (Mano, 2010:57). The website's editors encouraged Zimbabwean users of the website to take the law in their own hands and published addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information about anyone thought to be related to those in the government in Zimbabwe (ibid). As published by the editor:

ZimDaily this week takes the 'Fair Deal' campaign on ministers' kids in the lands of the 'Imperialists' to a new level. Buoyed by the successes we have scored in Australia and the numerous enquiries we are receiving from the EU, UK, Canada, USA and Scotland we officially launch the 'FAIR DEAL' Campaign, under the banner "Send Mugabe's crooks (*sic*) kids back to their evil fathers" (*ZimDaily* editor, 17 September 2007 cited in Mano, 2010:65).

As a result some children of top ZANU PF government officials were deported back to Zimbabwe (ibid.). In a way, the notion was to help resolve the political and economic crises in Zimbabwe because while the people in Zimbabwe were suffering both politically and economically, the government officials have been sending their children and relatives abroad for better education and jobs. So the reason behind the whole activity was to have them send back to Zimbabwe so that they also suffer the same way the majority were suffering.

However, Mano (2010:57) argues that while the Internet has been successful in producing dependable and quality information that African democracies have need of, it has also produced vigilante journalism; "a vindictive and revengeful form of gathering and disseminating news and information." (Mano, ibid.). Thus, while it is true that the Internet has opened new prospects for challenging power, it is crucial to note that it has also emerged as a double-edged sword that can both stimulate and demoralise democracy. Concurring with this view Moyo (2009:12) contends that on the Internet:

The non-professional journalists are not accountable to anyone but themselves, and their 'journalism' is not guided or constrained by any ethical norms or principles but rather by gut feeling and common sense. In a crisis situation such as the one obtaining in Zimbabwe after the 2008 election, citizen journalism could worsen things by spreading untruths and half-truths which could lead to panic and disorder.

The Internet empowers citizens to promptly and openly express their aspirations and expectations to their governments and to connect with one another and the outside world (Ott & Rosser, 2006:139). The nature of political interaction has eventually changed as a result of the advent of the Internet especially in regard to decrease in communication costs. Ott and Rosser (ibid.) argue that "the power of individual citizens is increased in two major ways: through greater access and through greater influence." The Internet affords easy "access to

information about issues, decisions and pending legislation that might affect the individual and there is greater influence both as an individual who can more easily communicate his or her views on a topic directly to elected representatives, and indirectly through easier access to civil society organisations and the media” (Ott and Rosser, 2000). However, in all these processes access to information is the basis. One cannot accomplish all that if access to the Internet is denied.

Remarkably, “the ease and affordability of publication on the Internet, to some extent has effectively circumvented government censorship and control of the media in Zimbabwe” (ibid.). For instance, in Zimbabwe there are cases of newspapers publishing online in disobedience to government prohibition (for instance, many independent newspapers which were banned have been published online). In line with this, Moyo (2007:81) argues that Zimbabwe’s “restricted democratic space has reproduced an assortment of alternative public spheres that enable groups and individuals to continue to participate and engage in the wider debate on the mutating crisis gripping the country since the turn of the century.” Zimbabweans outside the country are making use of the Internet technologies to resist state propaganda spread through the conventional media. Foreign-based news websites on Zimbabwe are affording the citizens with the platform to contribute on the ongoing discourse on the Zimbabwe crisis.

The “examples of news websites on Zimbabwe are the Zimbabwejournalists.com, the Zimbabwe Situation (<http://www1.zimbabwesituation.com>), ZimDaily (<http://zimdaily.com>), NewZimbabwe (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com>), ZWNews (<http://www.zwnews.com/>) and ZimOnline (<http://www.zimonline.co.za>) (Moyo, 2007:100; Mano, 2010:62). Some of the news websites, for instance, NewZimbabwe.com has several discussion forums where readers contribute their opinions on the Zimbabwean situation. In a way these news websites are affording the Zimbabweans, both in and out of the country, a public sphere where they can debate and deliberate on issues affecting their country. A number of these news “websites have in various ways transformed not only the role of professional journalists but also that of the readers who have been empowered to become ‘consumer-producers’ and hence active participants in the production and reception of information” (Hamilton, 2001, cited in Moyo 2007:87). However, noteworthy is the fact that some sites are blocked within Zimbabwe which means that only people outside the country can get access to them. Nonetheless, the new media inclusive of social media make it much harder and in some instances almost impossible to silence critical reporting and debate. Zimbabweans are hungry for a space in

which they can be at liberty to debate on issues of the day without being victimised. Through the use of the Internet the citizens can receive diverse information from different sources and also produce information mostly if they are outside Zimbabwe.

In addition, Schifffrin (2009:1) argues that “online publications also allow wider participation and the growth of citizen journalism, which can improve governance and encourage transparency”. Moreover, through the use of Internet in Zimbabwe journalists are now able to gain access to crucial information through the Internet, which had been kept out of sight of the public by the government. Thus Moyo (2007:24) argues that “landmark stories that could have remained hidden under the carpet have been exposed through these websites. In Zimbabwe where the conventional media have long functioned as gatekeepers for the public, the role of gatekeepers is weakening.” This is because the news websites are empowering citizens to find information for themselves. By contributing to free speech and the free flow of information, Internet communication has undoubtedly proved the possibility to enhance the power of the Zimbabwean citizen versus the state, with beneficial effects for liberalisation and democratisation initiatives (Ott & Melissa, 2006:139).

Though there are constraints associated with employing the Internet technologies to promote citizen participation in Zimbabwe, most of the respondents indicated that the Internet could be beneficial to the public if the government could take an initiative by posting questionnaires requiring citizen views on matters relating to governance. This could be done on social media platforms in a friendly environment. Online discussion forums could be used to further citizen participation in the governance system. “Nevertheless, Kaul (2012:2) maintains that new Internet technologies have great potential to democratise the countries where they are introduced and are permitted to function.” This means that the prevalence of Internet does not eventually leads to democracy, the potential lies in the permission to use them.

The ever-increasing use of Internet founded on its distinguishable potential provides an excellent opportunity for changing the operations of political landscapes in Africa and beyond. Mutsvairo (2013:181) argues that as digital technologies become more accessible and affordable, more people are able to easily coordinate, organise, and advance their interests. He further (ibid.182) maintains that like the voters, the Internet could play an essential role in influencing political and governmental change. Such a scenario could be applicable to the Zimbabwe too.

This implies that the Internet as a tool has the potential to advance citizen participation but this all depends on how the government and the citizens employ it. If the government makes an initiative and open up for citizens to use it and deliberate on issues that affect them then its role in the advancing democracy becomes imperative.

7.9 The citizens and the liberty to express themselves online

One of the objects of inquiry in this study has been to establish whether there is freedom of expression on the Internet in Zimbabwe. The findings of the study indicate that freedom of expression on the Internet is conditional when it comes to political deliberations. Most of the respondents reiterated that the citizens can only express themselves freely if they are conforming to the ruling party's ideology, otherwise dissenting voices can land someone in trouble. In other words the participants implied that there is a false sense of freedom. The freedom of expression can only be exercised if one is airing views that are in line with the ruling party. The Zimbabwean constitution guarantees certain fundamental freedoms that include liberty of speech, movement, association, to mention but a few. In reality, however, the government of Zimbabwe has not upheld these freedoms. In terms of Section 61 (1) of the Constitution (2013) of Zimbabwe:

Every person has the right to freedom of expression, which includes freedom to seek, receive and communicate ideas and other information.

An understanding of the above clause would make one to believe that the citizens are not prohibited from exercising their liberty to express themselves which is inclusive of freedom to hold different opinions and convey one's thoughts and views without anyone interfering. However, this is just in theory as reiterated by most of the participants who highlighted that dissenting opinions in many instances have resulted in victimisation. On this note a media rights organisation, the Media Monitoring Project in Zimbabwe (MMPZ, 2011:3), argues that the "media in Zimbabwe function in one of the most oppressive environments on the continent and media workers are regularly harassed, detained and beaten by the police; with the cumulative effect, that self-censorship prevails in the media."¹⁰ Because of such happenings citizens are cautious about what they deliberate on for fear that they get punished.

¹⁰ "Reclaiming the People's Voice: Broadcasting Reforms in Zimbabwe." *MMPZ Report*. <http://www.mmpz.org/category/resource-centre/pamphlets/reclaiming-people%E2%80%99s-voice-broadcasting-reforms-zimbabwe>. Accessed 23 August 2014.

Of importance is to note that the Constitution affords the citizens with freedom of expression but goes further to curb that freedom by stating that freedom of expression can be controlled in (i) “the interest of defence, public safety and economic interest of the state, public morality/ public health; ii) to protect the independence of courts and parliament; iii) to protect the freedoms and reputation of others”¹¹(Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013). Hence, such provisions were put in place to rationalise the legislation of the debatable media-regulating laws. Thus in the actual sense freedom of expression on the Internet is conditional.

Moreover, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19) states that:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression which embraces the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers (cited in Chikwanha, 2009:6).

However, the right to freedom of expression as Mendel et al (2012:5) notes “is complex meaning there is need to strike a balance between this right and other sometimes conflicting imperatives such as national security, protection of author’s rights and respect for privacy.” On this note, in Zimbabwe the government has used the issues of ‘state economic interests and state security’ as a scape goat in order to curb the rights of the citizens to express themselves freely.

Mataruse (2012:25) notes that just like other any other country the government of Zimbabwe is bound by various international and regional human rights apparatuses that protect fundamental rights and liberties; these “includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights.” Moreover, the Zimbabwean constitution guarantees certain fundamental freedoms that include liberty of speech, movement and association, to mention but a few, though in reality, the government has not advocated for these freedoms (Mataruse, 2012: 25).

The way the Internet functions makes it advantageous as a vehicle for citizen participation if only citizens would be allowed to use it accordingly. Article 19 (2011:1) sums up what the Internet can offer for citizen participation:

¹¹ Constitution of Zimbabwe: Also available on line, www.parlzim.gov.zw/cms/.../ZimbabweConstitution.pdf Accessed 24 September 2014

The Internet combines within one medium both the right to receive as well as the right to express and disseminate information, ideas and opinions, be it in the form of writing, or through audio or video. It is simultaneously a publishing tool and a communications tool, allowing millions around the world to communicate instantaneously at low costs. It brings the ability to broadcast to an audience of millions within the reach of everyone with access to a computer, a telephone line; cellular phone and it serves as a huge conduit of information on topics ranging from human rights to politics.

It is significant to note that in a permissive environment, the Internet can be a vital tool in augmenting the citizens' right to express themselves. Nonetheless, the ruling party has in some instances employed sophisticated technologies to snoop on people's communication, block content, monitor and identify activists and critics, criminalised legitimate expression, and the implemented restrictive legislation to justify measures against freedom of expression.

Though the Internet affords a platform for public deliberations many people in Zimbabwe are not free to deliberate on political issues and those who engage do so hesitantly. It is easier to contribute one's view if one is aligned to the ruling party's ideology. The respondents in this study expressed a general lack of trust in online deliberations, particularly those that involve sensitive issues. With regard to this, Chaterera (2012:104) argues that if security and privacy is not guaranteed, citizens will tend to distance themselves from engaging online debates in fear of invasion of privacy resulting in arrests, harassment and torture.

According to Castells (2001:184) "in many instances the government and its citizens do not trust each other and the Internet as a space of freedom would epitomise this cleavage with advocates of liberty trying to preserve this new land of opportunity, while the government mobilises their considerable resources to close this leak in their control systems." This implies that while the citizens are trying to seize the opportunity afforded by the Internet to engage and deliberate on issues that affect them and have their voice heard, the government on the other hand is putting efforts to control the system such that efforts to democratisation are thwarted.

As Mendel et al (2012:7) argues;

The Internet facilitates the collection and location of personal information - each computer, mobile phone or other device attached to the Internet has a unique IP address which provides a unique identifier for every device which means in turn that they can be traced.

This has been a matter of concern in Zimbabwe where many citizens had resorted to the use of Internet as an alternative platform that affords freedom of expression since the mainstream media is mainly government controlled (Moyo, 2010).

Media, Information and Publicity Minister, Webster Shamu, has called for “appropriate regulations to the Internet and other new media platforms as they have a potential to cause strife in society” (Zvamaida Murwira, *The Herald*, 17 December 2012). He further argued that there should be leverage on social media because;

The so-called citizen journalism facet of the new media means everyone has the potential to disseminate information that is sometimes inaccurate or undesirable, information which may indeed be in total disregard of the national interest and lead to uncalled for internal strife in a country (ibid.).

A closer look at the Minister’s argument will force one to argue that the new media is a threat to the government and that in a way they are secure when the citizens do not access the social media because they fear that they will cause strife in the society. Moreover, one can be forced to conclude that the government is blocking the citizens’ access to information deliberately for fear that they demand accountability on the part of the government. Thus he advocates for “self-censorship, which is (according to him) a cornerstone in sensible dissemination of information in both the traditional and new media, assumes an abundance of progressive thought in society.”¹² Hence it is not surprising to realise that the citizenry has resorted to self-censorship and do not contribute in some political deliberations for fear of being hunted down and victimised for acting against the laws of the state.

According to Reporters Without Borders (2009) “during the 2008 presidential elections, government forces hacked into journalists’ e-mail accounts; eight journalists were fired for allegedly failing to support Mugabe and the ZANU-PF”. There is no right to privacy at all because anytime the government can snoop on people’s private communication. This shows that even media workers cannot do their work objectively for fear of being harassed or losing their jobs.

Recently, “Zimbabwe leader Robert Mugabe revealed a \$300, 000 reward to anyone who would uncover the identity of an Internet mole known as ‘Baba Jukwa’ (Flanagan, 2013). An unidentified source is using popular social network Facebook to shake up Zimbabwean politics posting daily revelations of alleged wrongdoings by the country’s leaders. The

¹² Zvamaida, Murwira. *The Herald*, 17 December 2012, ‘Call for appropriate regulations to the Internet, new media platform’

Facebook page run by a Baba Jukwa posts a range of exposes that detail alleged plans by President Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF party to rig the past general elections. His site has also been leaking allegations about Mugabe's regime, including government assassination plots, corruption of government ministers, and police brutality. Moreover, "attempts by senior ZANU-PF party officials to persuade Facebook to close the page failed and the president has reportedly appealed to friends in the Chinese government for technical support to censor the site and identify its user." Thus in such an environment, whether the citizens access Internet, using it for political deliberations is dreadful and as a result many citizens shun debates on political issues.

The platform for citizens to freely express themselves in Zimbabwe is "closely related to the socio-economic and political context of the state" (Mataruse, 2012). Furthermore, "the public and the private media as spaces of civic engagement and public debate have been neutralised through legal and extrajudicial tactics by the state and this has a constraining impact on freedom of information and journalistic practice, just as it also violated many other constitutionally guaranteed civic and human rights" (Mataruse, 2012:25). Laws, such as the Broadcasting Services Act (2001), the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) (2002), and the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) (2001), silence the news media and undermine their role as the watchdog of particularly the state. Media freedom is further constrained by the use of threats, arrests, torture of journalists and the bombing of mostly private media's printing presses and offices (Moyo, 2007). Though the Internet has the potential to provide the citizens with diverse information, a platform that enables deliberation, decision and organisation, the restrictions imposed by the Zimbabwean legislations render it useless. If citizens would be allowed to express themselves freely, with the Internet the problem of scale would no longer be a concern because participation by many citizens in the process of deliberation would be possible.

The worldwide trend of the new communication technologies being employed to express political opinions, and even to form groups and campaign online, has not been followed with enthusiasm by Zimbabwean citizens. Chaterera (2012:26) points out that, "the lack of anonymity and fear of consequences limit the expression of politically-oriented deliberations and opinions which can be traced back to those expressing them". Because of lack of freedom of expression on the Internet and even in the mainstream media the Zimbabwean citizens have remained disempowered to become effective socio-economic and political participants. Most communities still live in fear as political processes, including national healing, have not

been effective in eliminating the culture of fear entrenched by present political schism and as a result the majority of the people have distanced themselves from political deliberations (Mataruse, 2012). The Internet has been identified as one of the greatest influential apparatuses of the twenty-first century for improving openness in the way the elite conduct themselves, access to information, and for facilitating active involvement of citizens in the development of democratic societies but this has not been the same in Zimbabwe.

7.10 Obstacles to the use of Internet for citizen participation

7.10.1 Lack of Internet access

One of the hindrances to the use of Internet for citizen participation as revealed in this study is lack of access to the Internet. There is a wide disparity between access of Internet in Zimbabwe and other countries for instance South Africa and eventually this means that a solution in South Africa where Internet access is high might not work in a country like Zimbabwe with low Internet access. Buttressing this point is Dada (2006) who emphasizes that “this wide discrepancy in access to the Internet technology suggests that a solution in a country with high levels of connectivity will not necessarily work in a country with extremely low levels.” Hence the solutions that have worked in other states in the West to enhance citizen participation through the use of Internet might not work in Zimbabwe where Internet penetration is still low.

Zimbabwe Internet statistics is said to have risen to about 6,759, 032 million subscriptions, which is approximately forty-seven percent penetration (Internet World Stats, 2014). Regardless of these promising figures, Moyo (2007:102) observed that the Internet is still confined to urban areas which have seen a marked rise in the number of Internet cafes and is still very much controlled and accessed by members of an elite club, most of whom live in the major cities, thereby excluding the rural citizens from participation. “This means that the Internet is still an elite and urban phenomenon, as the majority of people who live in the rural areas do not have access to it” (ibid.). Most countries of sub-Saharan Africa are among the world’s poorest “both in the sense of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), especially Internet deployment, and Gross Domestic Product at Purchasing Power Parity (GDP (PPP)) per capita” (Zlotnikova & van der Welde, 2011:50). Reinforcing this viewpoint is Nyaira’s (2009:) assessment that “the only problem in using online media for a country such as Zimbabwe, and indeed much of Africa and the Third World, is that these countries are not wired enough to allow the majority of citizens, who live in poor rural areas, to access

the news and be part of the public discourse on events which affect them.” Despite the remarkable increase in the number of people who use the Internet in Zimbabwe the majority of citizens still lack Internet access and as a result are excluded from the online deliberations. Notably, full access to contents also means plurality and diversity when receiving or disseminating information through the Internet. It also means a complete absence of censorship.

The key barriers in the penetration and expansion of the Internet in Zimbabwe include lack of essential infrastructure, for instance, telephones, computers and electricity. The current shortage of electricity in the country is a major obstacle. Chaterera (2013:102) notes that “few households and companies in Zimbabwe can afford to use generators for their electricity needs during periods of load-shedding by the Zimbabwe Electricity Distribution Company (ZEDC).” This has negative effects on the use of e-government services in the country and these initiatives may not make any sense and could be a waste of resources if citizens, who are the intended beneficiaries, do not have access to the services. In addition to regular power cuts, Internet connectivity in those areas that do have network boosters is very poor, making efforts to use the Internet a frustration (ibid).

As Chari (2009:59) points out, personal computers or laptops are now beyond the reach of many and the telephone infrastructure is deteriorating due to lack of both maintenance and foreign currency. The costs of accessing the Internet are soaring and many find it difficult to afford. Thus, in spite of the enthusiasm associated with the Internet, there are numerous challenges threatening its diffusion.” As a result, it is still beyond the reach of many in Zimbabwe. Of importance to note is the fact that the Internet as a means to exercise the right to free expression can only serve its purpose if states develop effective policies to attain universal access to this service. The provision of technology alone will not optimally harness the potential of ICTs to improve access. In line with this view Swarts (2006) contends that “to take full advantage of the different technologies and to direct their maximum use for the benefit of all citizens, there needs to be a clear framework which sets the scene and provides the enabling environment for technologies to be integrated, deployed and used to their fullest potential” (Swarts, 2006 cited in Zlotnikova & van der Welde, 2011:51). Thus, the citizens might have Internet access but in the absence of an enabling environment they will not use it for political discourse.

As La Rue argues, “in the absence of concrete policies and action plans, the Internet will become a technological tool that is accessible only to a certain elite, while perpetuating the digital divide” (cited in Capdevilla, 2011). Nevertheless, Columbus and Heacock (Forthcoming) declare without hesitation that despite economic difficulties the country has experienced over the last decade, Zimbabwe has one of the highest Internet penetration rates in sub-Saharan Africa (cited in Mutsvairo, 2012:186)

Computers, software and modems are out of reach of most Africans. Such equipment is often subject to high import tariffs, making it several times more costly than in industrialised countries. Computers and networks require constant maintenance as well as electricity supplies of which can be highly unreliable (Lesame, 2005). In Addition, “lack of training, low incomes, high costs of smartphones, high costs of connectivity, illiteracy, costs of and lack of commitment by governments who may not appreciate the advantages of connecting to the Internet” are stumbling blocks to the application of Internet for citizen participation (Jensen, 2000; Alden, 2004; Kenny & Hawkins 2008 cited in Chari, 2009).

Despite the efforts which citizens are making in adopting Internet usage in Zimbabwe, numerous obstacles are still on the way. The findings indicated that the country is facing an economic crisis characterised by a high inflation rate and joblessness and these are major blows to the use of Internet. Moreover, “connectivity costs are now beyond the reach of many who are struggling to provide basic commodities for their families” (Chari, 2009:59). Many of those who access Internet do so using mobile phones. Many people who live in the rural areas have mobile phones but the cheap ones that cannot connect to the Internet, they only afford the cheap ones that can make a call and receive messages. Then in accord with Article 19 (2011:6) one might ask “how relevant the Internet really is to rural Africa where many people do not even have access to the most basic social services, such as water, health care and education?” For one to be able to use the Internet basic computer training is required and this might not be a priority for people in the rural areas. Furthermore, English language is still dominating on the Internet such that for many to use it there is need for incorporating more indigenous languages.

7.10.2 Attitudes of citizens and the government towards the use of Internet for citizen participation

The study found that Internet usage especially via the phone was prevalent and widely used by Zimbabweans, because it permits access to the Internet at low costs. Nevertheless, many

people used the Internet to interact with friends and family on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and not to interact with the government. Participants in the study indicated that consulting the government for information is usually a waste of time and posting their views is also useless because their contributions are never put into consideration. As revealed in the interviews most people in Zimbabwe pay in order to access Internet and to use it for some government survey seems a waste of their money especially when there is no guarantee that their views will be considered.

In a way they are frustrated and do not anticipate anything positive coming out of online interactions with the government. On the one hand, are citizens who are no longer interested in participating in the day to day deliberations that affect their lives, on the other hand, are leaders who shun criticism from the citizens and in a way try by all means to suppress them. The government does not provide sufficient information in order for the citizens to make informed decisions. The end result is that the potential of the Internet is not fully exploited and as a result democracy in the country suffers.

Hence better information access facilitated by the Internet, might not eventually lead to growth in citizen participation, or greater public engagement, or confidence in political processes, especially in Zimbabwe where the citizens really know that their communication through the Internet is under surveillance and any communication that offends the government or the president can be tracked back to its origin and they will be punished.

Access to the Internet is also starved by the government which is somehow cagey of citizens' use of Internet technologies (Freedom House, 2013). Whereas other states are working towards increasing Internet adoption by citizens, others like Zimbabwe are on a mission to restrain Internet usage by snooping on citizens' online communication.

7.10.3 Fear of the unknown because of the application of undemocratic laws by the government

Another obstacle to the use of Internet for citizen participation stressed by all the respondents is fear of the consequences of engaging in online deliberations. The major constraint to the use of Internet for citizen participation is the fear of airing one's honest views because the government spies on citizens' communication. The government acquire phone records of citizens and also access citizens' e-mails whenever they suspect any communication that is

against them. Because of this interference from the government citizens are afraid to participate in online deliberations and to speak truthfully.

The government of Zimbabwe make use of several laws to punish citizens who engage in online deliberations that are critical of the government. A close analysis of this indicates that fear of the unknown because of the laws applied by the government to restrict online deliberations, is a major stumbling block to the use of Internet for citizen participation even more than the other issues discussed initially. This is so because it affects even those who have access to Internet. Because they fear the consequences of engaging in political debates online, they refrain from participating. As a result of this, there are many citizens in Zimbabwe who access the Internet but do not use it to engage in online political deliberations.

In a bid to silence opposition using interception gadgets, the ZANU-PF government has gone as far as jamming radio signal and web traffic that broadcast any information which is unfavourable to the ruling party or that sympathise with opposition parties (Mavhunga, 2008). Moreover, “online newspapers and Internet radios have been using the Internet to attack the Mugabe dictatorship and inevitably the government started using presidential powers to crack down on Internet, mobile and fixed phone users ‘circulating subversive e-mail inciting the public to oust the president from office’” (ibid. 21). Many people have been arrested to offenses as such.

On a sad note, basic statutory provisions have restrained civil liberties, instead of seeking to uphold human rights and citizen involvement in governance (Mapuva and Muyengwa, 2012). These laws aim at controlling citizen participation in governance and policy processes. While the laws should protect the general public, in this context “the amendments to key existing laws and the enactment of new laws have provided government with tools with which it can deal with the perceived “enemies of the state” and the proponents of “regime change” (ibid.133). Hence, through the use of Acts like the ICA of 2007, POSA of 2002 and AIPPA of 2002 the government has successfully silenced many citizens’ voices and this has affected the use of Internet for citizen participation.

While the citizens may be exposed to information, the biggest threat to full and enhanced participation lay in their ability to overcome fear of the unknown. Notably, even though there are conspicuously thousands of brave people who by all means choose to fight Mugabe’s alleged totalitarianism, one quotation from an interviewee summarises what appears to be the

general view about active participation in Zimbabwe politics: “To live happily in Zimbabwe, stay out of politics” (02/11/2014). In other words, the masses are afraid. The fear factor plays a crucial role in keeping the citizens away from participating online. If one reads newspapers, one would find articles about citizens being abducted or tortured by the secret service. Fear, as already discussed, is one of the reasons why it will probably take a long time before Zimbabweans realise the full potential of the Internet. Because of the socio-economic and political crisis that has prevailed in Zimbabwe for a long time the citizens lack a sense of connectedness and cannot speak with one voice. Differences in political views and unfair treatment of citizens who hold different views have all resulted in a citizenry which is divided and this negatively affect the application of Internet for citizen participation.

7.11 Lack of community cohesion

In addition to the impediments discussed above, the study found that one of the factors affecting citizen participation in Zimbabwe is the absence of unity among the citizens. Those who deliberate online cannot speak with one voice. There are so many factions even within one political party such that citizens are always opposing each other. As a result they cannot agree on one thing. In such a situation it is even impossible to act on the ground. Members of the Zimbabwean community are not connected to each other in most of the instances and in such a situation deliberating on issues affecting them is a challenge. Corroborating this view is Mataruse (2012:27) who contends that “the extent or the condition of community connectedness can determine the level of participation in that community.” This implies that the more citizens are connected to each other, the more they can speak with one voice and find a solution to their problems. In most instances when someone raises a pertinent issue online, some citizens oppose the view, not in a constructive manner such that many end up not contributing because people attack each other.

On the same note Mataruse (ibid) again notes that “community connectedness holds that citizens are driven by a common purpose to participate in public life in order to achieve a common goal.” Because of political polarisation, the citizens are no longer driven by a common purpose; hence citizen participation in public life is affected. Citizen participation in public life embraces thinking, planning and making choices on matters that affect them. It also connotes a community’s ability to self-mobilise and organise. Because the citizens cannot speak with one voice, many citizens shun participating in public issues and concentrate on things that are more benefiting. There is a lack of shared values amongst

citizens, hence low level of citizen participation. Thus, in a way social connectedness is a crucial foundation for civic and political participation.

7.12 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, one can conclude that new communication technologies, far from eloquently improving the way Zimbabweans participate politically, are yet to fully demonstrate their full potential. The issue of the use of Internet for citizen participation in Zimbabwe is intricate. Subsequently, it must be addressed not only on technological perspectives, but also from the social, cultural, economic and political perspectives. The Internet or communication technology alone is still far from advancing citizen participation in Zimbabwe. Though it has the potential to enrich the social, economic and political wellbeing of the citizens, there other issues that need to be addressed first.

Besides technological challenges in Zimbabwe, there is also, lack of awareness, negative attitudes, lack of trust between the government and the citizens, fear of the unknown on both parties and these have affected the use of Internet for citizen participation. These have resulted in the unwillingness and powerlessness of citizens to actively participate in political deliberations. The citizens might have the Internet and have unrestricted access to it, but what is important is their willingness and determination to use it for political purposes. That is still lacking in the case of Zimbabwe. Indeed, there are plenty of fearless people who have taken the ruling party to task by using the Internet and new media platforms to denounce its alleged misrule. However, there is still a long way to go before the platforms can have a direct influence on the Zimbabwean political climate.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

This study sought to examine the use of Internet to promote citizen participation in the Zimbabwean democratisation process. The study had three objectives. The first objective was to examine how the Internet can be used for citizen participation in the Zimbabwean democratisation process. The second objective was to assess the effective use of Internet as a tool for promoting citizen participation in their governance. Lastly, the third objective was to analyse the factors that hinder the effective utilisation of the Internet for citizen participation in the Zimbabwe political process. This chapter concludes the study by providing a summary of the main findings and arguments raised in the study. The chapter also provides some recommendations from the lessons learned from the study.

8.2 Main arguments and findings

Several findings emerged from this study. By way of addressing the first research question, the researcher established that the Internet can serve as a public sphere which provides a platform for Zimbabwean citizens to express themselves whilst furnishing the government with a mechanism to evaluate the opinions and views of the public and respond to public probes. To some extent the Internet has transformed Zimbabwe's political discourse. More than ever some members of the community have the ability to seek out political information, interchange opinions, and deliberate on governmental concerns that they are interested in online. This study agrees with Moyo (2007) that the Internet in Zimbabwe to some extent affords an alternative public sphere for citizens to deliberate on political and social concerns which they could not debate on as a result of the absence of effective channels. As demonstrated in Chapter 5 the traditional media is vastly controlled by the ruling party and to a greater extent the public do not have space to air their opinions and publicly criticise the government, to some extent the Internet has become a public sphere where alternative voices can be heard.

Zimbabwe's constrained democratic space has produced a range of unconventional public spaces that empower individuals and groups to engage in deliberations concerning the socio-political and economic crisis that has been prevailing in the country ever since the turn of the century. Although dissident newspapers and pirate radio have been some of the most

common forms, the government of Zimbabwe has in many ways succeeded in silencing alternative voices. Amidst such a situation, the advent of the Internet in recent years has resulted in the development of other forms of media outlets presenting more opportunities for wider citizen participation and enablement in contrast to the conventional media. However, in Zimbabwe online deliberations have not been completely free from government interference. Through employing advanced technologies the government has succeeded in monitoring, identifying activists, blocking content, criminalising legitimate expression and implementing restrictive legislation to justify measures against freedom of expression.

Above and beyond providing an expression platform for participation, the present study found that the Internet technologies also affords the Zimbabwean government with the means to assess the views and feelings of the citizens, though in most cases this has not been used in an affirmative way. The government make use of the platform to snoop on what citizens deliberate on. On discovering that the citizens are deliberating on issues that are against its line of thinking, the government always devise ways of stopping such discussions through intimidating or arresting citizens. As a result of this, most of the citizens do not engage in political deliberations or discuss sensitive issues online for fear of being harassed and arrested.

A lot of indicators show that there is an increasing determination from the government to curtail communication via Internet technologies, for instance, the arrests of different people for comments made on Facebook and also the recent arrests of people in line with Baba Jukwa Facebook page. There are several other citizens who have been arrested in line with online deliberations. This shows that the freedom is mostly in theory because any comments that criticise the government are traced back to their sources. While the government cannot fully control the Internet evidence shows worrying advances to curb Internet communication over the past years. Several regulations as discussed in previous chapters (see chapter, 5, 6 and 7) have been used to infringe on effective citizen participation in matters affecting their day to day lives and this has resulted in the closing of the political arena. Many sectors in the community have not been left unaffected by the laws and regulations because the laws extend to Internet Services Providers and even Internet cafes as discussed in Chapter 7. In a way citizens are careful of what to say in their deliberations, and ISPs should operate as stipulated or else they lose their licences.

Thus, while absolute control of online communication has not been a momentous threat so far in Zimbabwe as compared to the conventional media, the tendency amongst the transitional democratic states in sub-Saharan Africa (as it is in Zimbabwe) has been inclined in the direction of indirect ways of suppression (Burnheim, ARTICLE 19:1) This systematic control of the Internet steered by the regime results in Zimbabweans refraining from exercising their right to express themselves fully on the Internet online. The fact that online content is subject to scrutiny makes citizens to shy away from deliberating on sensitive issues. This eventually robs them of their right to express themselves freely.

Nevertheless, as reflected in Chapter 7 the regulating of online communication is not inescapable. Zimbabweans in the diaspora persistently prove their refusal to accept Internet regulation by publishing and criticising the government on foreign based websites which they establish outside Zimbabwe. The government's control of the traditional media coupled with the exodus of many citizens to countries like Botswana, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States of America and Australia due to the socio-political and economic crisis elicited an unmatched burgeoning of news websites on Zimbabwe across the Internet. These websites have been developed mainly for the purpose of unearthing the truth and exposing the dishonesty and human rights manipulations by the government in power. Besides that, the websites are endowing ordinary people the public space to share their sentiments and opinions and contribute to the widespread debate about the Zimbabwean situation.

Thus, though the government has tried to restrain the deliberations of the citizens, it has faced resistance from the citizens outside Zimbabwe who have come up with alternatives to resist the situation. This clearly shows that Zimbabwean citizens are really in need of truth and impartiality, hence a call for a platform where they can freely express themselves. The engagement in social and political discussions online despite government surveillance and the use of alternative avenues to obtain dissenting views distributed outside Zimbabwe demonstrates the desire of the citizens for more critical and liberated opinions.

Of greater importance too is that many citizens in Zimbabwe access the Internet mostly via the cellphone. Most of the citizens are on social networks like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Significantly most of the citizens only use the social networks on a daily basis to communicate with friends and family and not to engage in online political deliberations. Hence, the prevalence of Internet or the presence of social networks like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter does not imply that the citizens will eventually use them for engaging in political

discourses. Hence, there is more to citizen participation than merely accessing the Internet or being on social networks. Thus in line with Groshek (2009) this study confirms that the prevalence of Internet alone does not eventually leads to democracy. The Internet is available, but the citizens are not at liberty to use it to deliberate on political issues. This implies that other factors need to be favourable for the Internet to advance citizen participation in Zimbabwe.

As demonstrated in chapter 7 the circumstances prevailing in Zimbabwe would force one to argue that the adoption of the Internet alone as a mechanism to promote citizen participation will not yield much in the democratisation process of the country. It is of great importance to note that the arena for public involvement and freedom of expression in Zimbabwe is closely aligned to the political and socio-economic setting of the state. This implies that an attempt to implement ICTs only to advance the democratisation process in Zimbabwe will not yield the best results. Alongside the implementation of the Internet to promote citizen involvement, socio-economic and political changes are required in conjunction with the adoption of the Internet.

Without changes in the other spheres, the adoption of the Internet solely is bound to be fruitless as far as democracy is concerned. This idea is supported by Dada (2006 cited in Nyirenda, 2009) who argues that e-government alone is inadequate for developing countries to attain the benefits of increased public engagement. Instead, both political and social changes are a prerequisite in conjunction with the application of ICT to affect government.

Furthermore, the high levels of poverty and economic deficiency in Zimbabwe have resulted in citizens to be more concerned with issues of survival. In such a situation, the Internet is a luxury that many cannot afford. This has left the citizens without a voice as they have become primarily preoccupied with issues of basic survival. Official economic data indicates that eight out of ten Zimbabweans are outside the formal employment system; a significant majority of which are youth (Mataruse, 2012:25). This has negatively affected citizen participation in that citizens are preoccupied with activities that they perceive to be addressing their present needs or activities that are beneficial. Thus, Sachikonye et al. (2007:54) argue that “a combination of the economic decline that the country has been going through and severe curtailment of civil liberties through repressive legislation has contributed to the general disengagement of the citizenry from civic participation, a situation that is not healthy for democratic consolidation.”

In addition, as discussed in the preceding chapters, (chapter 6 and 7) the Zimbabwean constitution guarantees certain fundamental freedoms that include liberty of speech, movement, association, to mention but a few. Nonetheless, in reality the government of Zimbabwe has not defended these freedoms. Political disagreement coupled with repressive legislation has not had any positive effects on the alienated citizens to actively participate in socio-economic and political processes. Through the implementation of harsh laws the government has succeeded in silencing the citizens.

Furthermore, as revealed by the findings, community integration is not very strong amongst the citizens. Political differences have resulted in disunity amongst the citizens. As a result the citizens cannot get together and speak with one voice against ill treatment from the government. The government has taken advantage of this disunity amongst the citizens to exploit them and close the space for deliberations. When another citizen raises a concern, he or she cannot get support from other citizens. The criticism is not constructive, in other instances some citizens are attacked verbally. As a result, some citizens have seen it better to stay completely out of politics. It does not matter whether people belong to the same political party; there are so many factions within the same party resulting in detestation and divisions. Because of all that citizen participation in the democratisation process through the Internet has not been very meaningful. As a result of the absence of community cohesion; communities are no longer able to speak with one voice when they engage with the government. Because of these and other similar reasons, citizens' view of participation remains to a large extent, individualistic in nature and limits the cohesion that facilitates effective public participation.

Additionally, as discussed previously, public participation in practice implies that citizens must have trust in the system believing their participation can impact decisions and ultimately affect change where deemed necessary. In Zimbabwe, there is a general lack of trust in the political system. The findings revealed that the citizens do not trust that if they meaningfully participate in public and political life, the system would reflect their views, opinions and aspirations. Most of the citizens believe that the system has let them down, even if they contribute their views, they are not taken cognisance of. Hence it is useless to contribute. In other words, a democratic culture is missing in Zimbabwe; people no longer have faith in the system. In most instances when the citizens are consulted on certain issues it ends there, their views and recommendations are not incorporated in final decisions. Thus participation rarely goes beyond consulting. Consultations alone do not guarantee that citizens' participation has

an influence or bearing on final decisions made. The government needs to create trust such that the citizens believe and trust them and the political system.

Whilst some incidents indicate that the ruling elite considers public views expressed on the Internet earnestly, at some point debates on the Internet have altered topical issues in the real world. Nevertheless, one might ask if the Internet technologies will transform Zimbabwe into a democratic country. Though the Internet has been instrumental in providing citizens with more access to information and more channels to communicate with other people in a more effective way in terms of costs, boundaries and time, to a greater extent not much has been achieved as far as the employment of Internet for political deliberations is concerned.

Based on the findings from this research, one can conclude that new media technologies, far from eloquently improving the way Zimbabweans participate politically, are yet to demonstrate their full potential. The subject of the application of Internet for citizen participation in Zimbabwe is complex and multidimensional. Subsequently, it must be addressed not only on technological perspectives, but also from the social, cultural, economic and political points of view. The Internet or communication technology alone is still far from advancing citizen participation in Zimbabwe. Though there is a possibility of the Internet to enrich the social, economic and political wellbeing of the citizens, there are other issues that need to be addressed first.

Though there are technological challenges in Zimbabwe, lack of awareness also exists among the citizens. As discussed in Chapter 7, some citizens are not aware of some technological initiatives that the government offers. It was evident from the interviews that most of the participants were not aware of the availability of legislation online and also government ministries websites. On the one hand the citizens are to blame for such ignorance; on the other hand the government is to blame too. There should be programs put in place to make the citizens aware of such initiatives.

Fear amongst the citizens has also been noted as one of the barriers to citizen participation. The citizens fear the consequences of their online deliberations. They fear that if they engage in debates that are critical of the government of the day, they will be punished. Past events, for instance, the brutality that the opposition party members have been treated with, some lost their family members, have incited fear in citizens such that they do not want to be active in online political deliberations. These have resulted in the unwillingness and powerlessness of citizens to actively participate in political deliberations. The citizens might have the Internet

and have unrestricted access to it, but what is important is their readiness and determination to use it for political purposes. That is still lacking in the case of Zimbabwe. There are plenty of fearless people who have confronted some of the government officials. Indeed, there are plenty of citizens outside Zimbabwe who have taken them to task by using the Internet and new media platforms to denounce their alleged misrule. However, there is still a long way to go before the platforms can have a direct influence on the Zimbabwean political climate. New media thus empowered Zimbabweans with information, but political participation requires more than just access to information. They may be exposed to information, but the biggest threat to full and enhanced participation lies in their inability to overcome the fear of the unknown, that is, the fear of the government's secret service. The mere fact that authoritarian governments strongly seek to contain and regulate the Internet highlights the immense potential of the Internet in harnessing democracy.

There is more to the situation in Zimbabwe as far as the democratisation process is concerned. The employment of communication technologies only cannot bring about socio-political or even economic transformation. Citizens of a country should have the ability to exercise power over their experiences and communally act, and develop the audacity to determine their fate. Placing the Internet at the disposal of ordinary citizens who have the power to manipulate it to change their situation is something. However, providing someone who is not an activist with Internet does not imply that that person will eventually become one. There are several countries, for instance South Africa (as discussed in the literature review chapter) that have the Internet at their disposal and do not put much restriction on how the citizens use the Internet and yet the citizens have not applied it for citizen participation. There is more to it, than just the availability of Internet for citizens to engage in politics.

Despite the promising figures, Internet is still very much controlled and accessed by members of an elite club, most of them living in the major cities, thereby excluding the rural citizens from participating. Just like many African states, using online media for a country like Zimbabwe is problematic because there is inadequate infrastructure, the country is not wired adequately to allow the majority of citizens, who live in poor rural areas, to access the news and get involved in the public deliberations on issues which affect them. At the end of the day, those who are left out are the ones who have grievances that are supposed to be addressed through engaging in public discourse. But because they are left out their situation becomes even worse.

However, in an ideal world it should be noted that providing the citizens with the Internet is not the ultimate solution. Rather, it is a vehicle through which citizens can get to know their rights better and acquire knowledge of the rights that accrue to them and realise their entitlement. Through access to information the citizens should be empowered in a manner that reduce poverty, and enable them to demand accountability from their representatives and in a way make them to be aware of their rights as citizens. That is the reason why the ruling elite in countries like Zimbabwe restrict access to information so that they retain political power.

In a way, one might be forced to argue that citizens of a country might employ the Internet to participate in political activities, but only if they are convinced that it will work to bring about any changes. This implies that the offline environment must be favourable in such a way that it promotes public involvement in politics and also support interaction amongst citizens, citizen to government interaction and information production. Whereas several social media platforms are available in Zimbabwe, the usage thereof is constrained by low Internet diffusion. As a result the utilisation of Internet as a mechanism for mass organisations is limited. On the other hand, even with the segment of those who have Internet access and use it oftenly, there is no synchronised application of social networks to mobilise the masses for transformation in politics.

As a result of the prevailing circumstances in Zimbabwe one is forced to argue that the Internet has not yet necessarily provided an ideal public sphere to the citizens but just a public space. This is so because to a certain extent access to information facilitated by the Internet, has not yet steered growth as far as political participation is concerned or even confidence in the political dispensation. The benefits of the Internet are still being enjoyed by a selected few who can access it, those who have the connecting devices at their disposal, thus harbouring an illusion of an open public sphere. In addition, while digitally enabling the citizens, the Internet is at the same time reproducing class, gender and race inequalities of the offline public sphere or of the mainstream media.

For that reason, the Internet is just an instrument that facilitates dissemination of ideas, opinions and the receiving of information worldwide. As has been explained in the findings discussed above, one is forced to agree with Loo (2007:22) when he asserts that “the democratising influence of the Internet is only as effective as allowed for by the country’s communication, political, legal and institutional structures, the public discursive culture and

the people's readiness to actively engage in the political process by using the Internet as a medium for this engagement." This means that the adoption of Internet for political deliberations varies from place to place as has been shown in the literature review. Some states have adopted it so that their citizens may engage more in political decisions but some like Zimbabwe are still threatened by the platform that the Internet affords, hence are striving to guard the citizens against its use.

In actual fact, technology does not intrinsically cultivate democracy neither does it hinder citizen involvement in governance issues. Rather the citizens determine what they want to use the Internet for, be it socialising with friends or criticizing the government. This means that the democratisation potential of the Internet should be realised by the Zimbabwean citizens and be effectively applied to enhance citizen participation.

Democracy entails active unrestricted engagement between the public and their representatives. This comprises of regular communication in which opinions and views about matters of public interest are exchanged and this can be well facilitated by the Internet technologies. This can result in the making of decisions which are acceptable on both parts. Hence, access to the Internet is essential as a means to provide the citizens with a platform to engage the government. If the government embrace the Internet technology fully it has the capacity to change the way citizens communicate in a positive way and through this dialogic process the way the government functions can be transformed too. Thus Groshek argues that increasing media dependency effects are seen with increasing democratisation, the more democratic a state is, the more formidable a force for liberalisation the Internet can be (Groshek, 2009).

In an effort to expound on the input of Internet technologies in aiding citizen participation in Zimbabwe a number of issues have arisen. Although the platforms afforded by the Internet can be put to good use to promote democracy, good governance and adherence to civil liberties and the rule of law, it is not simple and clear cut that this is what always happens. The Internet in the hands of the authoritarian is bound to be misused and manipulated to consolidate their power base. In response to the online challenges, the mainstream and prodictatorships are utilising both older and newer forms of the media. In Zimbabwe, a catalogue of counteracting measures adopted by the despotic regime have been highlighted, some as baffling as compelling people to pull down their satellite dishes and confiscating their radios (Chatora, 2009:78). The absence of political will is also a barrier to participation.

8.3 Implications of the findings

As mentioned earlier, the success of the use of Internet for citizen participation heavily relies upon other factors such that its use in different states may not bring out the same results. The view that the new media technologies are at the centre of bringing democratic revolution worldwide should be cautiously uttered bearing in mind the different contexts in which these technologies are being applied. This study has shown how inadequate the Internet has been in empowering people for citizen participation in Zimbabwe. The thesis has also accentuated several of the convolutions surrounding the probable success of the application of Internet to advance democracy bearing in mind issues of availability, willingness, legal frameworks, access and state cynicism to mention but a few.

Consequently it does not follow that since the Internet was instrumental in bringing democracy to other African countries, the same can be functional in Zimbabwe. Different socio-political and economic conditions prevailing in different countries result in yielding different outcomes. Hence it is a gross distortion of facts to assume that because the Internet played a major role in bringing democracy to other African states like Egypt, Tunisia and Libya the same outcomes in another country like Zimbabwe will follow. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the Internet is unlikely to enhance the democratisation process in Zimbabwe in the near future unless there are changes in other spheres of influence. Nevertheless, the Internet has the potential to contribute very positively to the notion of a democratic society, but it is not yet used to its full potential in Zimbabwe.

8.4 Recommendations

Mobile phone technology seems to be playing a prominent role in democratising the political space in Africa. Somewhere else in Africa, cell phones have been attributed with assisting the independent media, mostly radio, to provide accurate coverage of elections. Since the cellphone is more affordable and most citizens access Internet via the cell phone than other ICT technologies, can Zimbabweans also turn to mobile phones to help boost citizen participation in a bid to advance democracy? Loader (2012) is of the opinion that new media technologies afford citizens an opportunity to bring about change in democratic institutions and practices. Nevertheless, it is vital to note that optimism has dominated largely unproven and superficially idealistic claims connecting citizen participation and digital technologies with the augmentation of democratic participation in Africa. However, empirical evidence to substantiate these notions is still lacking. Hence, thorough and careful research is needed.

Furthermore, since the findings of the research suggest that to some extent Zimbabweans abroad are engaging in online political discussions and yet practically on the ground they do not implement their deliberations, further research may concentrate on how participation online can precipitate offline activities.

It has also emerged in the study that citizen participation through the platform afforded by the Internet is to some extent hampered by lack of freedom of expression online. It may be profitable to research further on the likelihood of Internet corporations in taking an active part in protecting the rights of citizens to freely express themselves online.

The outcomes of this study indicate that digital democracy practises may only be established and developed in particular institutional and legal contexts. In some countries that are autocratic the development of ICTs to enhance public participation maybe fruitless. Hence, further research would be useful to identify how these variations may affect digital democracy's relevance in enhancing citizen participation in democratic practices.

8.5 Limitations of this study

The interviews of this study were conducted in South Africa with Zimbabwean expatriates. If the interviews were carried out in Zimbabwe more diverse views and opinions on the study could have emerged and boosted the analysis of this research. Additionally, most of the respondents had a higher educational level, meaning the same results would have not likely been obtained from users who are poorly educated. Hence spending more time observing and talking to people on the ground would have complemented the findings of this research. However, the researcher is satisfied with the amount of data obtained and used for this research.

9. REFERENCE LIST

ACE. 2013. The ACE Encyclopaedia: Media and Elections

Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act see Zimbabwe

Ake, C. 1993. Rethinking African Democracy. (In Diamond, L. and Plattner, M.F., eds. The Global Resurgence of Democracy. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press. p. 63-76).

Ake, C. 1993. The unique case of African democracy. *International Affairs*, 69(2).

Alden, C. 2004. For most Africans Internet Access is little more than a pipe dream. *Online journalism review*, Accessed: 2013-05-08, <http://www.ojr.org/ojr/workplace>

Alexander, K. 2006. The Future of Democratic Politics in Zimbabwe. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, <http://www.ijr.org.za/transitionaljustice/zimbabwemonitor/debate>, 8 October 2008.

Al-sebaei, M.O. 2013. Egyptian Diasporas, Social Media, and the 2011 Egyptian Revolution: how Egyptians Living in Saudi Arabia used Social Media during the Revolution. Grand Valley State University. (Thesis - MA).

Ani, E.I. 2013. Africa and the prospects of deliberative democracy. *South African journal of philosophy*, 32 (3) 207-219.

Annan, K. 1997. Address to the World Bank Conference: Global Knowledge '97. Toronto, Canada. June 22. Internet: <http://www.ctcnet.org/kannan/html> Accessed: May 2008

Asiimwe, E.N and Lim, N. 2010. Usability of Government Websites in Uganda. *Electronic journal of e-government*, 8 (1):1-12. <http://www.ejeg.com> (Accessed 23 September 2014).

Atton, C. 2002. Alternative media. London: Thousand Oaks.

Ayres, J.M. 1999. From the streets to the Internet: the cyber-diffusion of contention. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 566:132-43.

Babatunde, F. 2014. 'The (democratic) future is ours to create': Youth and democratisation in Africa. *African journal of democracy and governance*, 1(1):33-46.

Babbie, E.R. 2010. The Basics of Social Research. 5th ed. Wadsworth: Cengage Learning.

Bailard, C.S. 2011. A Field Experiment on the Internet's Effect in an African Election: Savvier Citizens, Disaffected Voters, or Both?

Bailey, O.G., Cammaerts, B. & Carpentier, N. 2008. Understanding alternative media. England: Open University Press.

Banda, F. 2006. Media in the Service of Citizens. Inaugural Press Freedom Day Lecture Series, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 3 May 2006. Date of access 15 September 2013

- Banks, K. 2010. Mobile technology gives Zimbabweans a voice. National Geographic. 21 December 2010.
- Barber, B. 1984. Strong Democracy: participatory politics for a new age. California: University of California Press.
- Becker, T. 2001. Rating the impact of new technologies on democracy. *Communications of the ACM*, 44(1):39–43.
- Bellah, R.N. 1995. Community Properly Understood: A Defence of `Democratic Communitarianism. *The responsive community*, Winter, 1995/1996: 49-54.
- Benhabib, S. 1996. Towards a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy. (In Benhabib, Democracy and Difference. Contesting the Boundaries of the Political. Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Berkowitz, P. 1995. Communitarian criticisms and liberal lessons. *The Responsive Community*, Fall. p. 54-64.
- Berman, J. & Witzner, D.J. 1997. Technology and democracy. *Social Research*, 64(3):1313.
- Bernard, H.R. 2000. Social Research Methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bertaux, D. 1981. From the life-history approach to the transformation of sociological practice. (In Bertaux, D., ed. Biography and Society: The life history approach in the social sciences. London: Sage).
- Best, M. L., & Wade, K. W. 2005. The Internet and democracy: Global catalyst or democratic dud? The Berkman Center for Internet & Society, Research Publication 2005. Date of Access: March 15, 2013, from <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/publications>
- Best, M.L. & Wade, K.W. 2009. The Internet and Democracy: Global Catalyst or Democratic Dud? *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society*, 29(4):255-271.
- Bimber, B. 2001. Information and political engagement in America: The search for effects of information technology at the individual level. *Political Research Quarterly*, 54(1):53-67.
- Bimber, B. 2003. Information and American democracy: technology in the evolution of political power. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Black, D.C. 2009. Assessing Complementary Practice. Building Consensus on appropriate research methods. London: The Kings' Fund.
- Blood, R. 2000. Weblogs: a history and perspective. Available: http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog_history.html Date of Access: 28 January 2014

- Boeije, H. 2010. *Analysis in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Boulianne, S. 2009. Does Internet Use Affect Engagement? A Meta-Analysis of Research. *Political Communication*, 26(2):193-211.
- Bourgault, L.M. 1995. *Mass Media in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Bowen, G.A. 2009. Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2):27-40.
- Bowman, S. & Willis, C. 2003. *We media: how audiences are shaping the future of news and information*. The Media Center at the American Press Institute.
- Boyce, C. & Neale, P. 2006. *Conducting In-depth interviews: A Guide for Designing and Conducting In-depth Interviews for Evaluation Input*. USA: Pathfinder International.
- Brainard, L. A. and Siplon, P. D. 2000. Cyberspace challenges to mainstream advocacy groups: the case of health care activism. Presented at the 2000 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. Marriot Wardman Park.
- Bratton, M., and Van de Walle, N. 1997. *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Transitions in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bratton, M., Mattes, R. & Boadi, E.G. 2005. *Public Opinion, Democracy, and Market Reform in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Breindl, Y. 2010. Critique of the Democratic Potentialities of the Internet: a review of current theory and practice. *TrippleC*, 8(1):43-59.
- Bremmer, I. 2010. Democracy in Cyberspace: What Information Technology Can and Cannot Do. *Foreign affairs*, 89(6):86-92.
- Broadcasting Services Act see Zimbabwe.
- Burham, P., Gilland, K., Grant, W. & Layton-Henry, Z. 2004. *Research Methods in Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Burnard, P., Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E. & Chadwick, B. 2008. Analysing and presenting qualitative data. *British dental journal*, 204(8):429-432.
- Bushu, A. 2015. *Mobile Market Look: Zimbabwe* (March 2, 2015).
- Bvuma, T.S. 1998. *Having it Both Ways: Dual Policy. Analysis and Evaluation of Zimbabwe Government Information Policy, 1980-1998*. Oslo: University of Oslo. (Dissertation - MA).
- Calhoun, C., ed. 1992. *Habermas and the public sphere*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

- Calista, D.J., Melitski, J. Holzer, M. & Manoharan, A. 2010. Digitized government in worldwide municipalities between 2003 and 2007. *International journal of public administration*, 33(12-13):588-600.
- Carothers, T. 2002. The end of the Transition Paradigm. *Journal of Democracy*, 13(1):4-21.
- Carter, L & Belanger, F. 2004. Citizen adoption of electronic government initiatives. Proceedings of the 37th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences. <http://www.computer.org/comp/proceeding/hicss/2004/.../205650119c.pdf> Date of access:3 Mar. 2013.
- Castells, M. 1996. The rise of the network society. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers.
- Castells, M. 2000. The Information Age: economy, society and culture. UK: Blackwell.
- Castells, M. 2001. The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business and Society. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Castells, M. 2008. The New Public Sphere: Global civil society, communication networks, and global governance. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616(1)78-93.
- Cilliers, J., Hughes, B & Moyer, J. 2011. African futures 2050: The next forty years. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies.
- Chamisa, N. 2011. BlackBerry row over Zimbabwe service licence. *Pretoria News*: 6, 28 June.
- Chari, T. 2007. Rethinking ethical issues in African media. *African identities*, 5(1):39-60.
- Chari, T. 2009. Ethical challenges facing Zimbabwean media in the context of the Internet. *Global media journal*, 3(1):46-80.
- Charmaz, K. 2006. Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis. London: SAGE Publications.
- Chaterera, F. 2012. Towards harnessing e-government adoption in Zimbabwe. *Mousaion*, 30(2):92-107.
- Chazan, N. 1990. Africa's democratic challenge. *World policy journal*, 279-307.
- Chikerema, A.F. 2013. Citizen Participation and Local Democracy in Zimbabwean Local Government System. *IOSR Journal of humanities and social science*, 13(2):87-90.
- Chikwanha, A.B. 2009. The trajectory of human rights violations in Zimbabwe. Institute for Security Studies Paper 2002. October 2009. Pretoria: ISS.
- Chiumbu, S. 2013. Knowledge and ideas in context of power: rethinking media policy and reform in South Africa. *Africanus*, 43(2):64-77.

- Chuma, W. 2005. Zimbabwe: The media, market failure and Political turbulence: research section. *Eccquid Novi*, 26 (1):42-62.
- Chuma, W. 2007. Mediating the transition: The press, state and capital in a changing Zimbabwe, 1980-2004. Unpublished doctoral thesis. University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.
- Cilliers, J, Hughes, B & Moyer, J. 2011. African futures 2050: The next forty years. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies.
- Cleaver, H. 1999. Computer-linked social movements and the global threat to capitalism. On-line. Available : <http://www.eco.utexas.edu/Homepages/faculty/Cleaver/polnet.html> (8 April 2005).
- Coleman, S. 2009. Making parliamentary democracy visible: Speaking to, with, and for the public in an age of interactive technology. (In Chadwick, A. & Howard, P.N., eds. Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics. New York: Routledge).
- Coleman, S. and J.G. Blumler. 2009. The Internet and democratic citizenship –Theory, practice and policy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Colesca, S.E & Liliana, D. 2009. E-government adoption in Romania. *International journal of human and social science*, 4(14):1040–1044.
- Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act. 2013. Government Printers, Harare.
- Cooke, M. 2000. Five arguments for deliberative democracy. *Political Studies*, 48:947–969.
- Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. 2008. Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J.W. 1998. Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. 2002. Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Pearson Education.
- Creswell, J.W. 2008. Educational Research: Planning and Evaluating Quantitative Research and Qualitative Research. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Merrill Prentice – Hall.
- Creswell, J.W. 2009b. Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. 6th ed. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Curran, J. 1991. Mass Media and Democracy: A Re-Appraisal. (In Curran, J & Gurevitch, M., eds. Mass Media and Society. London: Edward Arnold.

- Dada, D. 2006. The Failure of E-Government in Developing Countries: A Literature Review. *The Electronic Journal on Information Systems in Developing Countries*, 26(7):1-10.
- Dandjinou, P. 2002. E-Parliament as a tool for fostering parliamentary networks. United Nations Development Programme.
- Dahl, R.A. 1994. A Democratic Dilemma: System Effectiveness versus Citizen Participation. *Political Science Quarterly*, 109(1):23-34.
- Dahl, R.A. 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Dahlberg, L. 2001. Extending the public sphere through cyberspace: The Case of Minnesota E-democracy. Available: www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue6_3/dahlberg/index.html # note 2
- Dahlberg, L. 2001b. The Internet and Democratic Discourse: Exploring the prospects of online deliberative forums extending the public sphere. *Information Communication and Society*, 4(4):615- 633.
- Dahlgren, P. 2005. The Internet, Public Spheres and Political Communications: Dispersion and Deliberation. *Political Communication*, 22 (2):147-162.
- Dakroury, A. 2006. Pluralism and the right to communicate in Canada. *Media development: Journal of the world association for Christian communication*, LIII(1):36-40.
- Danziger, J. N., Dutton, W., Kling, R. & Kraemer, K. 1982. *Computers and politics: high technology in American local governments*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deibert, R., Palfrey, J., Rohozinski, and Zittrain, J., eds. 2008. *Access Denied: The Practice and Policy of Global Internet Filtering*. MIT Press.
- Deibert, R. & R. Rohozinski. 2010. Liberation vs. control: The future of cyberspace. *Journal of Democracy*, 21(4):43–57.
- deMarrias, K. 2004. Qualitative interview studies: Learning through experience. (In deMarrias, K. & Lapan, S.D., eds. *Foundations for research: methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. p. 51-68).
- Demchak, C.C. & Dombrowski, P. 2011. Rise of a cybered Westphalian age. *Strategic studies quarterly*, 5(1):32–61.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. 2008. *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. 3rd ed. London: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. 2008. Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. (In Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S., eds. *Strategies of qualitative inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. p. 1-44).

- Diamond, L. 1996. Is the Third Wave Over? *Journal of democracy*, 7(3):20-37.
- Diamond, L. 1999. Introduction. (In Diamond, L., & Plattner, M.F., eds. *Democratisation in Africa*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press).
- Diamond, L. 2010. Liberation Technology. *Journal of democracy*, 21(3):69-83.
- Diani, M. 2000. Social Movement Networks Virtual and Real. *Information, Communication and Society* 3(3):386-401.
- Dorr Goold, S., Neblo, M.A., Kim, S.Y.H., de Vries, R., Rowe, G., Muhlberger, P. 2012. What is good public deliberation? *Hastings Center Report* 42(2): 24–26
- Downs, A. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Drezner, D.W. 2010. Weighing the Scales: The Internet's Effect on State-Society Relations. *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, XV1(11):31-44.
- Dryzek, J. S. 1999. Transnational Democracy. *The journal of political philosophy*, 7(1):44.
- Dryzek, J. 2004. Legitimacy and economy in deliberative democracy. (In Farrelly, C. ed. *Contemporary political theory: A reader*. London: Sage Publications. p. 242-261).
- Dunn, J. 2005. *Democracy*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press.
- Dwayne, W. & Marlene C. 1997. From Communication to Democratic Norms: Reflections on the Normative Dimensions of International Communication Policy. *International communication gazette*, 59: 1-20.
- Ekstrom, Y., Hansen, A.H. & Boothby, H. 2011. The Globalization of the Pavement: A Tanzanian case study.
- Elin, L. 2003. The radicalization of Zeke Spier: how the Internet contributes to civic engagement and new forms of social capital. (In McCaughey, M. and Ayers, M.D., eds. *Cyberactivism: online activism in theory and practice*. New York: Routledge. p. 97-114).
- Eyck, T. 2001. Does Information Matter? A research note on information technologies and political protest. *Social science journal*, 38(2001):147-160.
- Feezell, J.T., Conroy, M.M. Guerrero. 2009. Facebook is fostering Political Engagement: A study of Online Social Networking Groups and Offline Participation. For presentation at the American Political Science Association meeting in Toronto, Canada. Sept 2009.
- Feltoe, G. 1993. *Guide to Press Law in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Legal Resources Foundation.
- Fernandez-Quijada, D. & Arboledas, L. 2013. The Clientelistic Nature of Television Policies in Democratic Spain. *Mass communication and society*, 16(2):200-222.
- Fiss, O. 1995. The Death of a Public Intellectual. (In Koh, H.H & Slye, R.C., eds. *Deliberative Democracy and Human Rights: Introduction*. p. 21-33).

- Flew, T. and Cunningham, S. 1997. Media Policy. (In Parkin, A. Summers, J. & Woodward, D., eds. Government, Politics, Power and Policy in Australia. Longman, Melbourne: Longman. p. 468-485).
- Fortman, B. 1994. Conceptualizing Democracy in an African Context. *An International African Journal of Philosophy*, 8(1):61-75.
- Freedom House, 2013. Freedom on the Net: Zimbabwe
- Freelon, D.G. 2010. Analysing online political discussion using three models of democratic communication. *New media and society*. XX(X): 1-19. Date of access:13 October from <http://nms.sagepub.com/content/early/2010/04/22/1461444809357927>
- Garrett, R.K. 2006. Protest in an Information Society: A Review of Literature on Social Movements and New ICTs. *Information, Communication and Society*, 9(2):202-224. Available:<http://journalonline.tandf.co.uk/openurl.asp?genre=article&id=doi:10.1080/13691180600630773>
- Garrett, R.K. & Jensen, M.J. 2010. E-Democracy Writ Small: The Impact of the Internet on Citizen Access to local elected officials. *Forthcoming in Information, Communication and Society*.
- Gaventa, J. and Valderrama, C. 1999. Participation, Citizenship and Local Governance. Background note prepared for workshop on 'Strengthening participation in local governance Institute of Development Studies. June 21-24.
- Gerhards, S. & Schafer, M.S. 2009. Is the Internet a better public sphere? Comparing old and new media in the US and Germany. *New media and society*, XX(X):1-18.
- Gibson, R., Lusoli, W., & Ward, S. 2005. Online participation in the UK: Testing a "contextualized" model of Internet effects. *Policy Studies Association*, 7(4), 561-583.
- Gillwald, A., & Stork, C. 2008. ICT access and usage in Africa. *Toward Evidence-based ICT Policy and Regulation*, 1(2):ii.
- Government of Zimbabwe ICT Policy, 2005.
- Grojec, W. 2013. Schemes of Internet control and political liberalization. Uppsala University. (Thesis-MA).
- Groshek, J. 2009. The Democratic Effects of the Internet, 1994-2003. *The International communication gazette*, 71(3):115-136.
- Groshek, J. 2010. A Time-Series, Multinational Analysis of Democratic Forecasts and Internet Diffusion. *International journal of communication*, 4 (2010):142-174.
- Groshek, J. 2011. Media, instability, and democracy: Examining the Granger-causal relationships of 122 Countries from 1946 to 2003. *Journal of communication*, 61:1161-1182.

- Groshek, J. 2012. Forecasting and Observing: A cross-methodological consideration of Internet and mobile phone diffusion in the Egyptian revolt. *The International communication gazette*, 74 (8):750-768.
- Grossman, L. K. 1995. Maintaining Diversity in the Electronic Republic. *Technology review*, 98 (1995):22-26.
- Grugel, J. 2002. Democratization: a Critical Introduction. New York: Palgrave.
- Grune, A. & Ulrich, D. 2012. Editorial: (De-) Westernizing Media and Journalism Studies: Demarcating, Transcending and Subverting Borders. *Global Media Journal*, 2(2):1-10.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A. & Johnson, L. 2006. How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field methods*, 18(1):59-82.
- Guion, L.A., Diehl, D.C. & McDonald, D. 2011. Conducting an in-depth interview <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy393> (accessed in 2014)
- Gutmann, A. & Thompson, D. 1996. Democracy and Disagreement Why Moral Conflict Cannot Be Avoided in Politics, and What Should Be Done About It. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Habermas, J. 1979. The public sphere. (In Mattelart, A. & Seigelaub, S., eds. Communications and the class struggle, Volume 1. New York: International General).
- Habermas J. 1984. The Theory of Communicative Action. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, J. 1989. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an enquiry into a category of bourgeois society. Cambridge: Polity
- Habermas, J. 1990. Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Habermas, J. 1991. The structural transformation of the public sphere. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Habermas, J. 1992. Post metaphysical thinking. Massachusetts, Institute of Technology: Cambridge, MA.
- Habermas, J. 1994. Three Normative Models of Democracy. In *Constellations*, 1(1). Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Habermas, J. 1996. Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Habermas, J. 1997. A Berlin Republic: Writings on Germany. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Habermas, J. 2001. Constitutional Democracy - A Paradoxical Union of Contradictory Principles? *Political Theory*, 29 (6):766-781.

- Hacker, K. & Van Dijk, J. 2000. *Digital Democracy: Issues of Theory and Practice*. London: Sage.
- Hahn, C. 2008. *Doing Qualitative Research Using Your Computer: a practical guide*. London: Sage.
- Haider, A. 2009. Contribution of internet to a democratic society. Paper presented at ECIS 2009 Proceedings. Paper 299. University of South Australia.
<http://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2009/299>
- Hall, R. 2008. *Applied Social Research: Planning, Designing and Conducting Real-world Research*. South Yarra: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hamelink, C. J. 1999. *Preserving media independence: regulatory frameworks*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.
- Hamelink, C.J. & Hoffmann, J. 2008. The state of the right to communicate. *Global media journal*, 7(13).
- Hameso, S. 2002. Issues and dilemmas of multi-party democracy in Africa. *West Africa review*, 3(2).
- Hamilton, L. 2013. Zimbabwe Elections: A manifestation of regional ailments. *African conflict monthly monitor*. p. 80-85
- Harrison, J. 2006. *NEWS*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Harvey, S. 1998. Doing it My Way- Broadcasting Regulation in Capitalist Cultures: The Case of 'Fairness' and 'Impartiality'. *Media, culture and society*, 20(4):535-556.
- Haug, A.V. 2007. Local democracy online. *Journal of information technology and politics*, 4(2):79-99.
- Held, D., ed. 1993. *Prospects for Democracy: North, South, East, West*. Stanford; California: Stanford University Press.
- Held, D. 2006. *Models of Democracy*. 3rd ed. USA: Stanford University Press.
- Henderson, I. 2008. The Internet and democracy in Africa. *Conflict Trends*, (4):18-24.
- Henrik, S.C. 2013. Broadening Democratic Participation? An exploratory study of e-democracy in 188 Finnish municipalities. *Scandinavian journal of public administration*, 17(3):3-21.
- Herman, E.S. & McChesney, R.W. 1997. *The global media: the missionaries of corporate capitalism*. Cassell.

- Heuva, W.E. 2010. Transforming communication in a changing milieu: Challenges and contradictions of reform in Namibia. Kolm (Germany): LAP Lambert Publishing AG & Co.KG.
- Holmes, S. 1995. Liberal Constraints on Private Power? : Reflections on the Origins and Rationale of Access Regulation. (In Lichtenberg, J. ed. Democracy and the Mass Media. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Hove, E.F. 2015. Sites of Protest: Alternative Online News Sites in Zimbabwe. *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(5A):997-1002.
- Howard, P.N. 2011. The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy. Oxford : Oxford University Press.
- Howard, P., Duffy, A., Freelon, D., Hussain, M., Mari, W., & Maziad, M. 2011. Opening closed regimes: what was the role of social media during the Arab spring? PITPI. Working Report, 1-30. Retrieved from <http://pitpi.org/index.php/2011/09/11/openingclosed-regimes-what-was-the-role-of-social-media-during-the-arab-spring/>
- Hungbo, J. 2008. The Wilderness of the Public Sphere: Clandestine Radio in Africa. CODESRIA 12th General Assembly: Governing the African Public Sphere. 07-11 December 2008.
- Ihonvbere, J. O. 2000. How to make an undemocratic constitution: the Nigerian example. *Third world quarterly*, 21:343-366.
- Interception of Communications Act see Zimbabwe
- International Telecommunication Union. 2004. World telecommunication indicators. Geneva, Switzerland: Author
- Internet World Stats. 2014. Internet Usage Statistics for Africa. April 31, 2014.
- Isike, C. & Uzodike, U.O. 2009. The role of the African media in the democratisation process: leaders, martyrs or culprits. *AFFRIKA Journal of politics, economics and society*, 1(1):68-97.
- International Telecommunication Union. 2011. ICT and Telecommunications in Least Developed Countries: Review of Progress made during the Decade 2000-2010.
- Jacob, C. 1988. Statistical Power Analysis for the behavioural Sciences. 2nd ed. New Jersey: Erlbaum Associates.
- Jafari, J. 2003. Attacks from Within: Zimbabwe's Assault on Basic Freedoms through Legislation. *Human rights brief*, 10(3): 6-10.
- Jankowski, N. & Van Selm, M. 2000. The promise and practice of public debate in Cyberspace. (In Hacker, K. L. & van Dijk, J., eds. Digital Democracy: Issues of Theory and Practice. London: Sage).

Janse van Rensburg, A.H. 2012. Using the Internet for Democracy: A study of South Africa, Kenya and Zambia. *Global media journal African edition*, 6(1):93-116.

Jensen, M. 2000. Making the connection: Africa and the Internet. In: *Current History*, May 2000.

Jensen, M.R. 2001. Policies and Strategies for Accelerating Africa's Information Infrastructure Development. (In Nulens, G., Hafkin, N., Van Audenhove, L. & Cammaerts, B., eds. *The digital divide in developing countries: towards an information society in Africa*. VUB: Brussels University Press).

Johnson, D. 2001. *Computer ethics*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Jones, P. 2000. Democratic norms and means of communication: Public sphere, fourth estate, freedom of communication. *Critical horizons*, 1(2):307-339.

Jorgensen, R. K. 2001. Internet and Freedom of Expression. Raoul Wallenberg Institute. (Dissertation: MA).

Joy-Webb, C.P. 2011. The Role of Technology and Social Media in Strengthening Resistance Movements: A comparative analysis of the revolutions in Iran and Egypt, 2009-2011. Simon Fraser University: Canada. (Dissertation: MA).

Joyce, M. 2010. How to Think about Digital Activism. (In Joyce, M., ed. *Digital activism decoded: the new mechanics of change*. New York: International Debate Education Association. p. 1-15).

Judd, F. 1992. Fair's fair: Democracy, Social Justice, Sustainable Development and International Synergy. Development. *Journal of the society for international development*, 3:6-11.

Kabweza, L.S.M. 2009. Broadband in Zimbabwe: The liquid Telecom fibre network map. TechZim.

Kagoro, B. 2005. The prisoners of hope: Civil society and the opposition in Zimbabwe. *African security review*, 14 (3): 19-29.

Kalathil, S. & Boas, T.C. 2003. Open network, closed regimes: the impact of the Internet on authoritarian rule. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Kalemara, A., Nalwoga, L. & Wakabi, W. 2012. How ICT tools are promoting citizen participation in Uganda. www.cipesa.org

Kalof, L.A., Dan, A. & Dietz, T. 2008. *Essentials of Social Research*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Kanjo, C. & Lwanda, J. 2008. Chicken and egg: e-democracy or e-governance in the Malawi context? Paper presented at the EDEM 08 Conference, Danube University Krems, Austria, September.

- Kanjo, C. 2009. Promoting E-democracy and Citizen Participation through ICT Initiatives in Parliament: The Malawi Case. *IGI Global Disseminator of Knowledge*, 312-325.
- Karombo, T. 2013. Zimbabwe sets telecom license fees at \$137.5million. *ITWeb Africa*, 03 June. www.itwebafrica.com/telecommunications/154-zimbabwe/231106-zimbabwe-sets-telecom-license-fees-at-1375mn
- Kaul, V. 2012. Interface between Media, Democracy and Development. *Journal of development communication*, 23 (1).
- Kaul, V. 2012. The Pros and Cons of New Media and Media Freedom. *Journal of mass communication and journalism*, 2(5):114. doi:10.4172/2165-7912.1000114
- Kavada, A. 2005. Exploring the role of the Internet in the Movement for Alternative Globalisation: The case of the Paris 2003 European Social Forum. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 2(1):72-95.
- Keane, J. 1996. Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. (In Anderson, M.B., ed. *Media and Democracy*. Oslo: University of Oslo).
- Keck, M.E. & Sikkink, K. 1998. *Activists beyond borders: advocacy networks in international politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Kedzie, C. R. 1997. Communication and democracy: Coincident revolutions and the emergent dictator's dilemma. Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, RAND Graduate School, Santa Monica, CA. Retrieved April 13, 2009, from http://www.rand.org/pubs/rgs_dissertations/RGSD127/index.html
- Kedzie, C. 2002. Coincident revolutions and the dictator's dilemma. (In Allison J.E., ed. *Technology, Development and Democracy*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. p. 105–130).
- Kellner, D. 2000. Habermas, the Public Sphere, and Democracy: a Critical Intervention. (In Hahn., ed. *Perspectives on Habermas*. Chicago and LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court).
- Kenny, C. & Hawkins, R. 2000. Economic Internet toolkit for African policymakers: an African Internet forum. UNECA and InfoDev Project. Accessed: 2013-03-08 <http://www.infodev.org/project/finafcom.htm>
- Khumalo, M.B. 1997. Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation: After Monopoly the Dual System (A Public/ Private Mix). University of Leicester. (Dissertation: MA).
- Kidd, D. 2003. Indymedia.org: a new communications commons. (In McCaughey, M. & Ayers, M.D., eds. *Cyberactivism: online activism in theory and practice*. New York: Routledge. p. 47-69).
- Kim, B.J. 2009. The Impact of the Internet on Civic and Political Participation in Local Governance. Blacksburg: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. (Dissertation – PhD).

- Kivikuru, U. 2006. Top-down or bottom-up? Radio in the service of democracy: experiences from South Africa and Namibia. *The international communication gazette* 68 (1):5-31.
- Klein, H.K. 1999. Tocqueville in Cyberspace: Using the Internet for Citizen Associations. *The information society*, 15(4):213-220.
- Kling, R. 2007. What Is Social Informatics and Why Does It Matter? *Information society*, 23(4):205-220.
- Krueger, B.S. 2002. Assessing the potential of Internet political participation in the United States. *American Political Research*, 30(5):476-598.
- Kumar, C. 1998. On the Universality of the Human Rights Discourse. (In Arnegard, T.J & Landfald, L., eds. Human Rights: Universal or Culture specific, Information Bulletin Number 1, 1998, North/South Coalition).
- Kupe, T. 1997. Voices of the voiceless: Popular magazines in a changing Zimbabwe, 1990-1996. Norway: University of Oslo. (Thesis-PhD).
- Laidlaw, E.B. 2012. Internet Gatekeepers, Human Rights and Corporate Social Responsibilities. London: London School of Economics and Political Science. (Thesis - PhD).
- Larok, A. 2011. Democratizing or Africanizing Democracy: which way Africa? Seminar on Electoral Democracy by MS TCDC 11 Nov 2011.
- Lavie, S. & Swedenburg, T. 1996. Introduction: Displacement, diaspora, and geographies of identity. (In Lavie, S. & Swedenburg, T., eds. Displacement, diaspora, and geographies of identity. Durham: Duke University Press).
- Lesame, N.C., ed. 2005. New Media: technology and policy in developing countries. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Levitsky, S. & Way, L.A. 2002. Elections without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism. *Journal of democracy*, 13(2):51-65.
- Lichtenberg, J. 1995. Introduction. (In Lichtenberg, J. ed. Democracy and the Mass Media. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Livingston, S. 2011. Africa's Evolving Infosystems: a pathway to security and stability. A research paper from the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Washington DC.
- Loader, B. & Mercea, D., eds. 2012. Social media and democracy – Innovations in participatory politics. London & New York: Routledge.
- Locke, L.F., Silverman, S.J., & Spirduso, W.W. 2010. Reading and understanding research. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Loo, E. 2007. The Internet: Simulacrum of Democracy? (In Banerjee, I., ed. *The Internet and Governance in Asia: A Critical Reader*. Singapore: Asia Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC). p. 21-38).
- Lowi, T. 1964. American Business, Case Studies, and Political Theory. *World Politics* 16, 677-715.
- Madhuku, L. 2010. *Introduction to Zimbabwean Law*. Harare: Weaver Press.
- Maher, V. 2007. Towards a critical media studies approach to the blogosphere. *Media in transition*. <http://vincentmaher.com/mit/>? Date of access: August 26, 2009.
- Majid, A.M.N. 2010. *Digital Democracy in Malaysia: Towards Enhancing Citizen Participation*. Melbourne: University of Victoria. (Thesis – PhD).
- Makumbe, J. & Compagnon, D. 2000. *Behind the Smokescreen: the politics of Zimbabwe's 1995 general election*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe.
- Makumbe, J. 2009. *The impact of democracy in Zimbabwe: assessing political, social and economic developments since the dawn of democracy*. Johannesburg: Center for Policy Studies.
- Mamdani, M. 1996. *Citizens and Subjects: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press
- Manda, L.Z. 2007. *Media in the Political Process*. (In Patel, N. and Svasand, L., eds. (Forthcoming) *Government and Politics in Malawi*. Zomba: Kachere Series).
- Manganga, K. 2012. The Internet as a Public Sphere: A Zimbabwean Case Study (1999-2008). *Africa development*, XXXV11 (1): 103-118.
- Mano, W. 1997. Public Service Broadcasting in Zimbabwe: a Brief on Promise, Performance and Problems. (In Andersen, E.W., ed. *Media, Democracy and Development*. IMK-report. 27. Oslo: Department of Communication, University of Oslo. p. 5-40).
- Mano, W. 2010. Between citizen and vigilante journalism; ZimDaily's Fair Deal Campaign and the Zimbabwean Crisis. *Journal of communication science in Southern Africa = Communicare: Tydskrif vir kommunikasiewetenskappe in Suider-Afrika*, 29:57-70.
- Mano, W. & Willems, W. 2010. Debating "Zimbabweanness" in Diasporic Internet Forums. (In McGregor, J. & Primorac, R., eds. *Zimbabwe's New Diaspora: Displacement and the Cultural Politics of Survival*. p. 183-197).
- Manyeruke, C. and Hamauswa, S. 2013. Rethinking the Concept of a 'People – driven' Constitution in Zimbabwe: The Case of COPAC's Constitution Making Process. *Southern peace review journal*, 2(1):197-214.
- Mapuva, J. & Muyengwa, L. 2012. A critique of the key legislative framework guiding civil liberties in Zimbabwe. *Potchefstroom electronic law journal*, 15(4):125-164.

- Mariam, A. 2011. Economic democracy before political democracy in Africa? http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alemayehu-g-mariam/the-democracy-before-demo_b_434992.html (Accessed 16 January 2014).
- Marshall, C. and Rossman, G.B. 1999. *Designing Qualitative Research*. New York: Routledge.
- Mason, M. 2010. Sample Size and Saturation in PhD Studies Using Qualitative Interviews [63 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum. Qualitative Social Research*, 11(3), Art. 8, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs100387>.
- Matambanadzo. 2013. 30-day ultimatum for cellphone users. *The Herald*, 28 September. www.herald.co.zw/30-day-ultimatum-for-cellphone-users/
- Mataruse, M. 2012. Public Participation Audit. Semina. 13-14 November 2012.
- Matsheza, S. 2011. Capstone: Defending the Public Sphere in the Information Age: The possibilities and constraints of mobile technology for increasing Political Action and Democratic Participation in Zimbabwe. University College Maastricht. (Dissertation - MA).
- Mavhunga, C. 2008. The glass fortress: Zimbabwe's Cyber-guerrilla warfare. *Concerned African Scholars*, December.
- Maxwell, J.A. 1998. Designing a qualitative study. (In Bickman, L. & Rog, D.J. eds. *Handbook of applied research methods*. California: Sage).
- McAdam, D., McCarthy, J.D. and Zald, M.N. 1996. *Comparative perspectives on social movements: political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and cultural framings*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- McCarthy, J.D. 1996. Constraints and opportunities in adopting, adapting, and inventing. (In D. McAdam, D., McCarthy J.D. & Zald, M.N., eds. *Comparative perspectives on social movements: political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and cultural framings*, New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 141-51).
- McChesney, R. W. 1997. *The global media: The new missionaries of corporate capitalism*. London: Continuum.
- McKee, A. 2005. *The public sphere: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McKenzie, J. 2013. Sim card registration newest assault on privacy and freedom of expression in Zimbabwe. *TECH PRESIDENT*, 9 October.
- McQuail, D. 2005. Accountability of media to society: principles and means. (In McQuail, D., Golding, P. & de Bens, E., eds. *Communication Theory and Research*. London & Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications. p. 89-102).
- Mead, G. H. 1968. *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

- Megenta, A.T. 2009-2010. The Internet's Democratization Effect in Authoritarianisms with Adjectives: The case of Ethiopian participatory media. Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper. University of Oxford.
- Merriam, S.B. 2009. Qualitative Research: A guide to Design and Implementation. San Francisco, California: John Wiley & Sons.
- Media Institute of Southern Africa. 2008. World Press Freedom Day Statement. Media Institute of Southern Africa. Harare: MISA.
- Media Institute of Southern Africa. 2010. Media Institute of Southern Africa. So this is Democracy? State of media freedom in Southern Africa 2009. An annual publication by the Media Institute of Southern Africa. Windhoek: MISA.
- Media Institute of Southern Africa. 2012. State of Media Freedom in Zimbabwe. Harare: MISA.
- Media Institute of Southern Africa. 2013. Zimbabwe photojournalist arrested, forced to erase images. Harare: MISA.
- Meier, P.P. 2011. Do "Liberation Technologies" Change the Balance of Power Between Repressive States and Civil Society? The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.
- Mhike, C. 2009. Press freedom remains elusive. *The Standard*, 2 May.
- Mhlanga, B. and Mpofu, M. 2014. The Virtual Parallax: Imaginations of Mthwakazi Nationalism – Online Discussions and Calls for Self-Determination. (In Solo, A.M.G., ed. Handbook of Research on Political Activism in the Information Age. USA: Moverick Technologies Inc. p.129-146).
- Milakovich, M.E. 2010. The Internet and Increased Citizen Participation in Government. *Journal of e-democracy*, 2(1):1-9.
- Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. 1994. Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook. London: Sage Publications.
- MMPZ. 2000. Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe. A question of balance. Harare: MMPZ.
- MMPZ. 2008b. Media Monitoring Project–Zimbabwe. ZBC's Coverage of 2008 Elections. Harare: MMPZ.
- Moe, H. 2010. Online media participation and the structure of the public sphere: Blogs and the issue of transnationalisation. Paper presented at Oslo, Norway, 14-01-10-15-01-10,
- MOI (Ministry of Information). 1988. Towards an Effective Information Policy for Zimbabwe as a Tool for National Development. Harare: Ministry of Information. Unpublished.

- Molokele, D. 2009. Let the diaspora vote. *Zimbabwe Metro*, 19 May.
<http://www.zimbabwemetro.com/current-affairs/daniel-molokele-let-the-diasporavote/> Date of access: May 26.
- Morozov, E. 2011. *The Net Delusion: The dark side of Internet Freedom*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Morozov, E. 2011. Whither Internet Control? *Journal of democracy*, 22(2):62-74.
- Morse, J.M. 1994. *Critical Issues in Qualitative Research Methods*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Moule, P. & Hek, G. 2011. *Making Sense of Research: An Introduction for health and social care practitioners*. 4th ed. London: Sage.
- Moyo, J.N. 1992. State Politics and Social Domination in Zimbabwe. *Journal of modern African Studies*, 30(2):305-330.
- Moyo, J. 1992. *Voting for democracy: Electoral politics in Zimbabwe*. Harare: UZ Publications.
- Moyo, S. 1996. A gendered perspective on the land question in Zimbabwe. *Southern African feminist review (SAFERE)*, 1(1).
- Moyo, D. 2004. From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe: Change without Change? Broadcasting Policy Reform and Political control. *Current African Issues*, 27(1):12-28.
- Moyo, D. 2006. *Broadcasting Policy Reform and Democratisation in Zambia and Zimbabwe, 1990-2005*. Oslo: University of Oslo. (Thesis - PhD).
- Moyo, D. 2007. Alternative media, Diasporas and the mediation of the Zimbabwe crisis. *Ecquid novi African journalism studies*. 28 (1& 2): 81-105.
- Moyo, D. 2009. Citizen journalism and the parallel market of information in Zimbabwe's 2008 Election. *Journalism studies*, 10(4).
- Moyo, D. 2010. The new media as monitors of democracy; mobile phones to Zimbabwe's 2008 Election. *Communicare: Tydskrif vir kommunikasiewetenskappe in Suider-Afrika* 29, 71-85.
- Moyo, L. 2011. Blogging down a dictatorship: Human rights, citizen journalists and the right to communicate in Zimbabwe. *Journalism*, 2011:1-16.
- Moyo, L. 2012. Participation, Citizenship, and Pirate Radio as Empowerment: The Case of Radio Dialogue in Zimbabwe. *International journal of communication* 6 (2012): 484-500.
- Moyo, L. and Kabweza, L. 2014. *Political Economy of the Internet and Mobile phones: Zimbabwe*. OSISA.

- Moyo, Q. 2012. 50 Points on the State of the Constitution Making Process in Zimbabwe. In: *Bulawayo 24*. Available at: <http://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo>. Accessed on 19 September 2012
- Mozorov, E. 2011. *The net delusion: The dark side of Internet freedom*. Philadelphia, PA: Public affairs.
- Mpofu, S. 2014. Memory, National Identity, and Freedom of Expression in the Information Age: Discussing the Taboo in the Zimbabwean Public Sphere. In A. Solo (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Political Activism in the Information Age* (pp. 114-128). Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference. p. 114-128). Date of access: November 20, 2014. doi:10.4018/978-1-4666 6066-3.ch007
- Mundy, D & Musa, B. 2010. Towards a framework for e-government development in Nigeria. *Electronic journal of e-government*, 8(2):148–161. <http://www.ejeg.com> Date of access: 12 Mar. 2014.
- Mungadze, S and Karombo, T. 2014. Challenging times in Zimbabwe telecoms. *Financial Mail*, 06 February. www.financialmail.co.za/features/2014/02/06/challenging-times-in-zimbabwe-telecoms
- Mutsvairo, B. 2012. Rethinking the role of the Internet in sustaining democratic participation in Zimbabwe. Master of Philosophy Dissertation, University of Hull. United Kingdom
- Mutsvairo, B. 2013. Are new media technologies positively influencing democratic participation? Evidence from the 2008 Elections in Zimbabwe. *Global media journal African edition*. 7 (2):181-200.
- Myers, D.J. 2000. Media, communication technology, and protest waves. Paper Presented at the Social movement analysis: the network perspective. Loch Lormond: Scotland.
- Myers, M.D. 2009. *Qualitative Research in Business and Management*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- NANGO. 1992. *Directory of Non-Governmental Organisations in Zimbabwe*. NANGO: Harare.
- Navia, P. & Zweifel, T.D. 2006. *I want my MTV: Media, freedom of information and democracy*. Midwest Political Science Association. Chicago, Illinois.
- Ndlela, N. 2003. *Challenges and Prospects for Press Freedom: Comparative Perspectives on Media Laws in Zimbabwe and South Africa*. Oslo: University of Oslo. (Thesis-PhD).
- Ndhlovu, N. 2009. Bloggers: The new watchdogs on the Zimbabwe block. *Rhodes journalism review*, 29(2009):45-46.

- Nhema, A.G. 2002. *Democracy in Zimbabwe: From Liberation to Liberalisation*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications.
- Nisbet, E.C., Stoycheff, E., and Pearce, K. E. 2012. Internet Use and Democratic and Democratic Demands: A Multinational, Multilevel Model of Internet Use and Citizen Attitudes about Democracy. *Journal of communication*, 62 (2012): 249-265.
- Nord, D.P. 2001. *Communities of journalism: A history of American newspapers and their readers*. Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- Norris, P. 2001. *Digital divide: Civic engagement, information poverty, and the Internet worldwide*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P. 2004. The bridging and bonding role of online communities. (In P.N. Howard, P.N. & Jones, S., eds. *Society online: the Internet in context*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. p. 31-41).
- Nyaira, S. 2009. *Mugabe's media war: How new media help Zimbabwean journalists tell their story* (Discussion Paper Series). Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy.
- Nyamnjoh, F. B. 2005. *Africa's Media, Democracy and the Politics of Belonging*. London: Zed Books.
- Nyamnjoh, F. B. 2011. De-Westernizing Media Theory to Make Room for African experience. (In Wasserman, H., ed. *Popular Media, Democracy and Development in Africa*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Nyirenda, J. and Cropf, R. 2009. The prospects for e Government and e Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Case Study of Zambia. Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS) 2009 Proceedings. Paper 261. <http://aisel.aisnet.org/amcis2009/261>
- Nyst, C. 2013. Zimbabwe: New SIM registration law represses twin rights to privacy and expression. Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum. Association for Progressive communications (APC).
- Nzouankeu, J.M. 1991. The African Attitude to Democracy. *International social science journal*, 43(2):373-385.
- Olsen, T.H. & Solstad, E. 2012. Kommunale websider som informasjonskanal ilokal iverksetting av en nasjonal reform. *Scandinavian journal of public administration*, 16(4).
- Opoku-Mensah, A. 2000. ICTs as tools of Democratisation: African women speak out. (In Rathgeber, E.M & Adera, E.O., eds. *Gender and the Revolution in Africa*. Canada: International Development Research Centre. p. 187-214).
- Ott, D. & Rosser, M. 2000. The electronic republic: The role of the Internet in promoting democracy in Africa. *Democratisation*, 7(1):137-156.

- Ott, D. 2011. Power to the people: The role of electronic media in promoting democracy in Africa. Retrieved June 17, 2013 from http://www.firstmonday.dk/issues/issues3_4/ott/index.html
- Pacific Council on International Policy. 2002. Roadmap for e-government in the developing world. http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/_council.pdf. Date of access: 9 Mar. 2012.
- Padgett, D.K. 2008. *Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research*. 2nd ed. United Kingdom: Sage Publications.
- Papacharissi, Z. 2002. The virtual sphere: the Internet as a public sphere. *New Media & Society*, 4(1):5-23.
- Papacharissi, Z. 2008. The virtual sphere 2.0: the Internet, the Public Sphere and beyond. (In Chadwick, A & Howard, P., eds. *Handbook of Internet politics*. London and New York: Taylor & Francis. p. 230-245).
- Pateman, C. 1970. *Participation and democratic theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Patton, M.Q. 1990. *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. 2nd ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Parkinson, J. 2003. Legitimacy Problems in Deliberative Democracy. In *Political studies*, 51:180-196.
- Pasirayi, S. 2012. Media System: More of the same. *Zimbabwe Independent*, 15 February.
- Peters, G. 1999. *Institutional Theory in Political Science: The 'New Institutionalism'*. London and New York: Continuum.
- Popple, K. 1995. *Analysing community work*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Public Order Security Act see Zimbabwe.
- Putnam, R.D. 2000. *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American democracy*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Quinteller, E. & Vissers, S. 2008. The Effect of Internet use on Political Participation. *Social science computer review*, XX(X):5-17.
- Raftopoulos, B. 2001. The New Constitution: What Next? *Agenda. Special Edition*, 4(1):1-1.
- Randall, V. ed. 1998. *Democratization and the Media*. London: Frank Cass.
- Regan-Sachs, R. 2013. Zimbabwe blogger takes on Robert Mugabe. *The Guardian*, 25 July. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/25/robert-mugabe-baba-jukwa-zimbabwe> Date of access: 14 October 2014

Rehg, W. 2001. Translator's Introduction. (In Habermas, J., *Between Facts and Norms. Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. Cambridge and Massachusetts: MIT Press).

Reporters Without Borders, Zimbabwe. 2007. Annual Report 2007, http://wrf.org/article.php3?id_article=20744&Valider=OK

Reviere, R., Berkowitz, S., Carter, C.C., Ferguson, C.G, *eds.* 2013. *Needs Assessment: A Creative and Practical Guide for Social Scientists*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: Francis & Taylor.

Rønning, H. 1995. Democratisation processes in Southern Africa and the role of the media. (In Waldahl, R., *ed.* *Perspectives on media, culture and democracy in Zimbabwe*. Department of Media and Communication, Norway: University of Oslo.

Rønning, H. & Kupe, T. 2005. The dual legacy of democracy and authoritarianism: the media and the state in Zimbabwe. (In Curran, J & Myung-Jin, P., *eds.* *De-Westernizing Media Studies*. 2nd ed. Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group. p. 138-156).

Rozumilowicz, B. 2002. Democratic change: a theoretical perspective. (In Monroe, E., Rozumilowicz, P.B & Verhulst, S.G., *eds.* *Media Reform: Democratizing the Media, democratizing the State*. London: Routledge. p. 9-26.)

Ruhode, E. Owei, V. & Maumbe, B.M. 2008. Arguing for the Enhancement of Public Service Efficiency and Effectiveness Through e-Government: the Case of Zimbabwe. IST-Africa 2008 Conference Proceedings. Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Faculty of Informatics and Design. 1-13

Ruhode, E. 2013. Integrated Architecture Framework for E-Government: A socio-technical assessment of e-government policy documents. (In Halpin, E.F., *ed.* *Digital Public Administration and E-Government in Developing Nations: Policy and Practice*. IGI Global p. 74-96.)

Rucht, D., Yang, M. & Zimmermann, A. 2004. *Die Besonderheiten netzbasierter politischer Kommunikation am Beispiel des Genfood-Diskurses*. Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung.

Rucht, D. 2005. Cyberprotest – Möglichkeiten und Grenzen netzgestützter Proteste, Tagung. Von neuen Öffentlichkeiten zur heimlichen Medienrevolution – Welche Chancen hat eine kritische internetkultur? Wiesbaden, May 7-8, 2005.

Rusike, E. 1990. *The politics of the mass media: A personal experience*. Harare: Roblaw.

Rutsito, T. 2014. POTRAZ lobbies for broadband policy. *The Herald*, 28 May. Date of access: 25 September

- Sachikonye, L.M. 1995. Democracy, Civil Society and Social Movements: An analytical Framework. (In Sachikonye, L.M., ed. Democracy, Civil Society and the State; Social Movements in Southern Africa. Harare: Sapes Books).
- Sachikonye, L.M. 2004. South Africa's quiet diplomacy: The case of Zimbabwe. (In Daniel J et al, *State of the Nation: South Africa 2004-05*. Johannesburg: HSRC).
- Sachikonye, L.M. 2013. Continuity or Reform in Zimbabwean Politics? An overview of the 2013 referendum. *Journal of African elections*, 12(1):178-185.
- Sartori, G. 1993. *Democrazia. Cosa è*, Milan: Rizzoli.
- Sartori, G. 1957. *Democrazia e definizioni*, Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Saunders, R. 1991. Information in the interregnum: The Press, State and Civil Society in Struggles for Hegemony, Zimbabwe 1980-1990. University of Carleton. (PhD- Thesis).
- Saunders, R. 1999. State, Politics and Democracy. (In *Never the Same Again: Zimbabwe's growth towards democracy*. Harare: Baobab Books).
- Saunders, R. 1999. *Dancing out of tune: A history of the media in Zimbabwe*. Harare: ESP.
- Saunders, C. 2001. From Apartheid to Democracy in Namibia and South Africa: Some comparisons. Discussion Paper, No. 10. In *Transition in South Africa: Comparative Aspects*. Nordic Africa Institute.
- Scammel, M & Semetko, H. 2000. The media and democracy. (In Scammel, M. & Semetko, H., eds. *The media, journalism and democracy*. Aldershot, Burlington USA: Ashgate & Dartmouth).
- Schiffrin, A. 2009. Power and pressure: African media and the extra sector. *Journal of international affairs*, 62(2):127-14.
- Scott, A. & Street, J. 2000. From media politics to e-protest. *Information, Communication and Society*, 3(2):215-40.
- Schudson, M. 1999. *The good citizen: A history of American civic life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Schulz, M.S. 1998. Collective action across borders: opportunity structures, network capacities, and communicative praxis in the age of advanced globalization. *Sociological perspectives*, 41(3):587-616.
- Segaard, S.B. 2010. Mellom myndighet og medieaktør. Nyhetsformidling i seksnett-aktive kommuner. *Scandinavian journal of public administration*, 14(1-2).
- Seleoane, M. 2001. Towards an African Theory of Freedom of Expression? *Politeia*, 20(3):5-21.

- Shafika, I. 2007. Survey of ICT in education in Zimbabwe. (In Farrel, G., Shafika, I. & Michael, T., eds. Survey of ICT and Education in Africa, volume 2.) 53 country Reports. Washington, DC: InfoDev/World Bank.
- Silverman, D. 2000. Doing Qualitative Research. London, Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Silverman, D. 2004. Qualitative Research Theory and Practice. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications.
- Sisulu, E. 2008. In the grip of silence. *Rhodes journalism review*, 28. September 2008.
- Sithole, M. 2001. Fighting Authoritarianism in Zimbabwe. *Journal of democracy*, 12(1):160–169.
- Somin, I. 2010. Deliberative Democracy and Political Ignorance. *Critical Review*, 22(2-3): 253-279.
- Southall, R. 2013. How and Why ZANU-PF won the 2013 Zimbabwe Elections. *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, 35(2):135-151.
- Smith, G. 2009. Democratic innovations – Designing institutions for citizen participation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Splichal, S. 2006. In search of a strong European public sphere: some critical observations on conceptualizations of publicness and the (European) public sphere. *Media, culture & society*, 28(5):695–7147.
- Splichal, S. 2009. ‘New’ media, ‘Old’ Theories: Does the (national) public melt into the air of global governance. *European Journal of Communication*, 24(4):391-405.
- Steenkamp, M.L. 2011. Assessing the role of social media in South African political sphere. Johannesburg: UJ. (Dissertation-MA).
- Stephan, M. 2012. Global Politics and Policy. (In The Structural Transformation of the Cyber sphere. Illinois State University).
- Stewart, D.W. & Kamins, A. 1993. Secondary Research: Information Sources and Methods. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications.
- Stockman, D., & Gallagher, M. E. 2011. Remote control: How the media sustain authoritarian rule in China. *Comparative political studies*, 44:436–467. DOI:10.
- Stokes, G. 2002. Democracy and Citizenship. (In Stokes, G., & Carter, A., eds. Democratic Theory Today. Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J.M. 1998. Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Street, J. 2001. Mass Media, Politics and Democracy. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Swarts, P. 2006. ICT & the Third Revolution in Education Policy. Available at:<http://digitallearning.eletsonline.com/2006/09/ict-the-third-revolution-in-education-policy-2/> Date of access 14 February 2015.

Taylor, C and Gibbs, G.R. 2010. What is Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA)? Available: onlineqda.hud.ac.uk/Intro_QDA/what_is_qda.php

Taylor-Powell, E. & Renner, M. 2003. Analysing Qualitative Data: programme development and evaluation. Madison: University of Wisconsin.

Tettey, W.J. 2009. News Media and Governance Reform: Sub-Saharan Africa. (In Norris, P., ed. Public Sentinel: news media and governance reform. Washington DC: World Bank. p. 277-304).

Thomas, D.M., West, R.E. & Rich, P.J. 2011. Beyond Transcription: Technology, Change, and Refinement of Method. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12(3) Available: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1103216>

Thornycroft, P. 2002. Zimbabwe's new middle class have one ambition: a ticket out. *The Telegraph*, 29 October. Date of access: 02 May.

Tolbert, C.J., & McNeal, R. S. 2003. Unravelling the effects of the Internet on political participation? *Political Research Quarterly*, 56(2):175-186.

Tolbert, C. J. & Mossberger, K. 2006. The Effects of E-Government on Trust and Confidence in Government. *Public administration review*, 66(3):354-369.

Tomaselli, K.G. 2009. Repositioning African Media Studies: Thoughts and Provocations. *Journal of African Media Studies* 1(1) 9-21.

Torpe, L. & Nielsen, J. 2004. Digital communication between local authorities and citizens in Denmark. *Local government studies*, 30(2):230-244.

Touray, A., Salminen, A. and Mursu, A. 2013. ICT Barriers and Critical Success Factors in Developing Countries. *Electronic journal of information systems in developing countries*, 56 (7):1-17.

Tracey, M. 1998. The Decline and Fall of Public Service Broadcasting. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tsagarousianou, R. 2004. Rethinking the concepts of Diaspora: Mobility, connectivity and communication in a globalised world. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 1(1):52-66.

Tuzzi, A., C. Padovani & Nesti, G. 2007. Communication and (e) democracy: assessing European e-democracy discourses. (In Cammaerts, B. & Carpentier, N., eds. Reclaiming the media: communication rights and democratic media roles. Bristol: Intellect).

- Unwin, T. 2012. Social media, democracy and good governance. (*In Commonwealth Governance Handbook 2012/13. Democracy, Development and Public Administration, London: for the Commonwealth Secretariat by Nexus. p. 44-46*).
- USAID. The Role of Media in Democracy: a strategic approach. Washington: Center for Democracy and Governance, Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support and Research, Technical Publication Series, June 1999.
- USAID/ Centre for Democracy and Governance. 1999. The Role of Media in Democracy: A Strategic Approach. Washington D.C.: USAID.
- Van Dijk, J. 2006. The network society: Social aspects of new media. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications.
- Van de Donk, W., Loader, B.D., Nixon, P.G. & Rucht, D. 2004. Introduction: social movements and ICTs. (*In van de Donk, W., Loader, B.D., Nixon, P.G. & Rucht, D., eds. Cyberprotest: new media, citizens, and social movements. New York: Routledge. p. 1-25*).
- Vegh, S. 2003. Classifying forms of online activism: the case of cyber protest against the World Bank. (*In McCaughey, M. & Ayers, M.A, eds. Cyberactivism: online activism in theory and practice. New York: Routledge. p. 71-95*).
- Venturelli, S.S. 1993. The Imagined Transnational Public Sphere in the European Community's Broadcast Philosophy: Implications for Democracy. *European journal of communication*, 8(4):491-518.
- Villa, D. 2008. Public Freedom. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Voltmer, K. & Kraetzschmar, H. 2015. Media Conflict and Democratisation.
- Waltz, M. 2005. Alternative and activist media. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Warren, M. 2002. Deliberative Democracy. (*In Carter, A., & Stokes, G., eds. Democratic Theory Today. Cambridge: Polity Press*).
- Ward, I. 1997. How Democratic Can we get?: the Internet, the Public Sphere, and Public Discourse. *JAC journal of rhetoric, culture and politics*, 365-379.
- Ward, S. & Vedel, T. 2006. Introduction: the potential of the Internet revisited. *Parliamentary affairs*, 59(2):299-313.
- Wasserman, H., ed. 2010. Popular Media, Democracy and Development in Africa. Taylor & Francis e-Library.
- Watts, D.J. and Dodds, P.S. 2007. Influentials, networks, and public opinion formation. *Journal of consumer research: an interdisciplinary quarterly*, 34(4):441-458.
- Welman, C., Kruger, F. & Mitchell, B. 2005. Research Methodology. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Windrich, E. 1981. *The Mass Media in the Struggle for Zimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Winseck, D. & Cuthbert, M. 1997. From Communication to Democratic Norms: Reflections on the Normative Dimensions of International Communication Policy. (In A. Sreberny-Mohammadi, Winseck, D., Mckenna, J and Boyd-Barrett, O., eds. *Media in Global Context. A Reader*. London: Arnold).
- World Bank, 2015. *Internet World Statistics*.
- Yanow, D. 2007. Qualitative-interpretive methods in policy research. (In Fischer, F., Miller, G. & Sidney, M.S., eds. *Handbook of public policy analysis: theory, politics, and methods*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC/Taylor & Francis. p. 405-416).
- Yin, R.K. 2003. *Case study research: Design and methods*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Young, I.M. 2000. *Inclusion and democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zaffiro, J. 1984. *Broadcasting and Political Change in Zimbabwe, 1931-1984*. Madison: University of Wisconsin. (Thesis - PhD).
- Zembe, W. and Masunda.O.C. 2013. *The Global Political Agreement (GPA) Constitution in Zimbabwe: A New People – Driven Constitution or a Misnomer?* Paper Presented at a Conference on Constitution Making Processes in Africa, University of The Western Cape, Cape Town, 6 September.
- Zimbabwe Internet Service Providers Association, “ZISPA membership,” September 2007, <http://www.zispa.org.zw/members>.
- Zimmermann, A. 2006. *Demokratisierung und Europäisierung online?* Berlin: FreieUniversität, Institut für Soziologie. (Verhandeling - MA).
- Zlotnikova, I.Y. & van der Welde. Th.P. 2011. An approach to modelling ICT educational policies in African countries. *International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology (IJEDICT)*, 7(3)50-73.
- Zunguze, M. 2009. *E-Knowledge for Women in Southern Africa (EKOWISA)*. Contextualising ICT for Development in Zimbabwe. retrieved on 20 July 2014 from www.ekowisa.org.zw

10. ADDENDUM

QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A

- i. Gender Male: Female:
- ii. Age 16-25yrs 26-35yrs:
- 36-45yrs: 45+yrs:
- iii. Employment Employed: Unemployed: Self-employed:
- iv. Time in SA 0-5yrs: 6-10yrs: 10yrs +:
-

SECTION B

1. Did you have access to Internet?
2. Where were you accessing the Internet from?
3. What were you using the Internet for?
4. Did you belong to any social network group?
5. How much time did you spend on the Internet on social network discussions and not on work related issues?
6. What were your favourite sites on the Internet?
7. What is your understanding of citizen participation?
8. As a citizen of Zimbabwe how did you participate in matters of governance?

9. Did the government of Zimbabwe make legislations available to citizens electronically?
10. Did the ministries have websites and e-mail facilities for citizens to contribute their views on important issues?
11. Were the citizens consulted before legislations were passed?
12. What is your understanding of the role of the Internet could play in promoting citizen participation?
13. What do you understand by the word democracy?
14. What is your understanding of the role of Internet in a democracy?
15. How was the Internet being used in Zimbabwe to enhance citizen participation?
16. What were the constraints associated with the use of Internet for citizen participation in Zimbabwe?
17. What are the advantages of using the Internet for citizen participation in Zimbabwe?
18. Do you think the Internet is an ideal tool for citizen participation in Zimbabwe?
19. Did the government provide the platform for citizens to contribute in matters concerning their governance?
20. If so, did you contribute to such deliberations?
21. Did the citizens have the freedom to express themselves?
22. Did you engage in any debates or comment on topics posted for discussion on the Internet?
23. If yes, did you get feedback for your questions or comments?
24. If so, what kind of feedback?
25. Are there any special skills or special training needed for people to be able to use the Internet?

