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PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION WHEN PROMOTING ELECTRICITY CUSTOMERS' INVOLVEMENT DURING AN ELECTRICITY TARIFFS REVIEW PROCESS

by SHAO KHATALA

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DECLARATION

I declare that "PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION WHEN PROMOTING ELECTRICITY CUSTOMERS' INVOLVEMENT DURING AN ELECTRICITY TARIFFS REVIEW PROCESS" is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

DATE (Mr. Shao Khatala) 05 November, 2019

Name of Witness: N. Raphoko

Signature **Date 05th November, 2019**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore and describe the perceptions of electricity stakeholders (referred to for the purposes of the study as electricity customers) regarding their communication with Lesotho Electricity and Water Authority (LEWA) during electricity tariff reviews in 2016 and 2017. LEWA is the electricity regulator, while Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC) is the national power distributor in Lesotho. The electricity customers participated in the review process. The study was framed within development communication, with particular focus on its derivative, participatory communication. The principles of stakeholder theory were also considered.

The study combined both quantitative and qualitative research approaches for data collection. The findings of the study were triangulated using an online self-administered questionnaire, a focus group moderator's guide and a qualitative document analysis. The results were interpreted in line with the proposed practical guidelines. The finding of the study is that although LEWA endeavoured to collaborate with electricity customers during electricity tariff review processes, its implementation of participatory communication was inadequate. Furthermore, electricity customers have not yet fully embraced the importance of participating in electricity tariff review processes, because they perceive such endeavours not to be useful. As a result, the findings of the study encapsulate revised practical guidelines to fit an electricity review setting, which could serve as a heuristic for similar organisations as well as provide insights into the benefits of participatory communication in the various aspects of their work.

KEY TERMS

Community development, development communication, dialogue, electricity tariff review participation, empowerment, information, participatory communication, public consultations, stakeholder.

KAKARETSO YA DIPATLISISO

Morero wa phuputso ena e ne e le ho hlahloba le ho hlalosa maikutlo a ba nang le seabo motlakaseng (ba boletsweng e le bareki ba motlakase molemong wa phuputso) mabapi le puisano ya bona le Lekgotla la Taolo ya Motlakase le Metsi Lesotho (LEWA) nakong ya ditlhahlobo tsa ditefiso tsa motlakase ka selemo sa 2016 le 2017. LEWA ke molaodi wa motlakase, athe Khampani ya Motlakase ya Lesotho (LEC) ke yona moabi wa matla wa naha ya Lesotho. Bareki ba motlakase ba nkile karolo tshebetsong ya tlhahlobo. Phuputso e hlophisitswe kahara puisano ya ntshetsopele, e shebane haholo le puisano ya yona eo eseng ya pele, le ya bonkakarolo. Ditekanyetso tsa dikgopolo tsa ba amehang le tsona di ile tsa hlokomelwa.

Phuputso e kopantse mekgwa ya dipatlisiso ya bongata le boleng ka bobedi bakeng sa pokello ya datha. Diphumano tsa phuputso di ne di arotswe ka dikgutlo-tharo ka tshebediso ya lethathamo la dipotso le fumanehang inthaneteng, tataiso ya motho ya lekanyang wa sehlopha seo ho tsepamisitsweng maikutlo ho sona le manollo ya tokomane ya boleng. Diphetho di ile tsa hlaloswa ka tumellano le ditataiso tse sebetsang. Phumano ya phuputso ke hore leha e le hore LEWA e ne e leka ho sebedisana le bareki ba motlakase nakong ya ditshebetso tsa tlhahlobo ya ditefiso, ho kenngwa tshebetso ha yona ha dipuisano tsa bonkakarolo ho ne ho sa lekana. Ntle le moo, bareki ba motlakase ha ba so ka ba amohela bohlokwa ba ho nka karolo ditshebetsong tsa tlhahlobo ya ditefiso tsa motlakase, hobane ba bona boiteko bo jwalo bo sena thuso. Ka lebaka leo, diphumano tsa phuputso di akarelletsa ditataiso tse ntlafaditsweng tse sebetsang bakeng sa ho nepahala boemong ba tlhahlobo ya motlakase, bo ka sebetsang e le tharollo bakeng sa mekgatlo e tshwanang hammoho le ho fana ka lesedi la melemo ya puisano ya bonkakarolo dikarolong tse fapaneng tsa mosebetsi wa yona.

MANTSWE A BOHLOKWA

Ntlafatso ya setjhaba, puisano ya ntlafatso, puisano, bonkakarolo ba tlhahlobo ya ditefiso tsa motlakase, matlafatso, tlhahisoleseding, puisano ya bonkakarolo, dipuisano tsa setjhaba, moamehi

OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie studie was om die persepsies van elektrisiteitsbelanghebbers (waarna vir die doel van die studie verwys word as elektrisiteitskliënte) rakende hul kommunikasie met die Lesotho Electricity and Water Authority (LEWA) gedurende elektrisiteitstariefhersienings in 2016 en 2017, te ondersoek en te beskryf. LEWA is die elektrisiteitsreguleerder, terwyl die Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC) die nasionale kragverspreider in Lesotho is. Die elektrisiteitskliënte het aan die hersieningsproses deelgeneem. Die studie het in die konteks van ontwikkelingskommunikasie geskied, met spesifieke fokus op die afleiding, deelnemende kommunikasie. Die beginsels van belanghebberteorie is ook in ag geneem.

Die studie het kwantitatiewe en kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenaderings tot data-insameling gekombineer. Die bevindings van die studie is getrianguleer met behulp van ŉ aanlyn selfgeadministreerde vraelys, ŉ fokusgroepmoderatorsgids en ŉ kwalitatiewe dokumentontleding. Die resultate is geïnterpreteer ooreenkomstig die voorgestelde praktiese riglyne. Die gevolgtrekking van die studie is dat hoewel LEWA probeer het om met elektrisiteitskliënte saam te werk gedurende elektrisiteitstariefhersieningsprosesse, hul implementering van deelnemende kommunikasie ontoereikend was. Verder besef elektrisiteitskliënte nog nie ten volle die belangrikheid van deelname aan elektrisiteitstariefhersieningsprosesse nie, omdat hulle sodanige pogings nie as nuttig ervaar nie. Gevolglik is die bevindings van die studie ŉ samevatting van hersiene praktiese riglyne om by ŉ elektrisiteitshersieningskonteks te pas, en dit kan dien as heuristiek vir soortgelyke organisasies en kan ook insig gee in die voordele van deelnemende kommunikasie in die verskillende aspekte van hul werk.

SLEUTELTERME

Gemeenskapsontwikkeling, ontwikkelingskommunikasie, dialoog, elektrisiteitstariefhersieningsdeelname, bemagtiging, inligting, deelnemende kommunikasie, openbare konsultasies, belanghebber.

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CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The introduction of the regulation of services and especially electricity services tariffs in Lesotho has made it imperative for electricity-sector organisations and electricity customers to communicate and interact in the quest for attaining better services (Thamae, Thamae & Thamae 2015). In principle regulation of electricity services can benefit developing countries so long as there is minimal political interference, especially in the designing of electricity tariffs. The determination of electricity tariffs is undertaken by regulatory bodies after assessing the evidence provided by the electricity supply utilities and submissions from stakeholders such as electricity customers (Thamae, *et al* 2015). Consultation with local populations on development issues (such as electricity access affordability) indicate their viewpoints on drawbacks and gains of development. Stakeholders know their development priorities, meaning they participate in endeavours that benefit them (Bryant 2015). Electricity tariff determination processes thus offer spaces wherein the regulatory entities can deliberate tariffs issues with electricity customers. Although when it comes to electricity tariffs determination government, investors and LEC are stakeholders they are outside the scope of this study. In the southern African region, almost all of the electricity regulatory bodies engage in public consultation procedures to solicit the participation of the electricity customers in the discussions aimed at determining electricity tariffs. There is some paucity of research on the extent to which communication processes such as public consultations, are participatory, as reflected in the literature (see Arcidiacono, Grimaldi & Di Martino 2016 and Ghosh 2010: 1-15).

In Lesotho, the Lesotho Electricity and Water Authority (LEWA) has been determining electricity tariffs for more than ten years and the public has been invited to comment on the reasonableness of tariffs proposed by the regulated entity (LEWA Annual Report 2016). However, the perceptions of electricity customers on whether the communication from the regulator enables them to make meaningful inputs during consultations or not must be investigated.

Enhancing awareness and education for electricity sector stakeholders (in this study electricity customers) is important for addressing some issues pertaining to tariff increases. Customer education on efficient use of electricity may help promote behavioural changes which may result in reduced electricity bills and savings (Malebese 2019: 1-8; Welton 2018: 581-583; Adair 2010: 248-263). The public consultation process in electricity tariffs determination requires that new methods, such as education, increasing both the time and location for public hearings be considered. According to the study, electricity customers do not have adequate access, time and platforms to express their views on the reasonableness of proposed tariffs. This is in contrast to what applies in other jurisdictions when public consultations are held (see Den Boer 2016; Caprino & Martínez-Cerdá 2016; Adamski 2014)

Invariably the drivers of the tariffs review processes are not identified or originated by the ordinary customers but by the supply company in its quest to satisfy organisational priorities. The priorities include changing technological, labour expenses and service improvement demands (Lesotho Electricity Company -LEC tariff review application 2017). However, by engaging in participatory communication an opportunity arises for the organisation to effectively communicate with its stakeholders (such as electricity customers) to build a trusting and listening space (Burnside-Lawry 2012).

The adoption and implementation of participatory communication by the regulatory agencies in Lesotho and by extension in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region must entail the rapid adoption of new media forms. This is so because LEWA still relies on traditional channels of communication, which limit participtation by ordinary people. Regulators should consider employing a mix of both traditional and new forms of media to complement each other. Gerhmanne (2018) suggests that the new media forms enable people to connect even if their cultures are not the same. In addition, the public hearings procedure must be designed collectively with stakeholders so that all may have ownership of the process (Kakeneno & Brugha 2016). The communication strategy used should be designed collectively to enable all to have tasks that contribute to the attainment of awareness-raising and motivation to participate in tariffs reviews (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009).

The requirement to include electricity customers in development endeavours, such as electricity tariff determination, is necessary for Lesotho and hence the implementation of participatory communication approaches could help address some issues of the legitimacy of the process. Overall, the implementation of such participatory endeavours is likely to be successful if articulated well throughout all the stages in which electricity customers' involvement is needed.

By proposing and applying practical guidelines for participatory communication within the context of an electricity tariff review process, this study explored and described how a regulatory body in the Lesotho electricity sector could enhance communication with electricity customers and bring about improved public participation and services for all.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In this section, the context of the study is provided by referring to its purpose and background and the chapter outlines the relevance of the topic and its relationship to the discipline of communication.

1.2.1 Background to the study

In the post-World War II period, development initiatives in the developing world were donor-driven and influenced by the then dominant and prescriptive modernisation development paradigm (Protopsaltis 2017:1733-1739; Rasmussen, Rönnberg & Tsatsaroni 2015:480). Various models of the modernisation paradigm did not emphasise the importance of wide public participation in development issues (Van de Fliert 2010:95). In the 1970s, most developing countries opted to be self-reliant as a result of the influence of the dependency paradigm (Mefalopulos 2008). However, in the 1990s development agencies, scholars and practitioners advocated for the transformation of the processes of public involvement in developmental matters, underscoring the importance of a participatory communication approach to development. Consequently, the institutionalisation of the various processes of public involvement took place (Bryant 2015:26-35; Berglund Hallgren & Aradóttir 2013:1-3). Therefore, civil society has participated in development issues in a manner that emphasises "responsibility that comes with intellectual authority" to ensure participation in development (Gehrke 2014:77-80). In concurrence, Van de Fliert (2010:95) maintains that development efforts should be participatory because, in theory, they should "empower communities, groups or individuals to determine" ways of developing themselves in a complete way. Instead of promoting individual behavioural change participatory designs promote collective change (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:1).

Many studies focus on participatory communication as practised in health, and other social science fields such as psychology (for example, Arcidiacono, Grimaldi & Di Martino 2016 and Rasmussen *et al* 2015). Other studies have focused on participatory communication strategies in the context of local governance, mass media, rural development debates and others (see for example, Msibi & Penzhorn 2010: 225–236 and Ghosh 2010: 1-15). According to these studies, mass media communication systems, inclusive of radio and television, are top-down communication interventions. Hence, they must be replaced by community-based ones, so that marginalised, illiterate people and women respectively are connected to development issues. It is therefore imperative to study the application of participatory communication to development processes such as electricity tariff reviews.

1.2.2 Purpose of the study

According to Freeman and McVea (2001) the sustainability of modern organisations is closely intertwined with how they interact with their stakeholders. According to this perspective, communication is regarded as a fundamental function in an organisation, which, among others, facilitates the management of stakeholder relationship endeavours between organisations and their stakeholders (Angelopulo & Schoonraad 2013:1-05). In line with development communication thinking, communication between participants in a development endeavour must be participatory rather than linear (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:02). Hence, the study proposes practical guidelines for participatory communication which were empirically tested on the communication endeavours between LEWA). The study focused on participatory communication when two electricity tariff review processes were held in 2016 and 2017. The study intends to fill a gap in participatory communication and in its application to an electricity tariff-review setting.

1.2.3 Relevance of the study and relation to the discipline of communication

As noted, the modernisation paradigm has been criticised by scholars and practitioners in the participatory paradigm (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:01-03). To improve the results and viability of tariffs review endeavours, it is deemed proper that electricity customers must be engaged in participatory and two-way communication to solicit their inputs. According Mefalopulos (2008: xii) two-way communication enables stakeholders to comprehend, weigh, discover issues and simplify decision making in own development matters. The results of this study could contribute towards the study of participatory communication within organisational communication theory and practice in the context of regulated services. Other regulatory institutions in Lesotho and possibly the Southern African region could use the findings as a point of reference. In addition, participatory communication provides some framework within which social change may be pursued (Mefalopulos 2008:96). Transparency and participation in regulatory processes are some of the most important principles for successful regulation because they limit the possibility of the occurrences of malpractices by dominant institutions (Kim & Lee 2012: 819-825).

As such it is imperative to investigate the extent to which LEWA communication processes are participatory during a tariff review or can be made to benefit the electricity customers in Lesotho. The investigation must take into account the latter's own perspectives.

When it comes to the relation of this study to the discipline of communication several scholars back this perspective. According to Mefalopulos (2008: xii) and Waisbord (2001: 1-49), participatory communication is a derivative of development communication. The topic for this study falls in the area of communication known as development communication. Despite a long-held belief that communication is not primary in projects that are regarded as non-communication in nature, development communication scholars suggest that the contrary is the case (Mefalopulos 2008:14). Tariffs review processes are regarded as communication events taking place between the public and organisations (Cavazos & Rutherford 2011:625). It is therefore essential to provide some practical guidelines for such communication events to ensure adequate participatory communication. Having access to knowledge about pertinent issues, engaging in communication relating to common issues, independently arriving at decisions and addressing unequal power relations ensures that development benefits all (Tapscott & Thompson 2013:368-370). In democratic dispensations, citizens scrutinise the operations of publicly funded organisations (Otto & Fourie 2011:398-421).

1.2.4 Other Research in the Field

A review of the existing literature reveals that a study dealing with participatory communication within the context of an electricity tariff review is yet to be undertaken at the regional and country levels. Research databases such as Nexus and University of South Africa (UNISA) Repository indicate that various authors have investigated the role of participatory communication in diverse fields such as health, education, theology and organisational change, to the exclusion of a tariff-setting process (see for example, Banda 2010; Chisale 2014). Other studies have focused on participatory communication in the context of issues such as local governance, mass media, rural development and others (see for example, Msibi & Penzhorn 2010: 225–236; Ghosh 2010: 1-15). As such, the study is the first of its kind within the country and regional context, as well as in electricity tariff review context.

The proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication were empirically tested on LEWA's participatory communication in a focus group discussion and thematic analysis of LEWA documents. The guidelines were further tested on electricity customers' perceptions regarding the extent to which they participated communicatively in electricity tariff reviews during 2016 and 2017. In theory, public consultations undertaken during an electricity tariff review process must be characterised by genuine participation in which officials obtain information (from the public) to inform their decisions (Shipley & Utz 2012:22-23). Focus group discussion was also held to explore the topic with LEWA artefacts being used in triangulation with the two sources of data.

1.3. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goal and objectives of the study are discussed below.

1.3.1 Goal of the Study

In research terms, goals have the same meaning as aims, purposes and overall results (Du Plooy 2009:50). There are two main goals of research, namely, basic and applied research (Leedy & Omrod 2010:44-45). Basic research aims to investigate and develop theories while applied research aims at investigating practical issues and offering solutions to them (Durrheim 2009:45;

Babbie, Mouton, Vorster & Prozesky 2009:79-80). The goal of this study was applied communication research. Practical guidelines for participatory communication were proposed and tested first on a public-sector organisation followed by electricity customers' perceptions.

1.3.2 Objectives of the Study

An *objective* refers to a result that is measurable and which leads to the accomplishment of a given goal (Thomas & Hodges 2013:1-9; Walliman 2009:219-220). The study has both exploratory and descriptive objectives. The objectives of the study are formulated below.

Objective 1: To explore practical guidelines for participatory communication within the context of promoting public involvement during an electricity tariff-review process.

Objective 2: To describe the process of LEWA's development communication with electricity customers during a tariff-review process in accordance with the proposed practical guidelines.

Objective 3: To explore electricity customers' perceptions regarding LEWA's participatory communication during a tariff-review process in accordance with the proposed practical guidelines.

Objective 4: To describe and explore how the proposed practical guidelines can be adapted for participatory communication during electricity a tariff-review process.

The key concepts underpinning the study are briefly explained in the next section.

1.4 DEFINING THE STUDY'S MAIN CONCEPTS

Key concepts in development communication are identified and discussed to provide a background the study. According to Servaes (1996:13), the basis for this approach is the understanding that development communication provides practical underpinnings of participatory communication. Barranquero (2011, 2001), Chang and Jacobson (2010) and Waisbord (2001) and Servaes (1996), cogently back this understanding.

Development communication is often confused with competing concepts, all of which have a relationship with it or its constituent parts (Mefalopulos 2008:07). These concepts are "participation", "consultation", "empowerment", "information" and "dialogue" (Mefalopulos 2008:39). These concepts are briefly explicated as they feature prominently in this study.

Information is mistakenly regarded as having the same meaning as *communication* (Servaes 2008:18). Information is one of the outcomes of communication and may only be regarded as part of communication, and not the other way around. The two concepts are, however, intertwined because communication is an interactive process between people, while information effects certain behaviours (Mefalopulos 2008:39)

Regarding *participation,* it is noted that participatory designs are principal in interrogating development issues during both the development endeavours and the undertaking of communication research on related issues such as media systems, their availability, and abilities to deliver (Mefalopulos 2008:39-40; Pawar 2010:106-7). Participation, however, is a continuous variable that takes different values, and that makes it necessary to determine the degree to which it is implemented in a particular development context (Mefalopulos 2008:40-41; Servaes 2008:20-23).

Consultation is the third concept which signifies a less refined form of participation. (Mefalopulos 2008:41). Decision-making in a consultation is made by a few on whether to take into consideration stakeholders' inputs solicited through a consultation process (Servaes & Malikhao 2008:171; Mefalopulos 2008:41). For Mefalopulos (2008:41) and Huesca (2008:187) in consultations some feedback is provided to stakeholders on a list of predetermined topics.

The fourth concept is that of *empowerment.* Empowerment refers to a state of mind inner to a human being wherein they do things by and for themselves. Through specific training or by creating spaces for people, institutions or communities to work collaboratively to realise their goals empowerment can be attained (Fourie 2009:1-30; Servaes 2008:208; Mefalopulos 2008:42). When communication is geared towards empowering people, even the marginalised and disenfranchised acquire some confidence and development project objectives are realised in a sustainable way (McKee, Manoncourt, Yoon and Carnegie 2008:262; Mefalopulos (2008:42).

The fifth and last concept to consider is that of *dialogue.* Dialogue refers to a two-way communication concerned with, among other things, producing knowledge and enhancing stakeholder engagement. Dialogue is a proven theory of ethics which holds that organisations should interact with stakeholders and publics to improve decision making, to make available information to the citizens and to strengthen organisations and the people (Taylor & Kent 2014:387-388; Yang, Kang & Johnson 2010:04; Mefalopulos 2008:42; Gumicio-Dagron 2008:8; Lie 2008:283).

Having discussed competing concepts of development communication, participatory communication its derivative is explored.

1.4.1 Participatory communication

Participatory communication refers to a branch of development communication that advocates the development of the community in the preparation and execution of communication approaches. Other scholars have defined participatory communication in terms of the Freirean perspective, which put the emphasis on dialogue as its critical component (see Barranquero 2011:163). According to Mefalopulos (2008:223), participatory communication is the main approach within the dialogic or participatory mode which brings together participation and two-way communication modes. Participatory communication refers to a main approach within the dialogic or participatory mode which brings together participation and two-way communication modes "techniques, and tools to ensure mutual understanding, investigate key issues, minimize risks, and identify best options" for change (Mefalopulos 2008:223) (see chapter 2, section 2.7).

1.5 FORMULATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this section, the study's research problem is explained followed by the research questions.

1.5.1 Research problem and statement

A research problem refers to a statement that describes the purpose of research. The statement is "often expressed as a gap or void in our understanding – and how the research contributes to our understanding of theory or practice" (Newton-Suter 2012:87). The formulation of the research problem plays an important role in the study as it enables the researcher to be firmly devoted to focus on the problem being studied. In this way, he or she eliminates any ambiguity that may cause some distraction (Leedy & Omrod 2010:57-58; Kelly 2009:359-362). As noted in Section 1.1, participatory communication research has not been undertaken in the context of the regulated electricity sector in Lesotho. The regulatory process of electricity tariff-review has a substantial communication aspect and, as such, provides the background to which the study is undertaken. Consequently, the research problem statement for this study is stated as follows:

> To propose and test practical guidelines for participatory communication with a mixed-method cross-sectional study within the context of an electricity tariff-review process to enhance the involvement of electricity customers.

1.5.2 Research questions

Research questions refer to the type of evidence that is needed to answer the research problem (Babbie *et al* 2009:74-75). In communication research, questions are used for a multitude of reasons, such as gathering preliminary information on a problem or exploring its full extent (Du Plooy 2009:76). The study attempts to answer four research questions, as outlined below.

Research question 1: What are the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication within the context of public consultations to promote public involvement during an electricity tariff-review process?

Research question 2: In what ways did LEWA deal with development communication from a participatory communication perspective?

Research question 3: In what way should have LEWA's participatory communication complied with the proposed practical guidelines to facilitate the public involvement of electricity customers during an electricity tariff-review process?

Research question 4: How can the proposed practical guidelines be adapted as a heuristic for participatory communication during an electricity tariff-review process?

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A research methodology refers to the procedures and tools that are to be employed in a research process. Research methodology commences with exploring a specific task of data collection and sampling using the most objective procedures (Babbie *et al* 2009:74-75). In the next section, the worldview adopted for this study is first explicated and followed by a discussion of the research methods used in the study.

1.6.1 Worldview adopted for this study

According Lincoln (2009:05), ontological, epistemological and methodical assumptions are key in any research paradigm. Depending on the assumptions that direct their study, theoretical viewpoints and the choice of methods and techniques, researchers use different worldviews encapsulated in research paradigms (Du Plooy 2009:19-20). Various research paradigms exist in the field of communication research, with the positivist and interpretivist being some of the most prominent (Shannon-Baker 2015:330; Bhattacharya 2012:1-02). According to the positivist paradigm, the existence of social reality is regarded as occurring independently of the researcher. The paradigm uses a mechanistic process to produce quantifiable data, unlike the interpretivist paradigm which holds that knowledge is socially made and, therefore, subjective (Paley 2012:1-09; Babbie *et al* 2009:50-80). A combination of the positivist and interpretivist research paradigms was adopted in the study. It is argued that participatory communication research methods should develop and address both ontological and epistemological assumptions that remove the subject-object relations. Rather, they should and put into place the criteria that allow for a self-reflexive, evaluative aspect of research (see Huesca 2008:191-192). The research methods proposed for the study are discussed below.

1.6.2 The research methods

Participatory approach researchers have three areas on which they agree. They concur that non-scientists must participate in research, acknowledge the role of formal processes in the construction of knowledge and seek ways of bringing about a change in society (Wilmsen, Elmendorf, Fisher, Ross, Sarathy & Wells 2008:09-10). The three methods used in the study are an online survey, a focus group and qualitative document analysis. Each of these methods is briefly explained hereunder (see Chapter 4, Section 4.4.3).

1.6.2.1 Survey

A survey refers to a research method that gathers data/information from a sample of individuals, evaluating the pervasiveness and dispersal of attitudes, as well as factual material about the researched subjects. Surveys may not be limited by geographical boundaries (De-Graft 2017:21;

Joye, Wolf, Smith & Fu 2017:1-03; Weisberg 2012:223). Surveys generate statistics or "quantitative or numerical descriptions" regarding some characteristics of the study population (Fowler 2012:2).

The aim of using the survey in this study was to utilise its advantage of providing diverse and timely data on specified variables in a participatory communication context. An online survey was used to obtain the respondents' perspectives regarding their participation in an electricity tariff-review process in Lesotho and addressed research question 3. The survey comprised both an online survey (using Google Forms) complemented with a paper-based survey method for those respondents who did not have access to the internet. Google Forms is a free online tool made available by the technology organisation Google to conduct surveys. Google has already developed several highly regarded online research tools (see Andrews & England 2012:1-14).

1.6.2.2 Focus group

A focus group refers to a group of people chosen and brought together by researchers to deliberate and make inputs on, from individual understanding and experience, the research issue of which little is known (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2011:2; Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook 2011:2). Focus groups are a collective activity, a "social event" for an "organized discussion" and "interaction" conducted in a natural environment or online (Abrams & Gaiser 2017:01; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2011:2). Within the African setting, focus groups are useful in facilitating the "non-individuality of the African culture in their natural context" (Ali 2017:138). The focus group data were used to address research questions 2 and 3 of the study (see Section 1.5.2).

1.6.2.3 Qualitative document analysis

A qualitative document analysis (QDA) is a methodical technique for studying or assessing documents—both "printed and electronic (computer-based and internet-transmitted) — material" (Bowen 2009:28). The purpose of qualitative document analysis is to scrutinise and interpret data to draw meaning from it, attain understanding, and develop practical knowledge (Olsen 2012:1-06; Bowen 2009:28). Document analysis is often used with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation (Bultas, Ruebling, Breitbach & Carlson 2016:765). The qualitative researcher is required to rely upon numerous (at least two) sources as proof or "convergence and corroboration" through the use of different data sources and methods to enhance credibility (Bowen 2009:28). The qualitative document analysis assisted in addressing research question 2.

1.6.3 The study population

A study population refers to the collection of units from which the sample is selected (Babbie *et al* 2009:174). All electricity customers who participated in the electricity-tariff reviews from 2016 to 2017 constitute the target population for the survey data collection method. With regard to the focus group, the study population comprised 24 employees, which is the LEWA staff complement. The entire collection of LEWA communication artefacts was the study population for the qualitative document analysis.

1.6.4 The target population

The target population refers to the totality of the objects or subjects (elements) that the researcher is concerned about or which he or she intends to generalise the findings to (Taylor 2012:1). In concurrence Babbie *et al* (2009:174) posit that a study population refers to the collection of units from which the sample is actually selected. A study population refers to the collection of units from which the sample is actually selected (Babbie *et al* 2009:174). All 2,000 electricity customers who participated in the electricity tariff reviews from 2016 to 2017 constituted the target population for the survey data collection method. With regard to the focus group, the study population comprised 24 employees, which is the LEWA staff complement. The target population for LEWA documents was all communication artefacts issued or produced by LEWA during electricity tariff review during the period under study, and other pertinent regulatory tools documents (see Chapter 4, Table 4).

1.6.5 The accessible population

The accessible population refers to the portion of the target group which is the population that the researcher had access to and from which the sample was drawn (Bracht & Glass 2011:2-3). The accessible population for the survey was 150 electricity customers who participated in the survey. These stakeholders had registered their names with LEWA during the electricity tariff review events and submitted comments on electricity tariffs as individuals or in groups. The accessible group for the focus group was six employees at both middle and senior management levels at

LEWA. All LEWA communication artefacts were available and also comprised the accessible population for the qualitative document analysis.

1.6.6 Sampling

According to Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2013:2), sampling refers to the process of "selecting a subset of items from a defined population for inclusion into a study". The subset of things to investigate in the study may not always be people but sampling units can include "groups, events, places, and points in or periods of time" (Guest, Namey & Mitchell 2013:2). A sample refers to sources such as people, textual materials, and objects from which researchers obtain data from, and these represent a bigger population (Leedy & Omrod 2010:146). Starks and Trinidad (2008:1374) point out that in qualitative studies, the scope of the study, nature of the topic, data quality, and study design determines the sample size. The results that are obtained from the sample can be generalised to the study population (Leedy & Omrod 2010:147).

There are two types of sampling, namely, probability and non-probability (Fritz & Morgan 2010:3-4). Probability sampling refers to when the researcher selects a sample that is representative to address the objectives of the study and generalise findings to the entire population (Wienclaw 2013:1; Fritz & Morgan 2010:3-4). For this study, a non-probability sample method was used for the survey, focus groups and the qualitative document analysis. In his work, Tongco (2007) explains that it is not unusual to use a non-probability type of sample, such as a purposive sample, for a survey.

1.6.7 Data Collection methods

In a qualitative research study, multiple sources of data collection methods can be used (Burnside-Lawry 2012:102-121; Bowen 2009:28). The three data collection methods, namely, the online self-administered questionnaire, the moderator's guide for focus groups and qualitative document analysis, were used to collect data. The moderator's guide and online questionnaire, are attached as Appendices C and D.

1.6.7.1 Online self-administered questionnaire

A questionnaire is a data collection method for a survey. A questionnaire refers to a "group of written questions used to gather information from the respondents," and is one of the most common methods for collecting data in the social sciences (Kanji 2009:484). An online self-administered questionnaire comprising Likert scale type of questions was developed. The Likert-type scales enable researchers to examine attitudes, personality characteristics, and other psychological variables in a study (Liu, Lee & Conrad 2015:953; Nadler, Weston & Voyles 2015:71). The questionnaire measured respondents' perceptions of LEWA's participatory communication during an electricity tariff-review process, in accordance with proposed practical guidelines. The questionnaire posed short and clear questions. Telephonic, E-mail and WhatsApp follow-ups were made to encourage the respondents to respond in acceptable numbers. In this manner, the response rate for the self-administered questionnaire was enhanced.

1.6.7.2 Moderator's guide for focus group

According to Henderson (2009:1), in a focus group discussion, a moderator's guide must be developed to be a road map for discussions, from the beginning to the end of the entire endeavour. A moderator's guide should always ensure that the focus group questions are related to the study, in order to gather the required data (Henderson 2009:1-2). A moderator's guide was developed as a tool to guide the sequence of questions that the participants had to respond to. The moderator' guide entailed ground rules for the discussion so that the participants could understand how the discussion would be conducted. Due to LEWA's lean organisational structure, the researcher physically contacted eight potential participants and requested their prior consent to deliberate in the group discussion. However, only six employees agreed to participate and were recruited to participate in the focus group (see Chapter 4, Section 4.4.4.2).

1.6.7.3 Qualitative document analysis

A careful selection of all LEWA communication artefacts that are helpful in relation to the stakeholder communication and education activities and those used during electricity tariff-review processes was made to facilitate analysis. The documents are reflected in Chapter 4, Table 4.1.

1.6.8 Analysis of the data

According to Sun (2018:2), data refer to an extensive collection of empirical objects. These include "historical documents, newspaper articles, TV programming, field notes, interview or focus group transcripts, pictures, face-to-face conversations, social media messages and others" (Sun (2018:2) Approaches to analysing qualitative data are not identical, as they have different origins, theoretical approaches, and goals for which the data were generated (McCurdy & Ross 2017:1). The interpretation of the impacts of participatory endeavours can be a contested area due to the availability of hard evidence or lack of it. This situation often results in either agreement or disagreement between scholars when it comes to assessment of the success of such impacts (Brown 2014:2-3).

The online self-administered questionnaire provided quantitative descriptive data about electricity customers' perceptions of LEWA participatory communication during the processes of electricity tariffs hearings. These quantitative data obtained through the survey were first examined to discover and eliminate any errors. As noted in in Chapter 4, Section 4.4.6.3, responses were then summarised and analysed electronically using an SPSS programme to attain descriptive information. Descriptive statistics were deemed sufficient for this study since they describe the respondents' perspectives and do not establish a causal relationship between results (which was not the intent of this study).

Thematic analysis refers to a data reduction and analysis strategy in which qualitative data are segmented, classified, condensed, patterned (themed) and reassembled to enable insight into communication (Hawkins 2018:1-1; Liamputtong 2015:10; Ayres 2008:1). Through thematic analysis, data from several research methods, such as interviews, observation, and written material, can be analysed (Gavin 2008:2; Ayres 2008:1). The deductive thematic analysis for this study was done in accordance with the approach by Braun and Clarke (2006), and embraced by Onwuegbuzie, Dickson, Leech and Zoran (2009) and Maguire and Delahunt (2017). The practical guidelines for participatory communication elucidated in Chapter 2 were considered during the analysis. Both the data of the focus group and documents were subjected to a thematic analysis.

1.6.9 Validity and reliability

Both reliability and validity are essential steps that indicate the extent to which the measurement that was used in a study may have errors (Leedy & Omrod 2010:29). For this study, construct and internal validity were important considerations. Internal validity refers to the extent to which research evidence support a claim about "causal relationship" between independent and dependent variables. The aim is to exclude alternative (noncausal) explanations for the evidence (Maul & Katz 2018:01; Leighton 2012:1-2; Van der Riet & Durrheim 2009:90). Such conditions can be changes in the measuring device or measuring procedures between a pre-test and post-test stages of a study (Van der Riet & Durrheim 2009:90). Construct validity on the other hand refers to "to the collection and application of validity evidence intended to support the interpretation and use of test scores as measures of a particular construct" (Markus & Lin 2012:2). Dilbeck (2018:2) further maintains that construct validity refers to a rational interpretation which is made from some measure or test that produces results that adequately support a theoretical position or basis. For this study, the proposed practical guidelines based on a comprehensive literature review enhanced construct and internal validity of all measurement instruments, while a statistician employed by University of South Africa (UNISA) assisted with the scale validity of the questionnaire.

In communication research, the validity of a study is also enhanced through methodological triangulation. Triangulation enables the researcher to check the validity of the data from various sources and expand his or her in-depth knowledge of the subject matter from different perspectives (Ali 2017:137; Leedy & Omrod 2010:33; Tredoux & Smith 2009:164). For this study, it means that the results of all three research methods were triangulated to validate the results and to understand different aspects of the same phenomenon. The piloting of the questionnaire furthermore ensured internal validity since it was pre-tested on a sample size large enough to enable a researcher to address potential problems. In addition, questions used in the focus group were also pre-tested to ensure that were understood and clear.

For this study, reliability was safeguarded through proper documentation of the research procedure for the focus group and document analysis framework, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). The transcriptions of the focus group discussion and recording are available on request. For the questionnaire, a statistician employed by the UNISA assisted with scale reliability.

Most expenses related to this study were covered by a bursary allocated to the student by UNISA. In addition, the researcher also received permission from LEWA to conduct the study. In addition informed consent forms were filled. These are available on request.

1.7 ANTICIPATED FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCIPLINE OF COMMUNICATION

1.7.1 Anticipated finding

It is anticipated that the study would contribute to the refinement of the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication in electricity tariff-review. This would facilitate scholarly understanding of participatory settings such as the LEWA electricity tariff-review process.

1.7.2 Anticipated contribution to the discipline of communication

The study seeks to contribute to research being done in a novel context for participatory communication using a mixed-method approach in the regulated sector.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION FOR THIS STUDY

In studies in which human beings are participants, their rights must not be violated, since being ethical, among other aspects, means that the research did not have any adverse effect on the participants (Coffelt 2018:01-06). In this regard, full cooperation and informed consent from participants was sought and obtained. The works of other scholars used in this study were referenced in accordance with the UNISA guidelines on referencing. The confidentiality and anonymity of research participants were respected.

The researcher attests to the fact that he is familiar with UNISA's Research Ethics Policy and considered this policy when planning and executing the study. Ethical clearance was granted for this study (see Annexure E).

1.9 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

This study is demarcated in terms of addressing the research questions and as depicted in Table 1.1.

Table 1: Demarcation of the study in terms of the research questions

CHAPTER	ADDRESSING RESEARCH QUESTIONS
Chapter 1: Orientation and rationale for the study	Provides a general overview of the study.
Chapter 2: Using a participatory communication approach within an electricity tariff review setting	**Research question 1**: What are the proposed practica guidelines for participatory communication within the context of public consultations to promote public involvement during an electricity tariff-review process? **Research question 4:** How can the proposed practical guidelines be adapted as a heuristic for participatory communication during an electricity tariff-review process?
Chapter 3: Lesotho Electricity and Water Authority	**Research question 2**: In what ways did LEWA deal with development communication from a participatory communication perspective?

CHAPTER	ADDRESSING RESEARCH QUESTIONS
Chapter 4: Research methodology and operationalisation	**Research question 1**: What are the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication within the context of public consultations to promote public involvement during an electricity tariff-review process? **Research question 2**: In what ways did LEWA deal with development communication from a participatory communication perspective? **Research question 3**: In what way should LEWA's participatory communication have complied with the proposed practical guidelines to facilitate the public involvement of electricity customers during an electricity tariff-review process? **Research question 4:** How can the proposed practical guidelines be adapted as a heuristic for participatory communication during an electricity tariff-review process?

CHAPTER	ADDRESSING RESEARCH QUESTIONS
Chapter 5. Findings and interpretation of the findings	**Research question 2**: In what ways did LEWA deal with development communication from a participatory communication perspective? ? **Research question 3**: In what way should LEWA's participatory communication have complied with the proposed practical guidelines to facilitate public involvement during an electricity tariff-review process? **Research question 4:** How can the proposed practical guidelines be adapted as a heuristic for participatory communication during an electricity tariff-review process?
Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations	**Research question 2**: In what ways did LEWA deal with development communication from a participatory communication perspective? **Research question 3**: In what way should LEWA's participatory communication have complied with the proposed practical guidelines to facilitate public involvement during an electricity tariff-review process? **Research question 4:** How can the proposed practical guidelines be adapted as a heuristic for participatory communication during an electricity tariff-review process

1.10 SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the study in a synoptic manner which will be explicated more in further chapters. The study was also contextualised through a discussion of the study's background, its objectives, the research problem and the research questions. The key concepts of the study and the practical context were elucidated. An overview of the research methodology was made, followed by a discussion on the anticipated findings. It was also important to address the study's ethical considerations. Lastly the study's demarcation was made. In the next chapter, Chapter 2, a participatory communication approach is used to propose practical guidelines for an electricity tariff review setting.

CHAPTER 2: USING A PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION APPROACH WITHIN AN ELECTRICITY TARIFF REVIEW SETTING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the overall theoretical framework on which the study is premised is elucidated. The study is anchored in the field of development communication, the derivative of which is participatory communication, the main focus in the chapter. Development communication is first discussed to provide a context for introducing debates in participation and, more importantly, participatory communication. This is because the study embraces a participatory communication lens to discuss the electricity tariff-review process. In theory, participatory communication holds that people become important actors in their own development efforts, as opposed to being mere beneficiaries of development assistance (Naidoo 2010:10).

Communication knowledge and research help to improve social development processes because skilled development communicators are critical role players in communicating the implementation of change within societies (Koningstein & Azadegan 2018:1-7; Manyozo 2016:118-121). Applied to the context of this study, it is maintained that communication with electricity customers during an electricity tariff-review process must be participatory so that the process becomes sustainable. Lastly, practical guidelines for participatory communication in the context of the interaction between LEWA and its electricity customers in an electricity tariff review setting are proposed. The aim is to inform the analysis of the empirical data in this study. The practical guidelines are informed by participatory communication theory.

2.2 CONTEXTUALISING DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

Scholarly perspectives on the concepts of *communication* and *development,* which are the constituent concepts in development communication, were highlighted in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.4). The meaning of development communication depends on the perspective that scholars attach to its two constituent concepts of development and communication (Melkote & Steeves 2015:385) and these are explained in the sections below.

2.2.1 Perspectives on and a definition of the concept of communication

Communication scholars and practitioners have different perspectives regarding the concept of communication. For example, some scholars regard communication as an organisational delivery system, while others view it in general terms as part of culture and every aspect of social change (Melkote & Steeves 2015:385). Mefalopulos (2008:40), asserts that genuine communication relies on a "symmetrical relational scheme, with parity of condition between sender and receiver, and the possibility of one hearing or giving ear to the other, as a mutual will to understand one another." Mutual agreements between people in a democratic setting are premised on "mutual respect and common interest" (Torruella, Casademont, Gifreu & Prieto-Flores 2018:6). In the context of research and for analytical purposes, communication is therefore more meaningful when it occurs between two or more people. Through communication, the way the participants express themselves, their awareness of issues and involvement thereof are enhanced (Mefalopulos 2008:40).

Hence communication incorporates all methods of human interfaces, from the interpersonal to the facilitated ones, and from the one-way direct flow to the two-way processes (Koningstein & Azadegan 2018:1-7)**.** Communication as a method denotes a circular flow (that is dialogic), in which its consequences and the outcomes are not automatically certain. Communication is regarded, more generally, as inseparable from culture and forms of social change (Hsin, Chien, Yin-Shao, Chen-Yung & Yore 2016:125-127; Melkote & Steeves 2015:315; Freedman & Shafer 2010:141). It is, therefore, the broad conceptualisation of the concept of communication that is adopted for this study.

2.2.2 Perspectives on and definition of the concept of development

The concept of development is also value-laden and its meaning is a contested area (Servaes 2013:1-8). Some scholars have espoused the economic slant in defining development while others opine that there are other indicators beside economic ones that represent it. Even in the United Nations system, there has been shifting paradigms regarding how to operationalise implementations over many years (Koningstein & Azadegan 2018:01-07; Arku & Arku 2013:59).

Having undergone paradigm shifts, the concept of development is largely associated with the requirement to develop in post-colonial societies, which entails changes in the social infrastructure to allow better attainment of human values (Nag 2011:2-4; Chagutah 2009:116-117). These paradigm shifts are discussed in more detail in Section 2.3 of this chapter. For some scholars, *development* refers to enhanced egalitarianism, liberty, acquisition of better control for the majority of people over their environment and it does not occur in a simple or straightforward manner (Bastia 2014:237–248; Nag 2011:3). Hence it is ideal to discuss the limitations in development where individuals and communities can be units of analysis. This approach is useful instead of the one that makes reference to people in a given geographical area as being developed or underdeveloped (Ogan, Bashir, Luo, Gaddie, Pennington, Rana, Salih & Camal 2009:650-657). Development itself comprises participatory and purposeful strategies designed to benefit the public, whether in terms of material, political, or social needs (Baú 2018:366). Development refers to a state of human independence, which allows people to live in a manner consistent with their own meaning systems in a sustainable manner. In this state, the people cannot be dictated to by others (Debasree 2014:1-5; Muthuri, Moon & Idemudia 2012:371). The view is regarded to be useful for the purpose of this study and is hence adopted.

Having adopted definitions for the two concepts of communication and development in 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, development communication is discussed in section 2.2.3.

2.2.3 Characteristics of development communication

The origins of the field of development communication can be traced back to the post World War II period. During that time communication scholars explored media effects on people in promoting development, not their participation per se (McAnany 2012:9-11). Mefalopulos (2008) asserts that development communication has evolved from the modernist, to the dependency paradigms and to the participatory one that makes use of both the monologic and dialogic types of communication. In its participatory perspective or paradigm (which is covered prominently in this study) development communication embraces the use of mediated technologies, such as television, radio and computer systems and interpersonal media (Baú 2018:366). Development communication focuses on change at various levels. Its participatory inclination assumes a firm horizontal instead of an upward or top-down meaning, format, comprising dialogic purposes, as well as the very ordinary dissemination ones (Sáez 2016:431; Melkote & Steeves 2015:315). This perspective on development communication is adopted for the study because it is in line with its objectives. As a prelude to the discussion in this chapter the shifting paradigms in development communication are explored as well as their theoretical underpinnings (in Section 2.3).

2.3. SHIFTING PARADIGMS IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

According to Linden (2014:480-483), modernisation and participatory paradigms feature prominently in development communication debates. Servaes and Malikhao (2008:155) and Huesca (2008:180) maintain that the participatory paradigm is informed by the deficiencies of the modernisation, dependency and to some extent on world systems paradigms. Each paradigm is briefly overviewed in subsequent sections.

2.3.1 Modernisation paradigm

According to Jooste and Van der Vyver (2014:631-640), the modernisation paradigm advocates for change in all areas of human thinking and actions from a traditional state to the one imposed or voluntarily borrowed from a dominant modern society. Modernisation paradigm articulated a concept of development which is characterised by progress that occurs in stages from traditional to modern societies. The process must be driven by either the state or by market forces (Georghiou 2014:42). The modernist paradigm espouses a unilinear approach to development that is dependent on science, reason, technology and the free market (Melkote & Steeves 2015:389; Singh 2009:03; Mefalopulos 2008:44-45). For modernists, development in Third World countries could only be achieved using Western science and technology (Higgs 2011:02-03; Pawar 2010:76). At the political level, the traditional or feudal social and political institutions occurring within such societies were to be replaced by democratic forms of governance (Singh 2009:03). The underlying assumption was that there could be only one form of development, as reflected in the advancement observed in the developed countries themselves (Waisbord 2015:149).

Hence, with regard to communication, the paradigm’s assumptions about reality or human existence (ontology), the science of knowledge (epistemology) and research strategy (methodology) are that there is only one truth (Mefalopulos 2008:58). Within this perspective, there has to be a fit between Western values and authoritarian, low-esteem and change-resistant Third World cultures. According to Thomas (2008:34) development would be attained by, among others, information dissemination and the mass media (newspapers, radio, cinema and television).

Mechanistic communication and propaganda models that were meant to diffuse Western culture to supposedly backward Third World countries were considered for use (Servaes & Malikhao 2008:160). Following some research, it was deemed that a blueprint of development communication had to be based on a "diffusion of innovations" theory (Servaes 2008:20). According to Peng and Vilas (2017:172) and Servaes (2007:487- 490), the main proponents of this paradigm modernist scholars argued that a human being went through predetermined sequential stages while adopting an innovation. Theoretical models of reference included the "hypodermic needle" theory or "bullet" theory. These put some emphasis on the powerful effects of the media over people who are regarded as being passive receivers of media products (Wise 2017:01). The other model was the model of "5 W's and an E" which could be summarised in a question, *who says what, to whom, in which channel and with what effect* (Du Plooy 2009:25). Another variant of the theory defined the communication process as Source-Message-Channel-Receivers (SMCR) (Mefalopulos 2008).

The modernisation paradigm has been critiqued for, among other things, downplaying the negative impact of developments such as colonialism, the expropriation of resources and globalisation on developing countries (Mefalopulos 2008:45). The main critics were mainly from the Dependency School, whose position is briefly discussed below.

2.3.2 The Dependency Paradigm

In the 1960s, the proponents of the dependency paradigm argued that modernist thinking had not brought equality and development to post-colonial societies (Naidoo 2010:26). Arguing from mainly a Latin American perspective, dependency theorists maintain that the modernisation paradigm is theoretically flawed (Naidoo 2010:26; Servaes & Malikhao 2008:160). Modernist thinking is regarded to be impractical for the development processes in the Third World (Pawar 2010:106). Georghiou (2014:42) and Servaes (1986:207) maintain that the dependency paradigm embraces a Marxist slant. The paradigm criticises the modernisation paradigm for studying development processes within a presumably stable social system with no class struggles, social clashes and inconsistencies. Colonisation has made development in the colonial countries impossible, since the profits that could be used to industrialise the former colonies are taken to the colonial powers. This international political and economic order is manipulative and preserves the dependency of the developing countries (periphery) on the developed ones (centre) (Vliegenhart 2010:252). The core uses its developed technological skills and infrastructure to control the periphery to provide raw materials and low-priced labour to the core (Mefalopulos 2008:47).

For dependency scholars, underdevelopment in post-colonial societies is not a result of the prevalence of deficiencies in capital or management skills. Rather it is a product of the international political and economic system known as the "international division of labour" and related "historical patterns of domination" (Servaes & Malikhao 2008:162; Mefalopulos 2008:47).

The influence of the dependency thinking on development policies in post-colonial societies in the 1970s and 1980s was great and it advocated for the fight against dependency to be executed at two levels. The first one was at the national level where countries should strive for self-reliance through implementing import-substitution policies to insulate national industries from foreign competition (Lyne 2015:75-76; Naidoo 2010:28). The second level is at the international level, where the peripheral countries would form alliances to have a greater voice and weight, both politically and economically (Naidoo 2010:28; Mefalopulos 2008:47). During the growth of its appeal, the dependency paradigm mutated into various branches that included the European Marxist tradition, French structuralism, political economy oriented to Africa and the Historical-Economic School (Thelwall & Thelwall 2016:48; Lie 2008:118). With regard to the role of communication, dependency theory analyses its "flows in the overall international scenario" (Mefalopulos 2008:47).

Despite its appeal, the dependency paradigm was critiqued for being too simplistic, failing to suggest an alternative model to modernisation and leading many countries to more debt as they pursued import-substitution policies. The theory fails to recognise the role of national elites in the periphery and the difference between the political-economic statuses of different countries in the periphery. In response to these shortcomings, the world systems theory emerged (Apia 2017:86-92; Mefalopulos 2008:48). The theory is elucidated below.

2.3.3 The World Systems theory

The "world systems" theory was formulated to recognise the general structures that restrain economic development in peripheral and dependent countries (Gills, Saskia, & Wallerstein 2015:174-177). The world-systems theory focuses on the chronological growth of the capitalist world-economy that has “a single division of labour”, spreading across many states or institutions and functioning on an inter-state system (Hall, Kardulias & Chase-Dunn 2011:235-236; Vliegenhart 2010:252). From the 16th to the 18th centuries, the capitalist system grouped the world into the core, peripheral, and semi-peripheral zones. The system further grouped the world into economic activities that sustained inequalities between regions and countries (Gills, Saskia & Wallerstein 2015:174-180; Griffiths & Knezevic 2010:448). In concurrence, Hall, *et al* (2011:235-236) observe that surpluses realised from the economic activities in the peripheral and semi-peripheral zones are transferred back to core zones. Servaes (2007:491), argues that core zones are strengthened by their state institutions and unfair trade exchanges between the core, peripheral and semi-peripheral zones.

For the world system theory, the international, as opposed to the national system, is the central focus. Closely linked here are the issues of communication and information, as entailed in the call, by the developing countries and the former Warsaw Pact countries, for the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). NWICO was championed by the United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). NWICO agitated for a more balanced flow of media programmes and information from developed countries to the developing ones. The aim was to halt what developing countries deemed to be “cultural imperialism” (Eko 2013:341; Luyt 2013:1198; Mefalopulos 2009:50). However, the developed countries, especially the United States, regarded these efforts as interference in free media flow (Mefalopulos 2009:50). In recent times, there is also a movement to entrench democracy in developing countries to ensure that voices inside the developing countries are heard (Freedman & Shafer 2010:135). According to Van der Riet and Boettiger (2009:3), the dominant nature of the world system has permeated all social structures such that participatory research approaches become necessary. The marginalised in society could be empowered to transform “accessing the least powerful members of a community, and engaging them in a research intervention. The transformation could be through “accessing the least powerful members of a community, and engaging them in a research intervention,” (Van der Riet & Boettiger 2009:3). In the context of this study, it is maintained that both the dependency theory and its variant, the world systems theory, are relevant. This is so because they provide a framework in which the contradictions within the Lesotho ESI system could be studied and applied to development processes.

Like both the modernisation and dependency paradigms, the world system theory has been criticised for ignoring social and cultural factors at the expense of economic indicators of development (Mefalopulos 2008:49; Hall, *et al* 2011:233-279). With the increase in demand for democratic and representative forms of governance there has been a call for participatory approaches to development to be considered (Friendly & Stiphany 2018:273-280). As suggested below, the participatory paradigm is consistent with modern-day development thinking. In Section 2.3.4 below, the participatory paradigm of development and its emphasis on dialogic communication is overviewed.

2.3.4 Participatory Paradigm

According to Mefalopulos (2008:51), because of the criticism levelled at other development paradigms in the early 1980s, practitioners and scholars advocated participatory approaches to development to be considered. As argued earlier the interpretation of participatory endeavours impacts can be a contested areas due to the availability of hard evidence or lack of it resulting in either agreement or disagreement between scholars. Hence, a lack of tangible data may not necessarily be construed to be a failure. Regarding their costs it is suggested that some participatory approaches or strategies are regarded as cheaper to implement (Colle 2008:213). However, there is an alternate view that despite their benefits participatory endeavours can be time consuming and expensive. One of the ways to assess their success is not by focusing on the local but regional context (Terzis & Vassiliadou 2008:382). One of the theoretical approaches to participation, known as the multiplicity paradigm, is informed by the framework of multidimensionality. Multidimensionality emphasises the prominence of cultural identity of local communities, democratisation and participation by all in development endeavours at international, national, local and individual levels (Servaes 2008:19).

The focus of the participatory development paradigm has expanded to areas such as culture and education. In this perspective, it is a right of all people to speak their word either as a single person or as a group (Servaes & Milikhao 2008:168-170; Lie 2008:284). The empowerment of people in the developing world could be attained through conscientisation or awareness-raising. Conscientisation "requires the poor people to become aware of their conditions through a totality of reflection and action" (Mefalopulos 2008:55) (see Section 2.2.3). For empowerment to occur, good relationships should be established among groups with diverse skills sets, knowledge and experiences so that solutions to problems can be arrived at collectively (Burger 2017:17). In participatory thinking ordinary people's dormant abilities are roused or set in motion when they are allowed to set their own goals and make their own decisions, where they can improve their potential (Msibi & Penzhorn 2010:226). Although disagreements may occur during the implementation of participatory programmes, these are minimised through deliberation on issues in order to reach agreement, as well as to capacitate citizens to attain development (Servaes 2008:2-4).

Enghels (2016:05-10) and Waisbord (2001:15) maintain that critics of participatory approaches argue they are vague in outlining concrete procedures for development interventions. Incidences such as epidemics or health crises may not require participatory methods but the speedy and direct involvement of players such as governments or donors, in a top-bottom method (Waisbord 2001:15). Others maintain that participatory approaches are essentially inconsistent with local cultures, as they have been developed in the West. In this sense, they may only benefit the powerful and active members of the community (Enghel 2015:18). Participation, critics further posit, is always difficult, especially when the objectives or goals of participants are not uniform or multi-pronged (Miller & Rein 2011:86). The powerful may feign some appreciation of the problems of the poor, when in fact they do not even consult them on any development issues (Akpabio 2012:42). In concurrence, Otto and Fourie (2016:34-35) maintain that groups that dominate the participatory agenda tend to benefit more than those which do not.

As is evident in this section, the concept of participation has some connection to development communication. Having outlined the competing paradigm shifts in development communication. Key issues or considerations in participation are discussed in Section 2.4 below to provide a broader framework that anchors the study.

2.4. KEY ISSUES IN THE CONCEPT OF PARTICIPATION

There is no universal definition of the concept of participation, since its definition is largely contextual. Pawar (2010:122) defines participation as "the involvement and incorporation of users and citizens more generally in service planning and delivery, providing an opportunity to voice their concerns and contribute to policy formation". In terms of welfare services, participation refers to notions in policy-making that relate to empowerment and inclusive citizenship, whose goal is to enhance accountability by policymakers (Pawar 2010:122). Laurian and Shaw (2009:294) add that participation refers to a manner (approach) of the relationship between the state and civil society that gives the latter a say in decision-making. Unlike top-down or command-and-control relationships, participation intends to enhance generally acceptable shaping of government programmes (Laurian & Shaw 2009:294).

Chang and Jacobson (2010:661) further define participation as “a communicative action whose characteristics entail uncontrolled and unforced exchange of ideas between concerned parties, or stakeholders, so as to achieve shared understanding.” Aylet (2010:102-115) further posits that the concept of communicative rationality holds that the potential for certain kinds of reason is dependent on communication itself. Participants must be free to express their own opinions (Sandberg & Wallo 2013:199). This understanding of participation by Chang and Jacobson (2010), as supported by Aylet (2010) and Sandberg and Wallo (2013), is adopted for this study. Participation is regarded to be a function of voluntary and free communication between stakeholders or parties who may be interested in a given development endeavour. The people should be convinced that their contributions will result in a mutually shared goal. Examples of such participatory avenues include public hearings and meetings (Laurian & Shaw 2009:294). For this study, public hearings that are conducted during an annual electricity tariffs public determination in Lesotho to solicit electricity customers’ inputs into the annual electricity tariff levels are participatory in nature (see Chapter 3). In section 2.4.1 some of the debates that are relating to the concept of participation are discussed.

2.4.1 Debates about the concept of participation

There are areas or questions which provide the background against which the debates about the concept of participation occur. The first debate relates to the role or actors that determine the participation programme or agenda in a development setting. In this perspective, it is contended that players such as governments and aid agencies have historically dominated the participatory agenda-setting scenes (Thiollent 2011:169; Delgado & Staples 2009:97; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:3). When citizens participate in all issues that affect them in a democratic manner and change the course of a development endeavour that is regarded to be a participatory development (Call-

Cummings & James 2015:3; Delgado & Staples 2009:95). A participative process should result in a consensus between concerned people and this in turn facilitates the attainment of shared learning, social, intellectual and political capital (Kulözü & Tekeli 2014:4). A consensus is only attained when all parties' concerns have been investigated and every effort made to fulfil them (Kulözü & Tekeli 2014:4). Hence, public participation in service-delivery processes is enhanced by, among other things, people-centredness and communication (Naidoo & Ramphal 2018:90).

The second debate relates to the capabilities that ordinary people have so as to be true participants in development processes and how the same capabilities could be strengthened (Otto & Fourie 2016:25-26). In some settings, participation is a function of access to information, proper education and skills, all of which can be influenced by an individual's social class (Adair 2010:246). Marais, Quayle and Burns (2017:36) suggest that, in most organisations, sharing information has been associated with risk and vulnerability and that is reflected by power relations that obtain in participatory settings. Endeavours that are nominally termed as being geared towards empowerment have at times led to repression rather than liberation of the marginalised (Lu & Ares 2015:112; Atkinson 2010:441). For a development problem to be solved, information shared among stakeholders must be "accessible, differentiable, abstractable and understandable" (Kakeneno & Brugha 2016:398). In the same way the availability of information on tariffs must enable electricity customers to structure or fix the problem at the root of the annual electricity tariffs reviews.

The third debate relates to institutional, social, political and cultural factors that provide the background within which participation occurs (Laurian & Shaw 2009:294; Pawar 2010:75). Institutions such as governments, donor agencies, organisations with huge bureaucracies and individual country's colonial past, often determine the direction of participatory methods (Pawar 2010:75; Laurian & Shaw 2009:295). During various stages of developmental endeavours, participation minimises the occurrence of disagreements between stakeholders (De Vente, Reed, Stringer, Valente & Newig 2016:05; Calvet-Mir, Maestre-Andrés, Luis-Molina & Van den Bergh 2015:1; Rowley 2011:53-54). Participation distributes power in society enhances the legitimacy of decisions and trust among stakeholders (Laurian & Shaw 2009:294). A participatory approach thus minimises political and people's input risks and enhances transparency (Mefalopulos

2008:07-08; Calvet-Mir *et al* 2015:1). Transparency implies that information relating to an organisation or actor which facilitates for "external actors to monitor the internal workings or performance of that organisation" should be accessible to all who want it (Ruijer 2016:355).

The fourth debate relates to the modalities of sustaining and broadening the participatory efforts by involving locals in development efforts (Call-Cummings & James 2015:03). Rhodes-Purdy (2015:415) maintains that development theory puts the emphasis on the primacy of both the size of a participatory endeavour (scope) and how it can be supported in a sustainable manner. Local development imperatives should be connected into issues of power where participants can express themselves so as to ensure the sustainability of participatory processes (Laurian & Shaw 2009:296; Rhodes-Purdy 2015:415). Understanding how power is dispensed among participants is important, especially where the decision-making process is dominated by a few stakeholders (Dyll-Myklebust 2012). In this scenario, many stakeholders are deprived of genuine power and remain marginalised (Paletto, Balest, De Meo, Giacovelli & Grilli 2016:09-15; Calvet-Mir *et al* 2015). The negotiated or "inter-subjectively shared agreement" as the favourable position reached at the end is also one of the foremost outcomes and requirements of a participatory process (Kulözü & Tekeli 2014:4). In terms of the theory of communicative action, a dialogical communication viewpoint is instrumental in the conceptualisation of a participatory approach to development (Otto & Fourie 2016:212; Kulözü & Tekeli 2014:4). Thomas (2014:9) adds that participation should always be assessed in terms of the political economy, so as to determine if it is genuine or it is driven by "structures, ideologies, and power flows". In support of this position O'Meara (2014:125) and Fourie (2009:1-30) point out that, in many cases, international organisations, governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) call for participation in spaces or media that have already been created. Consequently, that leads to no empowerment of the stakeholders. According to Royds (2015:67-77), spaces for critical analysis and reflection between stakeholders in a participatory undertaking in areas such as critical literacy and listening in participatory video exchanges must be created. New forms of media are being used in Africa to revive critical areas, such as culture, therefore indispensable in many areas (Gerhmanne 2018:65-67). In this regard, media coverage can promote participation by acting as an information intermediary and influencing public opinion (Bishu, Yuxia, Xiaolong & Jie 2018:503).

In the next section, the different typologies of participation which are important for the discussion on practical guidelines proposed in this chapter are discussed.

2.4.2 Typologies of Participation

As already noted, there are several theoretical positions with varying interpretations of the meaning and extent of participatory approaches and methods. According to Huesca (2008:185) and Post (2010:1-5), stages of participation can be placed on a continuum. At one end of the continuum there are scholars of the behaviourist tradition, mass media effects and those espousing limited implementation of participatory principles to development. At the other end are those who advocate for total participation as "utopian panacea for development" (Huesca 2008:185). Otto and Fourie (2016:21) in concurrence point out that participation conceptually encompasses numerous and divergent "epistemologies, methodologies and imagined goals", and symbolises unrelated "evaluative measures" applied to establish its authenticity.

Aware of these varying positions, some scholars have devised typologies that elucidated their positions. For example, a "participation ladder" was conceptualised to reflect the various stages of public participation (Waller, Dreher & McCallum 2015:57-58; Delgado & Staples 2009:100). According to Bland (2018:217), the "ladder of citizen participation" is indicative of genuine participatory commitment since it proposes that citizen participation is synonymous with citizen power. The theory proposes that citizens only attain power if governments lose it (Bland 2018:217). In the 1990s, scholars tried to produce its variants, known as the collaborative and rights-based models of participation (Aylett 2010:101). The latter two models' theoretical and practical underpinnings are beyond the scope of this study. The rungs of the participation ladder are arrayed in ascending order from manipulation which represents lowest participation to citizen control, which is the highest form of participation. (Delgado & Staples 2009). In concurrence Bardouille-Crema, Chigas, and Miller (2013:64) maintain that personal respect and dignity are indispensable for meaningful consultations. The higher levels of the ladder, namely, are indicative of real citizen power. At citizen control, power is shared with grassroots organisation and the decisions of the majority are final (Delgado & Staples 2009:101-102; Aylett 2010:101-104). Figure 2.1 depicts ladder of participation on a simplified scale.

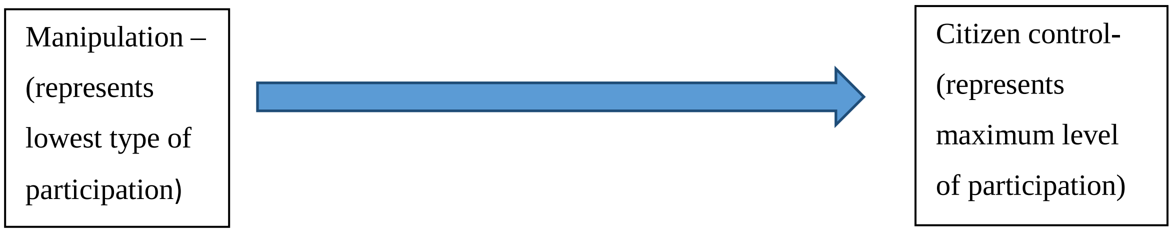

Figure 2. 1: Abridged typology of participation on a scale
Adapted from Delgado & Staples (2009:95-100) & Thomas (2014:7).

Manipulation is the weakest type of participation. By contrast, citizen control represents the ideal stage of participation (Delgado & Staples 2009:101; Coldevin 2008:239-240).

The model seeks to cover a wide array of situations but one of its limitations is that it does not exist in practice but in theory (Delgado & Staples 2009:101; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:6; Coldevin 2008:239-240). Consequently, other scholars have suggested a shorter four-stage ladder of participation. Mefalopulos (2008:11), for example, proposes a four-stage ladder which is indicated in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2. 1: A four-stage ladder of participation

Stage	Description
Passive participation	Stakeholders participate by being informed about what is going to happen or has already happened. People's feedback is minimal or non-existent, and individual participation is assessed mainly through head-counting and occasionally through their participation in the discussion.
Participation by consultation	Stakeholders participate by providing feedback to questions posed by outside researchers or experts. Since their contribution is not restricted to meetings, feedback can be provided at altered points in time. However, this consultative process preserves decision-making power to external professionals who are not obliged to integrate stakeholders' contributions.
Functional participation	Stakeholders take part in discussions and analysis of pre-determined objectives set by the development endeavour. This kind of participation, while it does not usually result in dramatic changes on "what" objectives are to be achieved, does provide valuable inputs on "how" to achieve them. Functional participation implies the use of horizontal communication among stakeholders.
Empowered Participation	Stakeholders are willing and able to be part of the participation process and participate in joint analysis, which leads to joint decision making about what should be achieved and how. While the role of outsiders is that of equal partners in the initiative, local stakeholders are equal partners with a decisive say in decisions concerning their lives

Source: Mefalopulos (2008:11)

The four-stage ladder of participation, as depicted in Table 2.1 above, indicates a participation continuum. The ladder starts from the lowest form (passive participation), which is purely a form of symbolic participation, to the maximum form (empowered participation), wherein local stakeholders participate equally in making decisions with external stakeholders (Delgado & Staples 2009). This simplified conceptualisation of participation was considered for the proposed practical guidelines due to its applicability. In Section 2.5 below the concept of participatory communication is explicated.

2.5 PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION

As mentioned in Chapter 1, participatory communication refers to a branch of development communication that advocates the development of the community in the preparation and execution of communication approaches. The original understanding that communication should be a top-down intervention for development has changed to embrace a participatory dimension (Waisbord 2015:151-152; Cornwall & Pratt 2011:265). For example, between 2000 and 2010, the World Bank set aside around US $80 billion for development projects, with a pre-condition that they should facilitate participation by civil society (Waisbord 2015:152). However, the extent to which such endeavours were truly participatory differed from one country to the other (Waisbord 2015:153).

Some scholars have defined participatory communication in terms of the Freirean perspective, which puts the emphasis on dialogue as its critical component (see Barranquero 2011:163). Participatory communication is the main approach within the dialogic or participatory mode, which brings together participation and the two-way communication mode. Participatory communication refers to a combination of participation and two-way communication methods "techniques, and tools to ensure mutual understanding, investigate key issues, minimize risks, and identify best options" for change (Mefalopulos 2008:233). As discussed under Chapter 1, Section 1.3.3., dialogic communication is the essence of participatory communication, as it facilitates consultation, empowerment and capacity building, which are central concepts in the study. According Wulfhorst, Eisenhauer, Gripne and Ward (2008:25) participatory communication uses research, among other things, to study a given problem or issue that concerns a community and is a continuous process. Listening, developing trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, discussing and learning for continued and meaningful change are features of development communication (O'Reilly *et al* 2018:167). In this sense the most peripheral and alienated communities can participate in the search for social justice (Harvey, Lewin & Fisher 2012:01).

Krueger-Henney (2016:49-65) suggests that listening to the concerns of the disadvantaged is beneficial for researchers who intend to address social problems. Hence, the definition of participatory communication by Mefalopulos (2008) is adopted for this study. The definition encapsulates the perspective espoused by Barranquero (2011) and by Wulfhorst *et al* (2008) that are applicable to the focus of this study. In the next sub-sections, approaches to participatory communication and its characteristics are discussed so as to relate them to context of the study.

2.5.1 Participatory Communication Approaches

According Servaes (1996:17-18), two original approaches to participatory communication exist. One of these approaches is the dialogical pedagogy which strategically combines two theories of Marxism and dialogical communication (Servaes 1996:17). The theory entails another element of liberating pedagogy. The theory puts emphasis on non-neutrality, critique, dialogue, praxis and concern for transformation as pillars of development process (Cortez 2013:50). Education is perceived to be a biased and political act because the educator must aim at empowering the learners through critical thinking and action (Malebese 2019:1-8; Cortez 2013:50). In this perspective, people see themselves as their own sources of inspiration or role models in the struggle for and attainment of better life chances (Huesca 2008:183). Mass media communication systems such as radio and television are regarded as top-down communication interventions that must be replaced by community-based ones so that the marginalised and illiterate people and women are connected to development issues (Ghosh 2010:1-9).

The second original approach, which was propagated by UNESCO (see Section 2.3.3), deals with issues of media access, participation and self-management (Burger 2017:16; Servaes 1996:17). People's self-management, access to the media for community use and participation in communication systems are very important to foster their development and therefore marginalised people must gradually take control of these three elements (Servaes 1996:18). Endeavours such as the United Nations' World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), hosted at the beginning the 21st century, have built on, among other things, UNESCO's approach. The WSIS Plan of Action stresses that the digital gap between Africa and the rest of the world should be decreased. The plan promotes, among other things, internet connectivity as a solution to development problems (Eko 2013:341-344). According to Lewis, Collyer, Willis, Harley, Marcus Calnan and Gabe (2017:578), in some situations privately owned media may have different objectives than do publicly owned ones. Hence there is a need to balance the use of the two media types.

Notwithstanding the above, it has been suggested that another approach to participatory communication, known as the multitrack model, has emerged (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:13). The model is flexible, amalgamating both monologic and dialogic communication methods to exploit the rigour and multifaceted nature of operational approaches and development problems into a reliable practical communication framework approach (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009). The multitrack approach calls for the inclusion of inputs by stakeholder groups in the execution of development projects at all stages from inception to completion and evaluation. In Section 2.7 of this chapter, the theoretical basis of this model is adopted for the proposed the practical guidelines. The practical guidelines are applied to the nature of participatory communication in the context of an electricity tariff-review process.

In Section 2.6 below, the stakeholder theory principles are discussed so that they can be adopted to the concept of participatory communication since both are compatible. The rationale of involving stakeholders in modern organisations' actions is to make their actions legitimate and transparent (Laplume, Sonpar and Litz 2008:1156-1166; later Richter and Dow 2017:428).

2.6. APPLYING STAKEHOLDER THEORY PRINCIPLES TO PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION

The stakeholder theory evolved from the strategic management field and has a multidisciplinary focus. The theory has influenced academic disciplines such as management, accounting, law, organisational communication, and business ethics, as well as the way in which contemporary business is understood (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar & De Colle 2010: xv; Laplume *et al* 2008:1156). The theory is a normative organisational theory that has systems-theoretic underpinnings (Valentinov, Roth & Will 2019:826-827). Stakeholders' opinions solicited on any development issue must be valued so that business uncertainties and acceptance of the risks thereof may be minimised (Capon, Gillespie, Rolfe & Smith 2015:1; Sueldo 2016:122).

Laplume *et al* (2008:1156-1160) maintain that a *stakeholder* refers to "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objective". Valentinov *et al* (2019:827) concur with the above, noting that the concept of stakeholder refers to "groups and individuals who have a stake in the success or failure of a business". The definition by Valentinov *et al* (2019) is adopted for this study because, within the context of electricity tariff review, electricity customers are affected by LEWA's decisions and vice-versa.

Public institutions stakeholders are many and varied. They include non-profit making organisations, governmental organisations, other agencies, citizens/customers, businesses, clients, politicians, the public, project managers, and design developers (Richter & Dow 2017; Moloi 2015:20-30: Rowley 2011:55). Government agencies sencounter problems in recognising and dealing with stakeholders' expectations due to the sheer volume of issues they deal with and their consequences (Moloi 2015:27; Revere, Calhoun, Baseman & Oberle 2015:22; Rowley 2011:54). Competing objectives, perspectives claims, and the conflicts that arise from these different goals should be "negotiated" (Rowley 2011:54). Public sector stakeholders expect public organisations to operate with transparency, accountability, fairness, democratic participation, and the empowerment of individuals and the community (Castelnovo 2013:92-94; Willems, Jegers & Faulk 2016:461). Programmes that are established, justifiable, popular, and which address strategically flexible business concerns and environment action increase support for organisations or participatory initiatives (Brown 2014:02; Laplume *et al* 2008:1164). Hoffmeister, Holleczek, Zwink, Stock, Stegmaier and Brenner (2017: 87) maintain that ordinarily people are induced to participate in events for which they are specially invited. Stakeholders in contemporary times tend to have access to more information and new technologies and to know market developments. Such developments make them different from traditional ones (Costello 2017:54). LEWA and LEC are public organisations. In the context of development, there should be a change in values and beliefs on the part of all stakeholders. That is attained by constructing new knowledge and practices, working collectively, and being open to two-way communication (Saul & Saul 2012:16).

The analysis of an organisation's relationship with its stakeholders should be anchored in the normative form of the stakeholder theory as it holds that organisations must value stakeholders' views (Donaldson 2011:130-133). However the critics of the theory argue that it does not offer a single and unified approach that guide managers on how they can practice ethical principles when dealing with real-life issues (Elms, Johnson-Cramer & 2011: 1-3; Scherer & Patzer 2011:140-142; Laplume *et al* 2008:1167-1170). The stakeholder slant originates from a socialist perspective and it militates against the implementation of corporate governance within firms (Freeman, Phillips & Sisodia 2018:01-03; Laplume *et al* 2008:1158). Despite the above criticism, the stakeholder theory is deemed relevant to this study as it is applied in the context of participatory communication during the electricity tariff review involving electricity customers who are part of the stakeholders.

In Section 2.7 below, the four phases of a participatory communication programme are explained, as outlined by Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009). These phases are important as they have been embraced by the World Bank.

2.7 THE FOUR PHASES OF A PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME

The process or nature of participatory communication generally has four phases which are discussed below. The four phases are applied to an electricity tariffs setting process for purposes of proposing some practical guidelines for participatory communication (see Section 2.8). The stages are (1) participatory communication assessment (PCA); (2) participatory communication strategy design; (3) implementation of communication activities; and (4) monitoring and evaluation (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:20).

2.7.1 Phase One: Participatory communication assessment (PCA)

The Participatory Communication Assessment (PCA) phase focuses on research putting emphasis on the appropriateness of communication methods and tools for addressing the development issue in question. The purpose is to establish electricity customers' trust and listen to their views while considering their various personal feelings about a specific development issue. Trust refers to "assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something; one in which confidence is placed; dependence on something future or contingent" (Gonzalez 2017:357). Theoretically, as explained in Chapter 1, Section 1.4.2, public consultations should facilitate dialogue on several ideas and the mere presence of the electricity customers is not sufficient to render a participatory process genuine. Consultations that are not genuine make ordinary people delegate their rights to be consulted to technical specialists who act as negotiators (Flemmer & Schilling-Vacaflor 2016:183). According to Aldridge (2015:09), participatory endeavours address issues of power at various levels of development and the stories and voices of participants are regarded as being critical. The public should engage in participatory communication to articulate own experiences about the various aspects of a development issue facing it (Meade 2017:326). PCA entails discussion of issues from broad to specific ones, including the "cause and effect" of problems, the best options and the media environment which should be agreed upon (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:22-23). In this regard, media coverage can promote participation by acting as an information intermediary and influencing public opinion (Bishu, Yuxia, Xiaolong & Jie 2018:503). PCA comprises the five steps that are outlined below.

In the **first step** all stakeholders ascertain the development issue they are dealing with and delineate it (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:24). The intention is for stakeholders to examine and discover important issues, hazards and observations about proposed change by themselves. Within a comprehensive range of options, all stakeholders are enabled to voice their primary perceptions about the suggested change (Mulu & Pineteh 2016:22; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:24) In many settings, stakeholders regard public consultations as neither honest nor important, since they legitimise decisions which have already been taken without their involvement (Campbell, Tabiri-Essuman, Gallo, Verdiel, Mandava, Azhar & Powell 2016:362). Ndlela (2019:43) holds a similar view that it is important that an organisation understands the priorities of its stakeholders so it may accordingly adjust its communication efforts with them. Stakeholders must be involved in the process of identification of the drivers for annual tariff reviews, in what has been referred to as a *concept of problem tree* identification (Tufte & Mefalopolus 2009:25).

The **second step** concerns the crafting a shared/communal area, instituting dialogue and developing confidence among key stakeholders to ensure the success of a development initiative (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:23-25). The principal stakeholders have to intermingle, work towards a common understanding and pursue a compromise about the main concerns identified in step 1. Stakeholders must agree to formal process of written consultation procedures and how the participants themselves refine their competencies in the subject matter under discussion (Lundberg & Hysing 2015:16). Burger (2017:02-10) suggests that in the developing countries public consultation or engagement is tied to a development agenda. She cites an example of global initiatives such as the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UN 2030 SDGs advocate for the establishment of partnerships among "social groups, the public sector, NGOs, third sector organisations, and the business sector" (Burger 2017:02-10). Activities that create a common space include the holding of open meetings or gatherings facilitated by agents of the stakeholders (Kachentawa & Patchanee 2017:16-17; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:23-25)**.**

The **third step** in PCA concerns weighing the problems, risks, opportunities, and solutions to the problem. In this step, stakeholders focus on areas connected to the proposed change (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:25). A communication baseline study must be conducted to collect information to be used by all stakeholders in assessing the situation in which a project is undertaken. The information will further enable stakeholders to evaluate its impact (Harjusola-Webb & Robbins 2012:99-110; Pade-Khene, Palmer & Kavhai 2010:266). Numerous research data collection techniques, such as one-to-one interviews and focus group discussions which yield required information, are undertaken (Kelly 2009:304; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:26; Elmendorf & Rios 2008:84).

During the **fourth step** of prioritising key issues for change and reconciling different perceptions, it is critical that the findings in the third step are investigated. In social research, more than one theoretical perspective is used to test the reliability and validity of findings (Walliman 2009:294; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:27).

The **fifth step** entails that of authenticating findings and delineating solutions or objectives. At this stage, careful synthesis and analysis of the data for interpretation is done extensively. The results are matched and differentiated across the whole array of stakeholders so that the change which most stakeholders prefer is identified. Creative thinking is a prerequisite so that generally stakeholders may agree on the best solution. The identification and definition of the objectives of the development endeavour takes place (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:23; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:27).

When it comes to the electricity review setting, it is important to explore all issues or problems that underlie an electricity tariff-review process. These include electricity customers' knowledge, attitudes and practices concerning electricity use and access. The joint exploration of the issues will establish stakeholder trust while considering their different opinions on tariffs. Through a participatory communication process, electricity customers determine the best solution or options to addressing the issues of an annual electricity tariff increase. A baseline study on communication needs for raising stakeholder awareness must be done here. Hence, it is critical that electricity customers' perceptions of the rationale for electricity tariff reviews are considered to ensure the reliability and validity of the exercise. The step will determine the best way to come up with the communication plan that will address electricity customers' problems concerning electricity tariffs reviews. Thereafter, an extensive analysis of the data must be undertaken to ensure that the objectives of the communication with electricity customers during tariffs are reflective of stakeholders' priority on addressing tariffs. For example, it is a standard practice in some countries that electricity markets stakeholders such as generators, companies, regulators and consumers have predictable tariffs levels for planning purposes (Makholm 2017:30). The predetermined tariff increase certainty allow them to prioritise their requirements.

It may not be possible to consult electricity customers because of issues such as time, resources, their interests and knowledge. Persuading people to participate in consultations is not easy although effective communication methods must be used to ensure they do (Sebola 2017:25-30). However, raising the electricity customers' awareness on pertinent tariff review issues such as energy conservation may be helpful in addressing fundamental issues related to tariffs (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2). LEWA is a regulatory entity; it must embrace transparency plans and actions. As Marais *et al* (2017:36) posit, the public should have adequate opportunities to be able to influence actions of public bodies.

Having finalised the step PCA step, the participatory communication strategy preparation stage must follow. The stage is elucidated below.

2.7.2 Phase Two: Participatory communication strategy design

During the second phase, the issues identified in the first (research) phase are aligned to the best communication methods to attain the proposed change (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:20). Contemporary strategy-making is a totally analytic and incessant process involving every stakeholder. The process is undertaken to determine the future instead of merely extrapolating from the past (Elhers & Lazenby 2011:04). Communication should be practised at a strategic level within an organisation. The organisation should use professional communicators to scan the environment for developments occurring therein so as prepare for their implicit and explicit consequences. Steyn and Pugh (2008:19) argue that organisations should focus on strategic stakeholders' needs, sensitivity and preconceptions.

The participatory communication strategy presents and articulates the identified problem(s) by key stakeholders and must be cognisant of the audience's knowledge, perceptions and priorities (Mulu & Pineteh 2016:08; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:20). At this stage, it may become necessary to consider when a monologic (one-way) or dialogic (two-way) communication mode can be used. Monologic communication is mostly used for awareness-raising or promoting further engagement with stakeholders to help identify key issues. Examples here would be newspapers which are one of the "most believable and trustworthy sources of information" (Nyilasy, Whitehall, Karen & Leonard 2011:174). A dialogic mode of communication should be considered by which all stakeholders are to make inputs to articulate their interests. The priority goals of the communication strategy must be clear as to what they should achieve and have a clear time frame. (Mefalopulos 2008:114-115; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:32). An effective communication strategy should be aligned with the context of its recipients, be intensive so to "violate people's expectations", be clear, unambiguous and not abstract (Wanyoike 2011:25-26).

Within an electricity review setting, due to its dialogic nature, participatory communication strategy formulation process should entail interactions between electricity customers. The objective should be to clearly communicate the drivers of the tariff-review process so that electricity customers understand the rationale for reviews, the process and why they should participate in it. The endeavour should be intended to increase trust and cooperation and foster partnerships among electricity customers. The monologic and dialogic features of communication are to be implemented at various stages so as to reach out to electricity customers. This brings some degree of predictability and transparency. Following this stage communication activities outlined in Phase 3 need to be implemented.

2.7.3 Phase Three: Implementation of communication activities

In the third phase, the communication activities conceived in the second phase are implemented (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:20). The activities are laid out in a plan that details specific aspects.

The plan must specify the financial and human resources required and the responsible person or institution. The timeframes reflecting scheduled times for completion and the indicators that will be used to weigh their effect must be stipulated (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:34). The audience or stakeholders to be addressed and the essential activities for implementation must be delineated. Context-specific issues should be considered so that monitoring and evaluation is a consideration throughout the process (Mulu & Pineteh 2016:08; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:35). Communication specialists may only participate when the problem was fully explored and demarcated (Mefalopulos 2008:20). Emphasis should also be put on stakeholder cooperation and media spaces. As Haro-de-Rosario, Saraite, Sáez-Martin and Del Carmen Caba-Pérez (2017:169-172) illustrate, social media has played an increasingly important role in the development of communication strategies and the maintenance of stakeholders' interests, as well as stimulating dialogic communication. The latest technological improvements have made it possible to communicate using new forms of media, such as cellphones, laptops, desktops and tablets. They can be useful when employed in dialogic communication (Bakowska-Waldmann, Brudka & Jankowski 2018:164; Mnisi 2015:93-94); Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:09). The use of ICT can influence the extent of success of participatory endeavours in many areas of contemporary life, including communication (Sîrbu *et al* 2015:01). In Hungary, for example, it is compulsory for all governmental decrees and all draft bills to be circulated on the government's webpage and be open for public scrutiny (Vértesy 2016:115). Nonetheless, Sénit, Kalfagianni, and Biermann (2016:533) maintain that information communication technology has also strengthened permanent participatory inequalities, instead of increasing transparency and accountability.

Within an electricity review setting, messages should be tailor-made to suit the electricity customers. Communication specialists should make inputs after the tariff-related issues have been demarcated and identified by electricity customers. For example, a message for urban electricity customer may not be the same as that for a rural electricity customers because the two are impacted differently by changes in electricity tariffs. The required communication activities that are to be implemented and the financial and human resources required must be specified. The responsible persons or institution and the timeframes reflecting scheduled times for completion have to be articulated. Lastly the indicators that will be used to assess their effectiveness of communication must be tailored to suit specific stakeholder groups. New forms of media, such as short message system (SMS), and internet-based ones (WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook), should be used to reach out to electricity customers not reached by the traditional media. ICT applications must be used to reach out to the geographically dispersed electricity customers. The stage of monitoring and evaluation of communication activities outlined in phase 3 now follows as elucidated below.

2.7.4 Phase four: Monitoring and evaluation

The fourth phase entails the monitoring and evaluation of the whole participatory communication endeavour. Evaluation involves a close review of the progress of the communication interventions and assessing their results (Mulu & Pineteh 2016:8; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:20). Neuhauser, Rothschild, Graham, Ivey & Konishi (2009:2139) and Brown (2014:3) posit that participatory endeavours are difficult to assess since they do not have universal monitoring and evaluation methods.

One of the methods that is employed in evaluating participatory activities is community-based participatory research (CBPR) (Chisa & Hoskins 2016; Hausman, Baker, Komaroff, Thomas, Guerra, Hohl, & Leff 2013:250-51). CBPR is a "research paradigm that encourages community participation in designing and implementing evaluation research" (Hausman, *et al* 2013:250-51). The CBPR's fundamental assumptions include learning together and inclusive involvement in information distribution on development matters that are relevant to the community. In CBPR approach scientists and administrators "listen and respond to the public" which is tantamount to the sharing of the results of a participatory endeavour by stakeholder groups (Hausman, et al 2013:250-251; Ali, Olden and Xu 2008:1281). Programmes that are conceptualised with stakeholders but are assessed only from the viewpoint of academic and policy stakeholders may not achieve intended results (Hausman *et al* 2013:250-251).

One of the most overlooked aspects of evaluating participatory communication is the degree of stakeholders' satisfaction and feedback (Braithwaite, McKenzie, Pruitt, Holden, Aaron, & Hollimon 2012:214-216). Both quantitative assessment methods (such as materials produced or staff trained) and qualitative ones, such as soliciting stakeholders' responses and views, can be employed. There must be a consensus regarding the application of the evaluation techniques undertaken at individual, group, organisational (and methodological) levels (Lopes & Videira 2016:40). According to Welton (2017:297), engaging in customer education initiatives on reducing electricity bills such as small-scale renewable generation and rooftop solar panels can be helpful in mitigating the impact of tariffs on stakeholders. The participatory communication process should be measured in its entirety, over time and not at the level of results only (Rogers, Harrison, Puruntatameri, Meredith & Dunne 2018.78-80; Brown 2014:2-3).

In an electricity-review setting, some of the qualitative indicators, such as the degree of local interest in discussing electricity tariffs, degree of gender equity in participation and information flows between electricity customers must be considered. There must be a collective self-efficacy, a sense of ownership, and special cohesion and social norms by the key electricity customers in the electricity tariff determination process. Tariff education, group media and workshops must be continually be undertaken to help the public to understand electricity tariff drivers. Furthermore, consumer communication forums could be established to sensitise the public on tariff drivers. According to Welton (2018: 581-583), education, guidance and other tailored-made resources can enhance electricity stakeholders' ability to make inputs and required contribution to energy-issue discussions. Following the discussion above, some practical guidelines for participatory communication are now proposed within the context of an electricity tariff-review process.

2.8 PROPOSING PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION DURING AN ELECTRICITY TARIFF-REVIEW PROCESS

In this section, some practical guidelines are now proposed for participatory communication during an electricity tariff-review process. The guidelines are first centred on the nature of participatory communication, followed by proposed stages of a participatory communication programme in this context, as informed by the literature.

2.8.1 The nature of participatory communication in an electricity tariff-review setting

This study supports participatory communication thinking as largely influenced by the liberating pedagogy concept. The concept promotes methods of joint action and thinking by appropriate stakeholders to a given problem (Barranquero & Saez 2017:433; Burnside-Lawry 2012:106; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:7; Servaes 1996:17). Furthermore, "dialogical pedagogy" approach rejects the customary approaches of "banking education" wherein outside "educators" or specialists just transmit what they know to ordinary people (learners) in submissive, hollow "holders" and "packets" (Otto & Fourie 2016:28). Bolin (2017:756-760) suggests that participatory thinking holds that power relations in human relationships bring about inequality and poverty. In this perspective, participatory communication emphasises that it is through active participation in the identification of problems, the search and establishment of solutions as well as execution of pertinent strategies that ordinary citizens are empowered (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:7).

In the next sub-sections, the philosophical principles behind participatory communication within an electricity review setting and practical steps are elucidated so as to apply them to an electricity tariff review setting. The guiding principles cited by Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) are given practical meaning. These are "unrestricted and open dialogue", "voice of the participants", "liberating pedagogy" and "action-reflection-action."

2.8.1.1 Unrestricted and open dialogue

Free and open dialogue is a central constituent of the philosophy that underlies participatory communication (Wanda 2011:170; Servaes 1996:81). Genuine dialogue refers to a situation in which all parties participating in a developmental process are realistically and sincerely keen to deliberate on issues to find solutions to problems (Burger 2017:15). Futhermore, Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009:10) posit dialogue is regarded as "the encounter between men in order to name the world", where people are free rather than oppressed and are included in decision-making processes. Dialogue eliminates inequality or discrimination. A communication strategy resulting from open and unrestricted dialogic communication is participatory (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:10; Muturi & Mwangi 2009:75-76; Gumucio-Dagron 2008:81; Mefalopulos 2008:75).

Within an electricity tariff-review process, the process of interaction between electricity customers must produce common knowledge of tariffs issues. The key issues in this regard include the protection of the interests of electricity customers from powerful players such as LEC. Introduction of economic efficiency in the Lesotho electricity sector through deregulation and enhanced regulatory framework could further protect customers. Deregulation refers to a situation in which there is little or no government control over how electricity is produced, transmitted and supplied. Deregulation started in the United States in 1992 (Isser 2015:1-5). The stakeholder parties have to surrender control over the result of discussions even if they disagree. All parties must take into consideration and listen to the concerns of others in an ongoing two-way communication to freely exchange views over the reasons for electricity tariff reviews. This process enables them to zero in on the problem to be addressed regarding the tariff review. Maxwell and Carboni (2014:301-302) hold a similar view maintaining that people who are not networked depend on "face-to-face and phone communication." This reinforces the argument by Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) above, that communication between development participants must be dialogic and personal to be effective. Consulting all stakeholders ensures issues addressed in a consultation process are all taken into consideration (Somarakis & Stratigea 2014:740; Dyll-Myklebust 2012:190-191). Another key aspect is that stakeholders must have access to documents on tariffs. In some jurisdictions, such as the European Union, legislation dealing with access to documents exists and its purpose is to ensure there is "deliberativeness, legitimacy building and accountability" (Adamski 2014:520). Access must be framed within the context of human rights and security (Den Boer 2016:126-130). In concurrence, Caprino and Martínez-Cerdá (2016:45) further point out that access by the stakeholders should be in relation to the "products, means and forms of communication". Andrade-Pachecol, Savory, Midekisa, Gething, Sturrock and Bennett (2019:1) assert that "improving access to electricity is a global challenge that if addressed, can help to reduce poverty and inequalities in health outcomes and education attainment".

2.8.1.2. Voice of the marginalised participants

In any human relationship, power relations bring about inequality and poverty (Huesca 2008:185; Lie 2008:284). According to Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009:11) main preoccupation of this thinking is to give voice to the marginalised groups, time and space to articulate their concerns, to define their problems, formulate solutions and to act on them. Marginalised groups include women and vulnerable groups, such as those who live with HIV/AIDS or the illiterate (Servaes 2008:206). The new forms of media platforms may enable the marginalised groups the chance to express their views, as they are easy to use and are popular. The reinforcement of community media channels is important because such spaces provide platforms that most marginalised groups use to express their problems, participate in public debates and resolve problems (Lu & Ares 2015:112; Atkinson 2010:441; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:11). In this sense a multi-modal communication approach is indispensable. A multi-modal communication approach refers to the use of a diversity of communication networks/tools for broadening prospects of public participation endeavours (Somarakis & Stratigea 2014:740). In this vein, participation occurs in a non-discriminatory manner safeguarding the impartiality features of participation (Somarakis & Stratigea 2014:740). In congruence with the above argument, Dyll-Myklebust and Zwane (2015:75) maintain that people normally prefer communication media channels that require minimal application from them and do not consume their time.

Within an electricity tariff-review process, this means that vulnerable groups, such as women, child-headed households, the poor and the unemployed, should be given time and space to express views on issues such as access to and the affordability of electricity. They should participate in the search for sustainable solutions to them. Local platforms such as community radio stations and new forms of the media or spaces must be made available to enable and empower the marginalised on how to communicate and even use electricity efficiently. In many African countries, privately-owned media lack active and critical citizens who can push to debate issues for influencing people and accessing resources. Citizens listen to public broadcasters, especially where there is enhanced press freedom and less corruption (Moehler & Singh 2011:276). However, Kalyango and Vultee (2012:119) maintain that state-owned media are sometimes mistrusted, and regarded as less trustworthy than the privately-owned media. In this sense, the disadvantaged people could use private media spaces to build their capacity and mitigate the impact of the inequality that is engendered by their position in society and lack of awareness. The electricity supply company in Lesotho should be incentivised to introduce appropriate time-use tariffs for various customer categories. Time of use tariffs are meant to assist electricity customers in using electricity during off-peak times, which result in lower electricity bills (see Torriti, Hanna, Anderson, Yeboah, & Druckman 2015: 891-912).

2.8.1.3 Liberating pedagogy

With reference to this principle, the modernist teacher-student relationship centred on disseminating information to the latter is totally rejected. Instead liberating pedagogy endeavours to narrow the distance between the oppressor and the oppressed (communicators) in order for both to collectively discover new knowledge conducted through action and reflection (Bolin 2017:764). In this connection, people should look up to themselves for inspiration or role models in the quest for improved life chances (Huesca 2008:183). In concurrence, Mudehwe-Gonhovi, Galloway and Moyo (2018:140-157) maintain that contributing to shared knowledge on issues exposes the disadvantaged to different and numerous perspectives and ideas. According to McKenna (2013:449), any attempt to distance people from their own choice-making is to transform them into items. Western or modernist education, enables socialisation and subservience to the status quo. Liberating pedagogy, on the other hand, advocates "de-socialization" in the quest for co-creation of meaning, and a sustained effort to address power relations imbalances (McKenna 2013:449).

Within electricity tariff-review processes, electricity customers should reflect and act on the problems that they have already delineated collectively so as to generate shared knowledge and help to build trust among each other through empowering each other. In short, they should all be equal partners where no groups have more power than others. According to Kloppers and Fourie (2018:90), in the quest for a successful participatory approach, a relationship of equal power is very necessary. Collaboration through education should be entrenched between all role players in the tariff-review process. Key to this is the improved service delivery by the power companies and the regulator, as that will illustrate a commitment to serving the consumers and investors as well as treating them in a fair manner. The promotion of access by all to electricity services must be a policy goal which is implemented through collaboration with electricity customers. Partnerships aimed at advocating inclusive knowledge creation must be created.

2.8.1.4 Action-reflection-Action

Despite the prominence that it puts on dialogue and reflection, participatory communication is also intensely slanted towards the taking of action (Altamirano 2016. 679). Through empowerment, people think critically about their problems and incorporate action, the attempt to deal with the issue that has been identified, or aligning the debate to real-life issues (Bolin 2017:757). First, it becomes necessary that communities should have a commitment to and own the identified problem through horizontal communication (Braithwaite *et al* 2012:214; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:11). The idea is to continually assess the process to ensure it is consistent with the stakeholders' objectives.

Within an electricity tariff-review process, when electricity customers have discussed the problems relating to the review of tariffs during the hearings and at various platforms, their concerns or recommendations should be addressed and solid action taken to address them. The electricity supply company and the regulator should address the concerns of electricity customers regarding the causes for electricity tariff drivers so that there is an improvement in their knowledge, attitudes and practices of electricity customers. This is all the more important in Lesotho. The country has not yet discovered viable coal reserves to boost the generation of electricity and that has the impact of escalating electricity tariffs (Makonese, Ifegbesan & Rampedi 20182018:40). Electricity customers should know that, as a result, the country has to import electricity at a cost that must be passed on to them. Moreover, the electricity customers should use electricity efficiently and thus reduce the demand.

There must be a sustained effort to continually educate electricity customers so that they can monitor progress regarding the issues relating to electricity tariff reviews. These efforts should appear genuine to them and should not be undertaken as in a modernist approach. According to Torres (2013) and Abbott and Badley (2019) maintain that the modernist type of learning is banking education. In this type of learning, learners are expected to imitate what the teachers say to them without critically testing it and being liberated. In this regard, it may be suggested that electricity customers must be allowed to make inputs into the modification of existing strategic electricity sector planning approaches and design an integrated resource plan (IRP), to fit a customer friendly electricity sector. IRP refers to an approach that "meets the estimated long-term requirements for electricity services over a specified period with a least-cost combination of supply and end-use efficiency measures" (Mqadi, Musango & Brent 2018:64). An IRP takes into consideration equity, environmental protection, reliability, and other country-specific goals to provide an integrated plan for the power system (Mqadi, *et al* 2018:64). This could be the initial step of an inclusive monitoring and evaluation exercise for electricity tariff-review processes. The proposed stages of a communication programme during an electricity tariff review are elucidated below, supported by a table that explains proposed actions within each phase.

2.8.2 Proposed stages of a participatory communication programme during an electricity tariff-review process

The guiding principles of participatory communication within the context of an electricity tariff-review process have been outlined. The process has to be planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated by electricity customers (see Section 2.7). As illustrated in Section 2.7, the first two stages of the communication programme process should be well designed to foster successful implementation of the subsequent ones. The subsequent step is the execution of the communication activities relating issues identified as causes of a development problem. This stage should be implemented using a mix of professional and creative insight aligned with the needs identified by electricity customers at the beginning. An action plan to facilitate the implementation and management of the communication activities for electricity customers on tariffs must be made. The fourth stage of a participatory communication endeavour is that of monitoring and evaluation of the final impact of the intervention. The process of monitoring and appraising a development initiative take place throughout the entire communication programme (Naidoo 2010:54; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:20; Mefalopulos 2008). This means that monitoring and evaluation in a participatory communication programme within the context of an electricity tariff-review process should be an iterative and continuous process. As Ghiggi, Kavaya and da Rosa Oliveira (2012:214) suggest, electricity stakeholders should push for increased input on the outcome of electricity tariff reviews instead of waiting for them to be resolved at a later date.

Table 2.2 below summarises the proposed stages of a participatory communication programme within the context of an electricity tariff-review process.

Table 2. 2: A summary of the proposed stages of a participatory communication programme within the context of an electricity tariff-review process

Phase	Description	Proposed actions within an electricity tariff review setting
1	Participatory Communication Assessment	-The basis for LEC tariff applications for electricity tariff reviews must be explored to enable electricity customers to appreciate and identify them. This activity has to be done in consideration of the socio-cultural environment of the electricity customers. -There should be sustained awareness-raising for electricity customers to improve the possibility of participation. LEWA must ensure that the public is adequately notified about the receipt of the application in time. -Exploration of all issues or problems that are associated with electricity tariff review should be made so that the perceptions and concerns of all electricity customers are appreciated. - Electricity customers have to listen to each other even if they do not agree, so as to reach a compromise on electricity tariffs issues, to ensure inclusiveness. -The electricity customers' perceptions of electricity tariff review regarding the priorities of the electricity customers must be reconciled to ensure the reliability and validity of the exercise. -Data on various stakeholder communication needs must be triangulated to ensure that the findings and proposed solutions to the issue in electricity tariffs are truly reflective of electricity customers' inputs. -The best solution for addressing the issue of electricity tariff review is agreed upon ahead of designing a participatory communication strategy.

Phase	Description	Proposed actions within an electricity tariff review setting
2	Participatory communication strategy design	*(Follows research findings in stage 1).* -The participatory communication strategy is designed by electricity customers to chart out the most suitable way to put into operation communication activities that seek to attain the essential change pertaining to the electricity tariff-review process. -The identified issues must be presented and articulated to electricity customers with cognisance of the audience's knowledge, perceptions and priorities. -The strategy design should have a dialogic bias and its activities must be specific, measurable, accurate, realistic and time-bound (SMART). -The procedures and specifics, as well the sequence of events for the public consultation, should be agreed to by all and obtainable before consultation commences. -The issue of time constraints, resources, interest and the skills of individuals and groups have to be matched with the need to include people in the tariff review endeavour. -The goal is to increase trust, cooperation and foster partnerships among electricity customers.

Phase	**Description**	**Proposed actions within an electricity tariff review setting**
3	Communication activities implementation	(*Activities defined in stage 2 are implemented*). -A communication implementation action plan which is aimed at facilitating the implementation and management of the communication activities relating to the electricity review process must be prepared. -The communication activities in this stage must be driven by professional insight and creativity and have to be aligned with the needs of the electricity customers. -Emphasis should be on stakeholder cooperation and access to media spaces. Most electricity customers have access to the internet, SMS, Facebook and others that are used interactively to communicate. These new forms of media encourage people to embrace the use of digital-age applications to provide a voice and facilitate the sharing of untold accounts of ordinary life experiences. -New forms of media should be used to reach most people.

Phase	Description	Proposed actions within an electricity tariff review setting
4	Monitoring and evaluation	-Monitoring and evaluation of the participatory communication is carried out through the four stages of a communication programme of electricity tariff review and focuses on the impact. -Assessment of indicators such as local debates, degree of gender equity in participation, information equity, electricity customers' collective confidence, sense of ownership, cohesion and social norms has to be determined. They must be aligned to the electricity tariff-review process. The process entails employing an approach from the perspectives of electricity customers in the electricity tariff determination process. Electricity customers should push for increased input on the outcome of electricity tariff reviews instead of waiting for them to be resolved at a later date. -The public consultation conclusion should be widely publicised, highlighting the important issues focused upon. The final decision has to be made accessible to all. -The efforts in the four stages outlined above must be evaluated incessantly to determine areas that require attention. Electricity customers' inputs are key to success.

It is very important there should be genuine participation by electricity customers throughout all the stages of the electricity tariff-review process (see Section 2.8.1.1).

2.9 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed in detail participatory communication as a derivative of development communication to assess its applicability to the proposed study. As argued, the participatory paradigm of development communication has evolved from modernisation and dependency theories. The chapter discussed debates on participation by elucidating the concepts of participation and its multifarious aspects so as to outline its rationale and to situate it within the study of communication. The chapter also discussed participation communication and applied it in the context of stakeholder theory, for facilitating discussion and measurement of the findings. Lastly, practical guidelines for participatory communication during an electricity tariff-review process were proposed supported by practical steps during different stages of a participatory communication programme, in line with participatory communication theory. In the next chapter, Chapter 3, LEWA is overviewed so as to provide more insight into regulatory processes of electricity tariff review issues.

CHAPTER 3: LESOTHO ELECTRICITY AND WATER AUTHORITY (LEWA)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Since this study considers participatory communication processes during an electricity tariff-review process at LEWA, it is also important to briefly explain the organisation in this chapter. In doing so, this chapter is structured into various sections. The first part provides a general background to the formation of LEWA, as well as an overview of the authority's functions. The chapter then proceeds to provide some historical background and some of the milestones of LEWA. The LEWA's governance structure is then outlined. In order to give further insight into the organisation and its strategic direction, the LEWA's strategic plan is also overviewed. The contemporary regulatory effectiveness measures are then outlined to situate them within the context of an electricity tariff-review process as a function of LEWA. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main ideas of this chapter.

3.2 SOME KEY DEVELOPMENTS BEFORE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LEWA

Like most African governments in the 1990s, the Lesotho government became aware that its state-owned enterprises (SOEs) were inefficient (Kaseke 2013:120-121; World Bank 2001:3). African electricity SOEs' inefficiencies were reflected by expensive services, little increase in the number of people who had access to electricity services and unreliable power supply. Under the influence of the World Bank and other multilateral entities, most governments had to reform their SOEs (Eberhard, Gratwick, Morella & Antmann 2016: xxvi; Kaunda, Kimambo & Nielsen, 2012:1; Yin-Fang, Parker & Kirkpatrick 2008:160). In Lesotho, the government resolved that, to lessen the financial impact of inefficient SOEs on the national budget, the provision of electricity services would have to be privatised (Bolarinwa 2014:8-11). In addition, the government decided to put into place a contemporary legal and regulatory framework to facilitate open market-driven development in the reformed electricity supply industry (ESI) (Central Bank of Lesotho 2009:2; World Bank 2001:3). Hence, the legislation to cater for, among other things, the privatisation of the Lesotho national electricity SOE, the Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC), mainly through the establishment of a privatisation coordinating unit, was published in 1995 (Privatisation Act 1995 Act No. 9 of 1995:2). The legislation was passed under the Lesotho Utilities Reform Project (LURP), financed through the World Bank and the African Development Bank (AfDB) (LEWA Strategic Plan 2014/15-2018/18:5; LURP 2005:2-3). This development led to the establishment of the Lesotho Electricity Authority (LEA), the predecessor organisation to the present Lesotho Electricity and Water Authority (LEWA) in 2004 (see Section 3.3).

In general, the ESI reforms in African countries, including Lesotho, entailed high-level measures, such as the corporatisation of the electricity SOEs and unbundling and rearranging of the sector. The reforms further comprised initiating competition in electricity generation and supply activities, horizontal separation of existing companies instituting independent regulatory authorities and privatisation (Jamasb, Nepal & Timilsina 2017:195-196; Kaseke & Hosking 2013:122). It was envisaged that the four segments or businesses of the electricity supply chain of the Lesotho electricity supply chain would be unbundled. The four segments are generation (power stations), transmission (big poles) distribution (wires) and retail supply (marketing, customer services, risk management and billing) (Nelson, Bashir, McCracken-Hewson & Pierce 2017:104). The unbundling would allow private investments into the segments (Lesotho Electricity Authority Act No.12 of 2002:761; LURP document 2005:2-3). Electricity transmission and distribution networks segments in many African countries, including Lesotho, are run by monopolies (Sarmento 2011:1-4). Vertical separation is intended to avert cross-subsidisation among the regulated businesses and unfair practices such as “denial of third-party access to networks” (Jamasb, *et al* 2017:195-196). Cross-subsidisation in electricity refers to a business model wherein the poor electricity stakeholders are offered services almost for free. The services are funded using profits which have been realised by charging other electricity customer categories the tariffs set at market prices (see Gupta, Palsule-Desai, Gnanasekaran & Ravilla 2018:104).

According to McKenna (2004:1-2), the Lesotho government had planned that the privatisation of the electricity SOE would be conducted as a private sale to a strategic investor. However, in later years and following some policy changes, the privatisation of LEC was halted because the government wanted to enhance its rural electrification drive (McKenna 2004:2). The government was aware that a privatised entity would find the rural electrification endeavour unattractive financially (LEA Annual Report 2004/5:06; McKenna 2004:1). In addition, experiences in developed electricity markets such as United States (USA) and United Kingdom (UK) demonstrated that competition is defective even in market segments (retail and generation) where it has been regarded as viable (Dagdeviren 2009:642).

The vertically integrated Lesotho ESI was and is currently dominated by LEC which was established as a corporation in 1969 to generate, transmit, distribute and supply electricity in the country (Electricity Act No.7 of 1969). Vertical integration refers to the situation in which the above-mentioned sectors are run by one entity and the practice was regarded in some industries as a risk management strategy (Aïd, Chemla, Porchet & Touzi 2011:1438-1440). However, as Sithebe and Kolobe (2014:527) suggest, vertical integration has made some industries worse off than if they operated in an unbundled market. With reference to LEC, the company was ineffective in terms of increasing electricity access because, for example, from 1967 until 2001, only 5% of the households in Lesotho had access to electricity (LEA Annual Report 2004/5:6). In 1998, the 72 Megawatts (MW) capacity 'Muela Hydropower Plant (MHP), owned by the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA), was commissioned to address Lesotho's demand for electricity (Thamae *et al* 2015:131). In Lesotho, there are no viable coal reserves to boost the generation of electricity and that has the impact of escalating electricity tariffs (Makonese *et al* 2018:40). The formation of LEWA is elucidated in Section 3.3 below.

3.3 FORMATION OF LEWA

In 2002, the Lesotho Electricity Authority Act no. 12 that established LEA was enacted by the Lesotho Parliament. The emphasis of the legislation was the design of a new regulatory framework and, unambiguously, the framework for the creation of an independent regulatory body, the Lesotho Electricity Authority (LEA) (Lesotho Electricity Authority Act No.12 of 2002:761). This development led to the repeal of the Electricity Act No.7 of 1969, which had hitherto given regulatory and service delivery powers to the LEC and its substitution with the new legislation (LEA Act 2002:816).

Under the new regulatory dispensation, LEA regulated the activities of the ESI players, such as LEC and prospective service providers. The organisation was to ensure the security of electricity supply by encouraging private sector participation in the sector (British High Commission

2017:19; LEA Act 2002:1-5). In 2006, LEA awarded a generation licence to the LHDA that had been operating the 'Muela hydropower plant (MHP) to generate power. LEC was licensed to transmit, distribute and supply electricity with a composite licence (LHDA Generation Licence 2006:1-3; LEC Composite Licence 2006:1-2). In order to enhance electrification in mostly rural areas of the country, the Department of Energy (DoE) was granted a licence exemption to operate Electricity Access Pilot Projects (EAPPs). The government subsidised electrification programmes throughout the country (LEWA Annual Report 2009/10:20-35). Furthermore, at the regulatory level, the ESI tariffs were regarded as being not cost-reflective, a development that was consistent with the vertically integrated monopolised market (LEA Chief Executive Presentation 2005).

In 2006, the LEA Act 2002 was amended to cater for changes in the authority's governance (LEA Act Amendment 2006:296-298). In 2011, the LEA Act 2002 was amended again to cater for the assumption of the regulation of urban water and sewerage services through the enactment of (LEA Amendment Act 2011:312-314). However, the regulation of urban water and sewerage services does not constitute the focus of this study.

Generally, the structure of the regulated ESI sector in Lesotho comprises LEWA which is the regulator. The main national utility LEC, the Rural Electrification Unit (REU) of the Department of Energy (DoE) and the 'Muela Hydropower Plant are key regulated entities. Government is the biggest electricity stakeholder, followed by the manufacturing, small and medium enterprises and ordinary consumers (LEC Annual Report 2015/16:1-30; LEWA Tariffs Press Release 2017:1-3). A general overview of LEWA and its functions from its inception is presented below.

3.3 DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS OF LEWA

LEWA commenced operations in August 2004, following the constitution of a seven-member non–executive board and the appointment of the Chief Executive (LEA induction book 2005:4). The authority is expected to adhere to several functions in fulfilling its statutory obligations, as set out in the Act. These functions include reviewing the provision of electricity supplies in Lesotho, regulating tariffs charged to consumers of electricity services and resolving disputes between licensed utilities and their customers.

In addition, Section 22(1) of the LEA Act lists several general functions of the LEA, which include regulating tariffs charged to consumers of electricity services, implementing customer care standards and establishing technical standards.

LEWA has also developed regulatory instruments, some of which were aimed at facilitating the entry of private entrepreneurs into the regulated electricity sector (LEA Licence Application Rules 2012:1083-1099). The ESI Quality of Service and Supply Standards (QoSSS) specify minimum standards that LEC and other future licensed companies have to take to ensure that electricity customers get quality electricity services (Electricity QoSSS 2016:4). The LEA Electricity Disputes Resolution Rules (2010) were published to assist LEWA to resolve customer complaints that have not been resolved to the customers' satisfaction by LEC. The rules also specify the procedure for LEWA in resolving disputes that may arise between licensed entities (Electricity Disputes Resolution Rules 2010:999). Of even more relevance to this study is that electricity determination function (methodology) for electricity tariffs is outlined in several documents (ECA Implementation of Economic and Financial Regulatory Model 2011:01-10).

Some of the highlights of LEWA achievements include the resolution of electricity customer complaints that have not been resolved by utilities upon their referral (LEWA Annual Report 2014/15:32). In 2017, the authority approved LEC's electricity customers' complaints-handling procedure to ensure that complaints are resolved expeditiously. Speedy resolution of customer complaints by LEC reduces the likelihood of them being referred to LEWA for resolution (LEC Customer Complaints Handling Code 2017:1-10).

Over 20 electrification projects have been funded from the Universal Access Fund (UAF) for electricity administered by LEWA since 2009 (LEWA Annual Reports 2010-2018). The fund receives and disburses funds for "subsidising the capital cost of new area electrification" (LEA Universal Access Fund Rules 2011:315). UAF "facilitates the development and expansion of electricity service infrastructure in areas where there are no services and to provide access to the greatest number of users" (LEA Universal Access Fund Rules 2011:315). UAF funds come from customer levies charged on customers. For more than a decade, LEWA has determined tariff applications for LEC end-user tariffs (LEC Tariff Determination Report 2015/16:1-40). Since the focus of this study is on public participation during the tariff determination processes, in Section

3.7, the communication processes that are followed during the determination of tariffs are elucidated. This is to align them to objectives of the study. The latest tariff determination for LEC is for the year 2019/20 and the approved tariffs became effective on 01 May 2019. This was the 14th single-year electricity tariffs determination since 2007.

3.4 REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT OF LEWA OPERATIONS

The regional and internal developments are discussed in this section as they are interconnected with issues of tariff determination (see sections 5.3.1.4 and 5.3.3.4 and Table 5.2.1). These developments are discussed at both regulatory and utility levels, as indicated below.

3.4.1 Regulatory context

LEWA is one of the regulators that each control energy/electricity sectors in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries. Eswatini, Lesotho, South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Botswana, Mauritius and Angola all have electricity/energy regulatory bodies. Lesotho, Tanzania and Angola have multisector regulators regulating electricity, water and sewerage services (RERA Strategic Plan 2012-17:1-10). LEWA is an active member of the regional regulators grouping known as the Regional Electricity Regulators Association of Southern Africa (RERA). At the continental level, LEWA is a member of the African Forum for Utility Regulators (AFUR). The purpose of being a member of these associations is, among other things, to promote information sharing and enhance members' capacity building in regulation. The other intention is to foster regional, continental and global cooperation on regulation (LEWA 2016/17 Annual Report 2017:15-40).

LEWA has undergone a peer-review mechanism exercise by other RERA members. Peer reviews help the members to enhance and share in "capacity building and information sharing" (RERA Strategic Plan 2017-21:5-20). According to Thamae *et al* (2015:130-139), the areas of focus for regulatory performance assessment are regulatory governance, regulatory substance and regulatory impact. These are all discussed below.

3.4.1.1 Regulatory performance assessment

Regulatory governance refers to the legal strategy and institutional configuration of a regulatory system, as well as processes for regulatory decision-making (Mutegeki 2017:7- 9). For Thamae *et al* (2015:130-139), regulatory governance consists of "formal attributes, such as legal mandate, clarity of roles and objectives, independence and accountability of the regulatory agency". Regulatory governance has "informal attributes, including transparency, participation, and predictability (found in practice)" (Thamae *et al* 2015:130-139). In the context of this study, it may be argued that observance of these elements gives electricity customers some trust in the regulatory body and boosts the validity of its decisions. Corruption and poor performance of institutions have a huge and negative impact on regulation, economic growth and development (Ukwandu & Jarbandhan 2017:157; Dagdeviren 2009:651). According to Satterlee (2017:217), a robust and enabling regulatory framework has to be in place and be coupled with innovative methods to attract investment in the energy sector. Transparency, accountability, dialogue and control "within the government as well as between the government and those affected by regulatory measures" can be improved by undertaking assessments of regulatory impact (Petrin 2016:547). This observation relates to the focus of this study (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3).

With reference to regulatory substance, Mutegeki (2017:07- 09) and Kapika and Eberhard (2010:08) posit that the concept refers to the content and actual practice of executing regulation with key characteristics that look into the methods. The assessment of steps that are employed to determine tariffs (tariff-setting methodology and guidelines) are part of the regulatory substance. Regulatory substance further refers to the aspects of implementation of QoSSS (quality-of-service regulation). The other aspect relates to how the service provider follows transparent accounting procedures (regulatory accounting systems), network connection policies, and grid codes (including access rights and standards) (Mutegeki 2017:7- 9).

A transparent and ethical regulatory regime should motivate regulated companies to enhance customer service and thus contribute to certainty which investors normally desire (Kapika & Eberhard 2010:8). A regulatory impact assessment is undertaken regularly to compare the actual against expected outcomes based on best-practice benchmarks. Unquantifiable benefits of improved regulation, including greater shareholder "participation and communication in the director nomination process", are enhanced by a regulatory impact assessment (Petrin 2016:554). The relationship between the three aspects of a peer-review exercise is summarised in Figure 3.1 below.

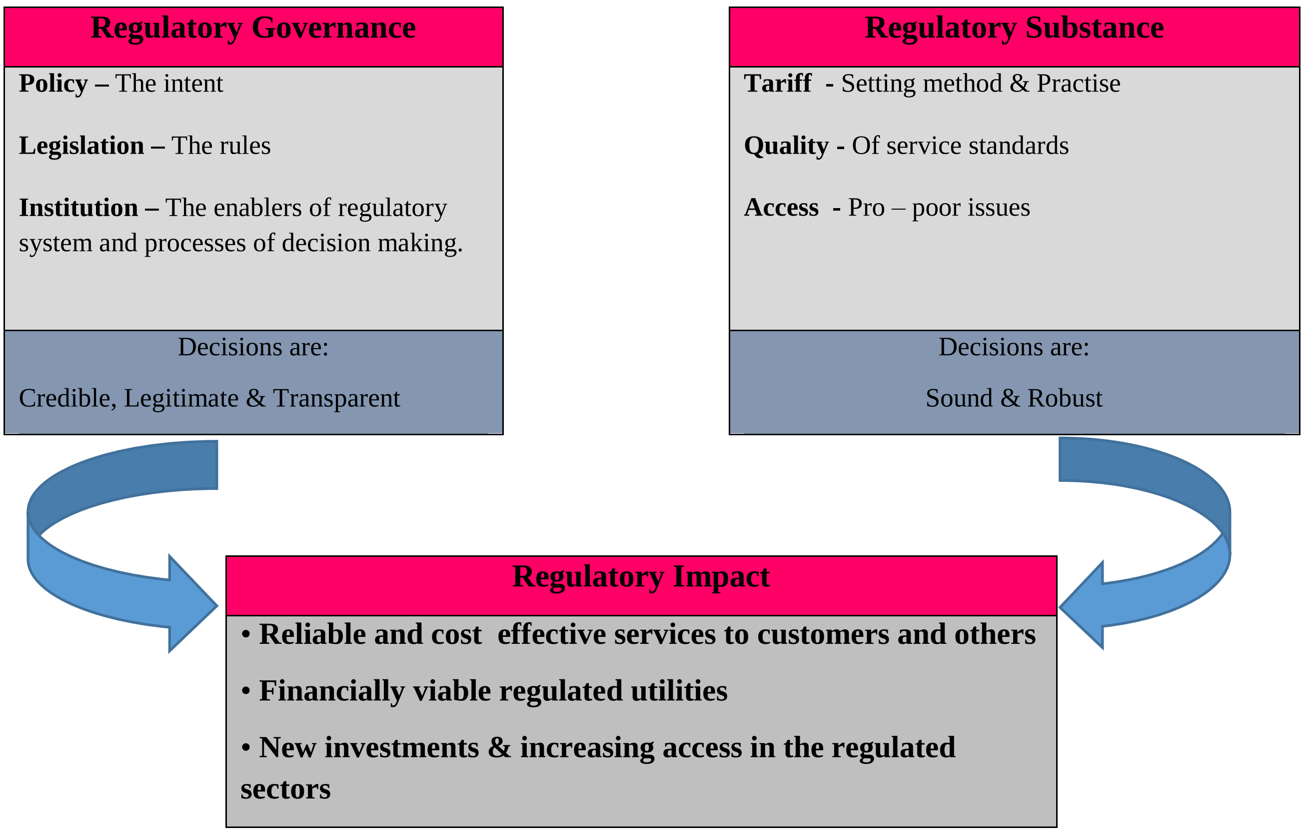

Figure 3. 1: Key areas of regulatory performance review
(Adapted from Thamae *et al* 2015, Mutegeki 2017 and Petrin 2016).

Although developing economies can develop successful regulatory systems and capacity in a gradual manner, literature on regulatory effectiveness is scanty. This applies even in the developed markets regulatory bodies have not effectively discharged their mandate efficiently in the face of evolving regulatory problems (Dagdeviren 2009:652).

3.4.2 Utility context

The demand for energy in many of the countries of the southern African region is growing rapidly, and plans for electricity network interconnections among these countries are underway (Fant, Gunturu & Schlosser 2016:565-566; Seymore, Van Heerden & Mabugu 2013:917-920). The Southern African Power Pool (SAPP) was created in August 1995 at the SADC Summit held in Kempton Park, South Africa. The ministers responsible for energy in the SADC region signed the Revised Inter-Governmental Memorandum of Understanding (IGMOU) on 23 February 2006. SAPP aims to, among others, provide a forum for the development of a "robust, safe, efficient, reliable and stable interconnected electrical systems" in southern Africa (SAPP Annual Report 2018:3; SAPP official website home page).

There are currently 17 members of SAPP. Of these, 12 members are from member national power utilities, two independent transmission companies and the rest are independent power producers (IPPs) (SAPP annual Report 2018:3). Of relevance to the study is that the South African utility Electricity Supply Commission (ESKOM) and Mozambique utility Electricidade de Mozambique (EDM) sell bulk power to the Lesotho national utility, LEC. The latter sells electricity to customers in Lesotho at higher tariffs to ensure profitability (see LEC Applications 2016 and 2017). During the 2016 and 2017 period, LEC purchased 373.56 and 373.89 Gigawatt hours (GWh) of electricity from both foreign SAPP member utilities (LEWA Annual Report 2017/18:29). The significance of the electricity imports is that their tariffs are passed on directly to the end-user (see LEC Applications 2016: and 2017). Hence, customers always have to pay increasing costs of bulk electricity import (LEWA tariff determination 2016).

The SAPP established the Short-Term Energy Market (STEM) in April 2001. From January 2004, SAPP started the development of a competitive electricity market for the SADC region. The Day-Ahead Market (DAM) was established in December 2009. In 2015, the SAPP opened for live trading in an intra-day market (IDM) trading platform from the 1st December 2015 and introduced Forward Physical Monthly (FPM-M) and Forward Physical Weekly (FPM-W) markets during the month of April 2016 (SAPP Annual Report 2018:3). Through STEM, DAM, IDM and FPM-W arrangements, electricity is delivered to utilities that have placed orders within a monthly, weekly or daily period that the buyer utility requires. In 2016-2017, LEC was not participating fully in the

SAPP market. Having discussed the regional and international operations of LEWA, the LEWA governance structure is now discussed in the next section.

3.5 LEWA GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The synopsis of the LEWA mandate has been described above (see LEA Act Amendment 2006:296-298). The authority's strategic plan 2014/15-2018/19, which provides the overall strategic direction for the authority is overviewed in this section. The authority also embraces the King IV Report on corporate governance and has started developing a risk mitigation strategy (LEWA Annual Business Plan 2017/18:13-20).

The board is responsible for the "Authority's corporate governance and provides effective leadership based on ethical foundation" (LEWA Annual Report 2014/15:9). In this regard, the board is responsible for providing the "strategic direction of the Authority for the executive management" (LEWA Annual Report 2015/16:7). The authority's board is also responsible for "considering the legitimate interests and expectations of the Authority's stakeholders in its deliberations, decisions and actions" (LEWA Annual Report 2014/15:10-11). The organisation's staff implements the annual business plans in line with the strategic plan approved by the board.

The board has four committees, namely, the audit and risk, pricing and tariffs, customer services; and human resources, finance and administration committees. The board committees are charged with specific responsibility which they discharge under the direction and on behalf of the board. For each committee, a clear set of terms of reference (ToRs) have been developed and approved by the Board. The ToRs to provide a framework within which each committee should conduct its business (LEWA Annual Report 2014/15:1-10).

Of relevance to this study is to mention the role of the Pricing and Tariffs Committee (PTC). The committee has been established for the purposes of evaluating and reviewing tariff adjustment submissions from the service providers. PTC recommends appropriate pricing and tariff regimes to the board (LEWA Strategic Plan 2014/14-2018/19:20-21). The Committee conducts public hearings to solicit electricity customers' inputs into the reasonableness of LEC's tariff-review applications. The board and its committee structure are depicted in Figure 3.3.

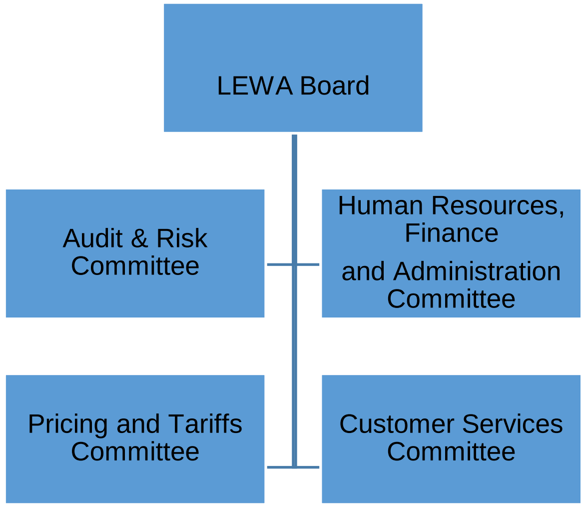

Figure 3.2: LEWA board committees

Source: LEWA Strategic Plan (2014/15- 2018/19:20-21).

In addition to the LEWA board and its committees, as depicted in Figure 4.2 above, there are six line departments whose functions are briefly described below.

- **Legal Services Department** – takes a lead role in providing a comprehensive range of legal services to the board and staff of the LEWA as well as overseeing the establishment of appropriate regulatory frameworks and compliance by licensed entities;
- **Technical Regulation Electricity Department** – takes a lead role in the development of technical rules and codes, and safety, security and quality of supply issues pertaining to electricity services. The department also contributes to the relationship between economic regulation and technical aspects of system development and operation (LEWA Corporate Governance Handbook 2005:1-50; LEWA Strategic Plan 2014/15-2018/19:20-21;
- **Economic Regulation Department** – takes a lead role in the development of regulatory thinking on the economics of the Lesotho power system, with particular emphasis on the costs of supply, the principles of charging for electricity services and cost recovery;
- **Consumer Affairs and Communication Department** – takes a lead role in the development of LEWA's policies in respect of customer protection, and develops and promotes customer standards, codes of practice and customer information. The department also handles the initial resolution of customer complaints referred to LEWA for resolution;

- **Human Resources, Finance and Administration Department** – takes a lead role in the establishment and maintenance of human resources policies and procedures.; and
- **Technical Regulation Water Department** – takes a lead role in the development of technical rules and codes, and safety, security and quality-of-supply issues pertaining to urban water and sewerage services (LEWA Strategic Plan 2014/15-2018/19:20-21). As of January 2019, the LEWA staff complement was 24 persons comprising both core regulation and support staff. The senior management structure is depicted in Figure 3.3.

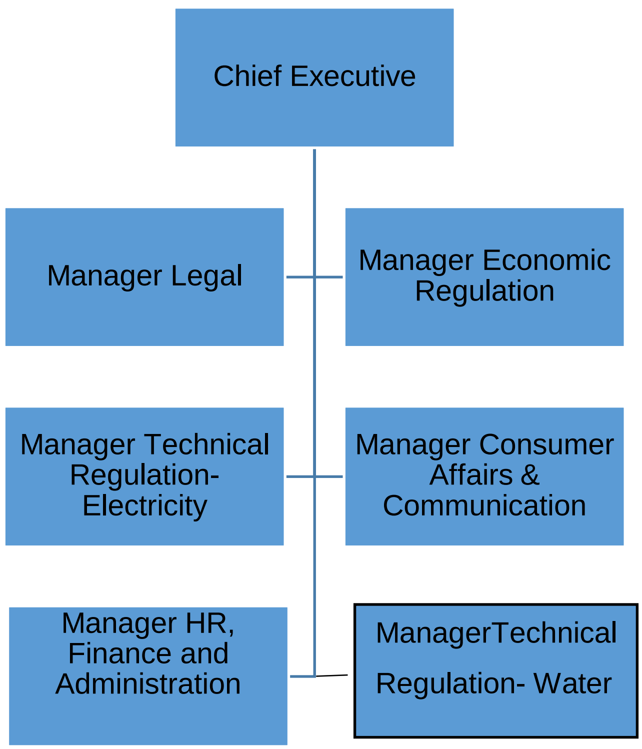

Figure 3. 3: LEWA executive management structure.
(Source: 2014/15-2018/19 Plan).

The Authority seeks to attain its mandate by executing the strategic objectives that have been outlined in the five-year strategic plan. An overview of the strategic plan is presented in Section 3.6 below.

3.6 LEWA STRATEGIC PLAN

According to LEWA's 2014/15-2018/19 Strategic Plan, the Regulator has, among others, the following key objectives that derive out of the legislative framework (LEWA 2014/15-2018/19 Strategic Plan 2014:1-45). The strategic objectives include determining tariffs and charges, promoting stakeholder awareness, empowerment and protection and increasing access to electricity services (LEWA 2014/15-2018/19 Strategic Plan 2014:1-45. These and other strategic objectives have been broken down into specific annual activities.

LEWA Vision

LEWA's vision is: **"**To be a world class utilities' regulator that facilitates delivery of affordable, sustainable and quality services" (2017 disconnection brochure: & LEWA 2016/17 Annual Report 1-10).

LEWA Mission

LEWA's mission is: "To regulate the electricity, urban water and sewerage services in the interest of all stakeholders through transparency, consistency, professionalism and teamwork" (LEWA 2014/15-2018/19 Strategic Plan 2014:1-45)

LEWA's Core Values

LEWA's core values are professionalism, teamwork, efficiency, integrity and excellence (LEWA Annual 2015/16:01-10; LEWA 2014/15-2018/19 Strategic Plan 1-10).

LEWA Regulatory Principles

According to the LEWA Annual Report (2016/17:vii), the authority has adopted internationally accepted regulatory principles, which are consistency and predictability, transparency, accountability and neutrality.

LEWA's Motto

The LEWA educational brochure (2017:1) states that an organisation's motto is meant to remind its employees of who it is and what it stands for and remind stakeholders of the values it stands for. The organisational motto reads: "A partner to all for sustainable services" or *"Re selekaneng sa moshoelella*" in Sesotho (LEWA educational brochure 2017:1). This means that the organisation commits to engendering long-term and durable relationships with its stakeholders. In the section below a review of the electricity tariff-review process is made so as to provide a background for further discussion in relation to the focus of this study.

3.7 ELECTRICITY TARIFF-REVIEW PROCESSES FOLLOWED AT LEWA

As mentioned in Section 3.2, the authority regulates electricity tariffs charged to consumers. In February 2012, LEWA approved the Lesotho Tariff Filing Procedures 2012 document to guide staff in reviewing tariff submissions. In addition, the document guided staff on making "recommendations to the Board regarding the approval or modification of tariffs proposed by LEC" (Lesotho Tariff Filing Procedures 2012:1-5). To ensure transparency, the procedure outlines the steps that should be taken by the LEWA in tariff determining tariffs application. LEC is therefore encouraged to prepare its application for tariff review in such a manner that is aimed at minimising delays in tariff determination processes (Lesotho Tariff Filing Procedures 2012:1-5). This procedure seeks to fulfil the provision of primary legislation (the LEA Act 2002) and subsidiary legislation.

A legal basis for the process of the tariff-review process exists. In terms of LEA Act 2002, Section 24, as amended, LEC must apply for a tariff review to LEWA for the latter to determine. The subsidiary legislation pertaining to electricity tariff reviews includes LEA (Electricity Price Review and Structure) and Regulations of 2009 (Lesotho Tariff Filing Procedures 2012:1-5) (see Table 4.1). The current tariff review communication processes are briefly discussed below.

3.7.1 Stakeholder communication processes during tariffs

In terms of LEA Act 2002, Section 24, as amended, LEWA must publicise the tariff application received from the utility (LEC) in local newspapers and other media. The publication enables the public to comment on the reasonableness of the proposed tariffs. LEC is expected to file its tariff-review application at least three months (normally at the beginning of January) in advance of the end of the financial year (LEA Act 2002:774). The application is written entirely in English with a dominance of economics and electricity concepts. Upon receipt of the application, LEWA checks the completeness and accuracy of the submitted information in the application. When LEWA so requires, LEC must submit additional credible information in support of its application information (Lesotho Tariff Filing Procedures 2012:1-5). Within a few days, LEWA embarks on electronic and print media campaigns notifying the public of the receipt of the application and its availability (see Annexure 1; LEWA notice on LEC application 2016:1-2). In addition, the organisation posts both notices and the application on its website. The hard copies of the application are produced and delivered to the district administrators' offices to facilitate access by local stakeholders (LEC tariff determination 2016/17:01- 20; Lesotho Tariff Filing Procedures 2012:1-5). In the 2016 and 2017 electricity tariff reviews, the public was allowed a maximum of three weeks to submit written comments. The schedule for the public hearings which specifies including the venues, dates and times is publicised to facilitate the time for the soliciting of public comments. Public notices for the tariffs reviews for the two years are Appendices A and B.

During the public hearings, LEC is expected to state its reasons (tariff drivers), facts and evidence in support of its application in full public view. Electricity bulk costs which refer to the costs of buying electricity from local and regional sources, and are cited as the main drivers (see sections 5.3.1.2, 5.3.2 and 5.3.3.1 in Chapter 5). Other prominent drivers are LEC operating expenses, maintenance repairs, labour and depreciation of assets (LEWA public notice 2017:01).

LEWA staff attends the events to provide logistical support to the board. The public is free to attend the consultations sessions, also known as *hearings*. LEWA is mandated by the law to hear all sides of the LEC tariffs proposal (Lesotho Tariff Filing Procedures 2012:1-5). Additionally, the committee may seek clarification on any aspects of the LEC's presentation. The various public groups are expected to give their views on the utility's application and presentation, stating reasons, facts and presenting evidence. The public forms groups to discuss the LEC presentation and formulate responses to its content. All the communication is open to stakeholders in the Lesotho electricity, urban water and water sectors and the entire country (LEWA External Communication Strategy 2011:8). All the communication is recorded via a system and through the taking of notes by the authority's staff for subsequent analysis (LEC tariff determination 2017/18:1- 20). The summary of all public comments is reflected in the tariff determination document (see Table 4.1 in Chapter 4). The LEWA board committee asks clarification questions on issues raised by stakeholders from the floor and LEC's presentation.

The electricity tariff review sessions were held in three out of the ten districts. From March to April 2016, the reviews were held in Quthing, Butha-Buthe and Maseru cities and the next towns were invited to attend the nearest sessions. From February to March 2017, the reviews were held in Hlotse, Mohale's Hoek and Maseru towns. Adjacent towns' stakeholders were invited to attend the nearest sessions (LEC tariff determinations 2016/17:01-20 & LEC tariff determination 2017/18:1-20).

Following the holding of the public hearings, the pricing committee meets to discuss the application and make a recommendation to the board. During the full board meeting, the determination of the applicable electricity tariffs is made, based "on the available information and analysis of LEC's application, the submissions from stakeholders, reasons, facts and evidence provided" (LEWA Press Release on Tariffs 2017:2). Immediately thereafter an announcement is made in a press conference and the concerned utility is informed of the decision (LEWA tariff determination for LEC application 2017/18; LEWA press release 2017:2**).**

In the 2016/20117 financial year, LEC proposed a 25.4% increase in both energy and maximum demand (MD) charges, which would result in a revenue requirement of M819.54 million. Following three public consultations and based on its own analysis LEWA approved M775.32 million as LEC total income for the year. This figure compromises an adjustment of 12.3% across all customer categories and 12.6% for high consumers of electricity (Maximum Demand customers-MD).

In the 2017/2018 financial year, LEC proposed a 16.9% increase in both Energy and Maximum Demand (MD) charges which would result in revenue of M964.48 million. LEWA held three stakeholder public consultations and analysed LEC's application. LEWA approved M856.29 million, compromising an adjustment of 3.6% across all customer categories and a 3.6% increase for MD customers. The final electricity end-user tariff is annexed to this document.

3.8 SUMMARY

The discussion on LEWA is made in this chapter by outlining briefly its history, the context within which it operates, structures, milestones, strategic plan and communication processes during tariff determination for electricity application. The chapter provides the overall context of the rationale for the regulation of electricity services in Lesotho. It further highlights the key areas of one of the functions of LEWA that requires public participation where communication is central and serves to place findings as discussed in Chapter 5 in context. Public input into the development endeavour of tariff determination is realised through communication processes which are being investigated by this study. In the next chapter, Chapter 4, the research methodology and operationalisation of the study are discussed.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND OPERATIONALISATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the research methodology and operationalisation for the study are stated and discussed. The chapter outlines, among other things, the research paradigm of the study, the goal of the study and the research design. The study employs both quantitative and qualitative research approaches to gather and analyse data. The research design entails the research questions, data collection methods, the population, units of analysis and the reliability and validity measures for each of the data-collection methods. Three data-collection instruments are used in the study. These are an online and paper-based self-administered questionnaire for a survey and a moderator's guide for the focus group discussions. A document analysis of the communication artefacts which LEWA used during the process of electricity tariff reviews in 2016 and 2017 was also undertaken (see also Chapter 1).

4.2 THE STUDY'S RESEARCH PARADIGMS

According to Clarke (2016:224) and Jacobs (2010:332), a paradigm refers to a combination of basic concepts, variables and problems which have specific and conforming methodological approaches and tools. A paradigm entails an ontology, an epistemology and a methodology (Mahlalela 2017:32; Malatji 2017:31; Stone 2012:257). A research paradigm thus refers to the overall organisation of scientific research in terms of the researcher's background, how the research problem is formulated and the plan of work (Walliman 2009:382). Depending on the assumptions that direct their study, their theoretical viewpoints, choice of methods and techniques, researchers use different research paradigms (Florès 2018:341-343; Du Plooy 2009:19-20). As was indicated in Chapter 2, Section 2.5.1, participatory communication has pertinent ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings.

Traditionally, the main research paradigms have been the positivist and the interpretive ones (Clegg 2012:02; Bhattacharya 2012:1-2; Paley 2012:1). The two paradigms are elucidated below. Although other paradigms, such as the constructionist or pragmatic exist (Ang, Zaphiris & Wilson

2011:537; Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim 2009:279), these are not applicable to this study and therefore are not discussed.

4.2.1 Positivist research paradigm

In the positivist paradigm, the existence of social reality is regarded as occurring independently of the researcher. Scientific methods of observation and experiment are followed to produce quantifiable, predictable and reliable data patterns to support hypotheses or theory (Bhattacharya 2012:4; O'Reilly 2012:3-4; Babbie *et al* 2009:22-23; Paley 2012:1-9; Du Plooy 2009:20-29; Van der Riet & Boettiger 2009:16). One of the assumptions that underpin the positivist thinking is determinism. Determinism condenses events in the world to a few underlying factors going back to the beginning of everything (the Big Bang). In this way, the outcomes of individual independent actions and of intricate causal links are discounted (Dowding 2011: 1-2; Osborne 2012:01-03). Other key assumptions of positivism are empiricism (which emphasises that knowledge is gathered from experience) and parsimony (which refers to the explanation of the researched phenomena in the most economical way possible). The other assumption is generality (which refers to generalising the results of the particular studied phenomenon to the world at large) (Paley 2012:3; O'Reilly 2012:2; Clegg 2011:1-2).

Positivist researchers control, measure variables or phenomena, quantify and analyse it statistically in order to arrive at a conclusive end where there are no other explanations (Kraska 2012:1167-1171; O'Reilly 2012:163-164; Clegg 2011:157; Schwandt 2011:234; Babbie *et al* 2009:476; Malcolm 2008:204). They adopt a quantitative approach to research. A quantitative approach entails the numerical analysis of data that which are "quantities" (Landrum & Garza 2015:201). Quantification of the social issues being studied helps in improving their meaning (Catiere 2012:10) Quantitative researchers study human behaviour in organised surroundings through experiments, to separate the "causal effects of independent variables" (Sullivan 2009:02). Quantitative research methods are often associated with a positivist paradigm by which the emphasis is on numbers, deductive reasoning and hypotheses testing. The methods aim to discover underlying relationships between diverse phenomena, as well as to make generalisations (Lugovskaya 2009:2). The importance of quantitative analysis is that it helps a researcher to interpret numerical data or evidence (Payne 2012:02).

In positivism, truth is conceptually obtained through reductionism. Reductionism holds that everything in nature can be condensed to and elucidated in terms of its constituent parts—cells, molecules, and atoms—and their interaction (Landrum & Garza 2015:199-201; Kroeze 2012:1-8; Kienle & Kiene, 2012:69). In order to study fields such as communication and development, a quantitative research approach and a positivist worldview have been adopted (Depaoli, Agtarap, Choi & Coburn 2018:336). Within this worldview, data analysis methods or strategies typically involve experimental studies, surveys and collection of data on “predetermined instruments that yield statistical data” (Singh 2016:2-3; Kraska 2012:1167-1171; Durrheim & Painter 2009:132). Positivists embrace descriptive research, which entails “correlational, developmental design, observational studies and survey research” (Singh 2016:2-3; Kraska 2012:1167-1171; Durrheim & Painter 2009:132). The survey research method of this study comprises the quantitative component of this study. The interpretivist paradigm is overviewed below.

4.2.2 Interpretivist research paradigm

Unlike the positivist paradigm, the interpretivist tradition enables a researcher to employ an array of techniques to understand social reality (Kroeze 2012:2-3; Bahari 2010:22). The ontological assumption here is that reality can only be “constructed through social interactions” wherein individual knowledge and perspectives are explored (see Stone 2012:265-268; Kroeze 2012:3; Bahari 2010:20-24; Malcolm 2008:204). Interpretivism further takes into consideration the framework in which social interactions arise in order to elicit subjective meaning from the participants and emotions are involved (Kienle & Kiene 2012:69; Benner 2012:462; Malcolm 2008:204). The philosophical and methodological underpinnings of the interpretivist thinking “denote an alternative to the positivist orthodoxy that has held sway for decades” (Malatji 2017:27). Interpretivism puts the emphasis on comprehension (understanding) and meaning-making, not description, as the fundamental goal of research (Bhattacharya 2012:1). For interpretivists, reality is multifaceted, subjective and complex. An identical phenomenon can have diverse meanings for various individuals, resulting in them taking different actions (Bhattacharya 2012: 1). Interpretivist researchers adopt a qualitative approach to research, which is inductive. Inductive reasoning means being open to numerous possibilities for getting to alternative findings (Leedy & Omrod 2010:33; Tredoux & Smith 2009:164; Babbie *et al* 2009:273). Inductive reasoning helps in organising data and ideas to enhance efforts to provide reliable knowledge (Leedy & Omrod 2010:33; Tredoux & Smith 2009:164; Babbie *et al* 2009:273). In a qualitative study, methodology relies on interpretation as well as narrative counts, rich descriptions and analysis. Qualitative methods include thematic analysis, which is discussed in this chapter. In qualitative research, a number of steps, such as triangulation, making sense of the data, and having open-minded learning, can be employed to minimise the manipulation of results through bias (Fetterman 2012:1).

Qualitative research follows a post-structuralist approach common in case studies, phenomenological study, grounded theory studies, content analysis, interviews, feminism and focus groups (Servaes 2016:3; Barbour 2014:4; Balbale, Schwingel, Chodzko-Zajko & Huhman 2014:728; Bhattacharya 2012:1; 2011:249; Staller 2012:1161). The focus group and qualitative document analysis comprise the qualitative component of this study.

Although the two main research paradigms are regarded as different, within the field of communication research, they are often used to complement each other (Leedy & Omrod 2010:135-153; Du Plooy 2009:19). The interpretivist paradigm, like the positivist one, emphasises logic and scientific reasoning as central to improving the validity and credibility of the research findings (Leedy & Omrod 2010:28-29). When a combination of the two paradigms is used (as is the case with this study), it is referred to as *mixed method research*. Mixed methods research refers to the gathering, evaluating, and harmonising of both quantitative and qualitative data in a particular study or several ones. Mixed methods enable researchers to better understand answers to research problems rather than when one approach is used (Clark, Sherry, Wang & Toraman 2019:319; Zmetana 2012:200). The goal and objectives of the study are discussed below.

4.3 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

There is no universal perspective or definition regarding the meaning of concepts such as “goals”, “aims”, “purposes” or “outcomes” (Du Plooy 2009:50; Steyn & Pugh 2008:30). However, it is universally accepted that are there are two key goals of research, namely, basic and applied research (Leedy & Omrod 2010:44-45). Basic research aims to investigate and develop theories, while applied research investigates practical issues and offers solutions (Du Plooy 2009:50; Babbie *et al* 2009:79-80; Durrheim 2009:45).

4.3.1 Goal of the Study

The goal of this study was applied communication research in that practical guidelines for participatory communication are not only proposed but also tested, first on a public-sector organisation followed by electricity customers' perceptions (See Section 2.7.5 in Chapter 2). Having discussed the goal of the study, the objectives of the study are outlined below.

4.3.2 Objectives of the Study

Research objectives refer to the formulation of results that are measurable and which culminate in the accomplishment of scientific research (Zmetana 2012:197; Walliman 2009:219-220). The study has both exploratory and descriptive objectives. Exploratory objectives refer to when a researcher wants to investigate a comparatively unfamiliar area or subject in research. This is done by utilising an "open, flexible and inductive" approach to research, as the researcher attempts to look for new insights into phenomena (Durrheim 2009:44). The exploratory objectives of the study are reflected by objectives 1 and 3 and 4. A descriptive study describes the phenomena precisely through employing "narrative-type descriptions", such as interviews and documenting, and does not establish a causal relationship between events (Singh 2016:4; Durrheim 2009:44). The descriptive objectives are reflected under objectives 2 and 4.

The objectives of the study as formulated are reflected in Section 1.3.2 in Chapter 1. In the section below, the research design of this study is explained.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design refers to a plan of how a researcher prefers to undertake a research study. This strategic framework (blueprint) entails the methods and techniques that are employed in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data (Babbie *et al* 2009:74; Du Plooy 2009:51). A research design is not the same as a research methodology since the latter puts the emphasis on the process of research and the type of tools to be used (Babbie *et al* 2009:75). The research design provides a link between the research questions and the implementation of the research (Durrheim 2009:34).

Research designs differ in accordance with the paradigm a researcher uses and the research question being explored. As noted in Section 4.2.1, positivist researchers prefer to use measurable, quantitative data (Zmetana 2012:200). According to Tuval-Mashiach (2017:132) and Durrheim (2009:34), qualitative designs entail reiterative processes of data collection and analysis which are not carried out in a sequential or predetermined manner.

The study has an empirical design, as it focuses mainly on primary data collection (survey questionnaire and focus group discussion) and analysis of existing documents in order to address the research questions. Combining the three methods is intended to address the validity and reliability of the findings through triangulation (Armstrong, Davis & Paulson 2011:153). The research problem is explicated below. Subsequently, the research problem and statement, research questions, data collection methods, population, unit of analysis, and the validity and reliability of findings are discussed.

4.4.1 Research problem and statement

A research problem is a statement that describes the purpose of research. The research purpose is "often expressed as a gap or void in our understanding – and how the research contributes to our understanding of theory or practice" (Newton-Suter 2012:87). The formulation of the research problem enables the researcher to be firmly focused on the research problem and eliminate any ambiguity (Leedy & Omrod 2010:57-58; Kelly 2009:359-362).

In Chapter 2 of this study, the importance of participatory communication and its application to the electricity tariffs-review process was discussed. The research problem and its statement are explicated below in relation to the study.

Since 2007, LEWA has on an annual basis notified the electricity customers about LEC's tariff adjustment proposal for electricity tariff reviews and solicited their comments. As elucidated in Chapter 3, the legal basis for this requirement is the provision of the Lesotho Electricity Authority Act 2002, as amended. Section 24 (3) of the Act provides that tariffs proposals by service providers requesting tariff reviews must be submitted to LEWA for consideration and review. In addition, Section 24 (6) of the Act prescribes that such proposals shall be publicised by LEWA in the media for enhancing public access and inputs. In this process, the electricity customers must submit inputs commenting on the reasonableness of proposed tariffs so LEWA may make a final determination. Tariff review processes are regarded as communication events taking place between the public and publicly owned organisations (Cavazos & Rutherford 2011:625). It is therefore essential to investigate if such communication has an impact on regulatory decisions and stakeholder perceptions. Stakeholder participation helps develop decisions, assists the building of social capital, strengthens civil society and enhances the capabilities of communities to solve problems and pursue common concerns (Videira, Rui Santos & Lobo, 2016:20-21).

From the foregoing, it is imperative to investigate the extent to which LEWA's communication during a tariff-review process has been participatory. Against this background, the research problem statement is formulated as follows:

To propose and test practical guidelines for participatory communication with a mixed-method cross-sectional study within the context of an electricity review process to enhance the involvement of electricity customers.

4.4.2 Research questions

Research questions refer to the type of evidence that is needed to answer the research problem(s) (Babbie *et al* 2009:74-75). The research question must express the research problem in a manner that makes it possible for applicable research approaches to be used to collect and evaluate data to answer the research problem (Lavralcas 2011:736). Variables and concepts constitute two of the most significant components in scientific research that help articulate the research questions (Du Plooy 2009:69). The term *variable* signifies any characteristic of an organisation or of the environment to which two or more qualities may be attributed (Brown 2012:1-2; Durrheim 2009:42).

Concepts refer to objects or typical material or words that represent intellectual ideas and are the foundation for developing a theory (Babbie *et al* 2009:109-110; Du Plooy 2009:69). Conceptual frameworks are drawn from theories, theoretical models and typologies. The above underscore the extent to which both theory and research depend on each other (Schwandt 2011:302; Du Plooy 2009:69).

Various factors determine how research questions can be formulated in a qualitative communication research study (Du Plooy 2009:76). For example, research questions are useful when the precise type or magnitude of the phenomenon being studied is not known (Babbie *et al* 2009:72-77). Research-question formulation facilitates the gathering of pilot data about the research problem or to authenticate or discard assumptions that are rationally linked to the research sub-problems (Babbie *et al* 2009:72-77). The study's research questions are stated in Section 1.5.2 in Chapter 1 and are not repeated here.

4.4.3 Research Methods

A *research method* refers to a systematic tool used to find, collect, analyse and interpret data. Through the research method, the approach that the researcher has undertaken to collect and analyse the data is explained (Effendi & Hamber 2009:123). As indicated in Section 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, the study employs both qualitative and quantitative research approaches.

Informed by the theoretical perspectives which were applied to the study, three research methods were suitable for the study to address the research questions. The three methods are an online survey, a focus group, and qualitative document analysis. Each of these methods is explained below.

4.4.3.1 Survey

A *survey* refers to a research method that evaluates the pervasiveness and dispersal of attitudes, as well as factual material about the research sample and may not be restricted by geographical boundaries (De-Graft 2017:21; Joye, Wolf, Smith & Fu 2017:1-3; Weisberg 2012). Surveys generate statistics or "quantitative or numerical descriptions" regarding some characteristics of the study population (Fowler 2012:2). One of the most common ways of gathering information is by posing questions to respondents and their responses, thus creating the data that is subjected to analysis (Joye *et al* 2017:01-3). Normally, data is collected from only a portion of the population, that is, a sample, instead of each member of the population (see Section 4.4.6). Surveys are measurement and design tools (Fowler 2012:1-12).

It is almost impossible to exhaustively categorise types of survey (Stoop & Harrison, 2012:7). Types of survey include the online, web or offline survey, telephone surveys, "exit polls, multi-actor surveys, business surveys and longitudinal surveys" (Fielding, Lee & Blank, 2008:7-8). The three most common types of surveys are face-to-face interview, telephone interview, and written questionnaire. In a face-to-face interview, interviewers can discuss complex issues and explore unexpected responses. Another advantage of this type is the interviewer's ability to personally observe the respondent/s and the surrounding environment (Stoop & Harrison, 2012:7). Phone interviews allow the interviewer to explain questions and react to responses (Stoop & Harrison, 2012:3-15). A written questionnaire is the most cost-effective way to reach many respondents. It also allows respondents to remain anonymous, which is arguably the questionnaire's strongest advantage over others (Stoop 2012:138).

Despite the above benefits, surveys have some imperfections (Fowler 2012:1). The response rate on questionnaire questions can, for example, lead to inaccurate results. No matter how carefully the survey is designed and conducted, some of the desired data can be missing. One of the causes could be respondents' refusal to provide information or because contact cannot be established with the respondents (Stoop & Harrison, 2012:7; Schouten, Cobben & Bethlehem 2009:101). The fact that survey data are gathered from a sample rather than from every other member of the population leads to a random variation known as sampling error. In addition, survey respondents may be different from the target population as a whole and this may lead to some bias (Fowler 2012:3).

The aim of using the survey in this study was to utilise its advantage of yielding diverse and timely data on specified variables in a participatory communication context. Furthermore, an online survey was used to obtain the respondents' perspectives regarding their participation in an electricity tariff-review process in Lesotho (see Section 4.4.4.1).

The survey comprised an online survey (using Google Forms), complemented with a paper-based survey method, to reach those respondents who did not have access to the internet. The survey method was used to address research question 2 of the study.

4.4.3.2 Focus group

A *focus group* refers to a group of participants chosen and brought together by researchers to deliberate and make inputs on—from individual understanding and experiences—the research issue of which little is known (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2011:2; Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook 2011:2). Focus groups are a collective activity, an "organized discussion conducted in a natural environment or online" (Abrams & Gaiser 2017:1; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2011:2). The term *focus group* originates from the phrase "focused group discussion" meaning that a group of people is "focused" on deliberating a selected topic or an issue. The method is often used as a single method or as part of a "multi-method" qualitative study in many sub-fields of an academic field such as business research. The method has various applications in human resource management and workplace studies (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2011:2-4). A focus group can be based on very different theoretical and epistemological orientations. Such orientations may include generating new questions for questionnaires or interpreting findings from statistical data (Fowler 2012:2-4: Eriksson & Kovalainen 2011:4).

There is no universal agreement on the appropriate size of a focus group. For some scholars, focus groups can be composed of six to ten participants who are knowledgeable in the subject matter under discussion (Srivastava & Thomson 2009:75). Other scholars argue that the number of participants should be between six and eight (Abrams & Gaiser 2017:1). Guest *et al* (2013:8) maintain that an ideal focus group cannot have more than 12 participants. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2011:4) suggest that between two to ten participants can form a focus group. According to Gavin (2013:8-10), a smaller focus group facilitates in-depth discussion of the research topic. The mix of the focus group should consider demographic factors such as age, education and gender (Kelly 2009:304). This is to ensure that the "difference and diversity in answers can be noted to the full extent possible" (Abrams & Gaiser 2017:1).

The use of focus groups has some limitations in that, in some cases, some individuals can dominate and lead the discussions to the extent that other less vocal participants may be excluded (Crawford 2009:1-2). Moreover, their views may be swayed by those who are near to them. Transcriptions of the focus group data can be very difficult, especially when it comes to identifying participants from "audio-tape recordings of the session" (Crawford 2009:1-2). Furthermore, a focus group is "bound in time and space" by the need to select, enlist and gather a group of people in a particular place to discuss an issue. This is because many populations of interest may not be in one place (Stewart & Shamdasani 2017:49).

In participatory research, focus groups are helpful in determining the importance of given topics to local groups. Local groups can understand the language being used to comprehend issues. Focus groups "provide valuable information for more harmonious and successful inquiry and decision-making" (Elmendorf & Rios 2008:84). Within the African, setting focus groups are useful in facilitating the "non-individuality of the African culture in their natural context" (Ali 2017:138). The focus group data were used to address question 3 of the study (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2).

4.4.3.3 Qualitative document analysis

Qualitative document analysis (QDA) is a methodical technique for studying or assessing documents — both "printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material" (Bowen 2009:28). QDA's main thrust of analysis is to "capture the meanings, emphasis, and themes of messages and to understand the organization and process of how they are presented" (Altheide & Schneider 2017:17). In concurrence, Spalding, Zimmerman, Fruhauf, Banning and Pepin (2010:206) maintain that QDA is a method of integrating ethnography into a document analysis. Ethnography is a research method wherein the researchers "infuse themselves into the daily lives of their subjects" to attain an improved insight into their values, actions, ethos and perspectives. In addition, ethnography is a real-life method of study that allows researchers to study social phenomena taking place in its own setting (Le Gouais & Wach 2013:441; Spalding, *et al* 2010:206). Although in document analysis there is no interaction with human subjects, studying the products of social interaction facilitates the expansion and consolidation of the analysis of human experiences (Spalding *et al* 2010:206). In QDA, researchers analyse documents in a careful and methodical manner to measure how specific 'themes' or issues have been dealt with (Le Gouais & Wach 2013:441).

Documents are literary, written or graphic devices that facilitate information to be shared and 'stories' to be offered (Coffey 2014:26). In concurrence, Bowen (2009:28) posits that documents are "social facts", which are produced, shared, and used in socially organised ways. These social artefacts are analysed for the purposes of explanation or description (Coffey 2014:26; Babbie *et al* 2009:87). Documents contain text (words) and images that have been recorded without a researcher's intervention. Documents may be the only essential data source for "studies designed within an interpretive paradigm, as in hermeneutic enquiry" (Bowen 2009:28). Alternatively documents may merely be the sole practical sources in, for example, "historical and cross-cultural research" (Bowen 2009:28)

The purpose of qualitative document analysis is to scrutinise and interpret data to draw meaning from them, attain understanding, and develop practical knowledge (Bowen 2009:28). Through QDA, researchers analyse content from documents, analysing the significance (meaning) and effects (implications) of text (Le Gouais & Wach 2013:441; Eagleman 2011:158). QDA is not similar to a quantitative word analysis, which is done through the application of software programmes such as WordStat. The software analyses the occurrence of keywords in text in a quantitative manner (Le Gouais & Wach 2013:441).

Document analysis is often used with other qualitative research to triangulate data. The qualitative researcher is required to rely upon numerous (at least two) sources as proof or "convergence and corroboration" using different data sources and methods to enhance credibility (Bowen 2009:28). The use of different data sources is further discussed in Section 4.6.7 below.

As a research method, document analysis is predominantly preferred in qualitative case studies — exhaustive studies generating thick descriptions of a single occurrence, event, organisation, or programme (Bowen 2009:28). It may be used as a standalone or in conjunction with other research methods. Document analysis is useful in helping the researcher to recognise practices and procedures that might not be detected by other research instruments (Ali 2017:139). QDA was used in this study to triangulate the data from the focus group and survey.

The documents that were used were collected from the LEWA due to their relevance to the study and are reflected in Section 4.4.4.3. The data collection techniques that were employed in respect of each research method are now elucidated below.

4.4.4 Data collection methods

In a qualitative research study, more than one data collection method can be used (Burnside-Lawry 2012:102-121; Bowen 2009:28). In this study, three data collection methods, namely, the online self-administered questionnaire (complemented with a paper-based version), moderator's guide for focus groups and qualitative document analysis, were used to collect data. The methods are discussed below starting with the online self-administered questionnaire.

4.4.4.1 Online self-administered questionnaire

A questionnaire is a data collection method for a survey and entails a "group of written questions used to gather information from the respondents" (Kanji 2009:484). A questionnaire is one of the most ordinary methods for collecting data in the social sciences (Kanji 2009:484). The advantage of a self-administered questionnaire is that the researcher may not be in physical or face-to-face contact with the respondents (Singh 2016:09; Du Plooy 2009:189).

To ensure that a questionnaire yields information aligned with the study's research questions and objectives, the researcher should understands the information to be collected. A researcher must design a questionnaire properly employing a structured or an unstructured question-response format or both (Liu *et al* 2015:953; Olsen 2012:1-2; Weathington, Cunningham & Pittenger 2012:187). In structured questions, the respondents are asked closed-ended questions in response to which they select the best option from a given list of answers. With unstructured open-ended questions, however, respondents are given the freedom to communicate their experiences or opinions about the research questions in own words (Weathington *et al* 2012:187; Kanji 2009:486-487; Singh 2016:10). For questionnaire-style research, the wording and design of the questions should allow the researcher to obtain the best possible data (Weathington *et al* 2012:187). When developing a questionnaire, the sequence in which items are to be asked should be considered so that broad questions precede specific ones (Yaddanapudi & Yaddanapudi 2019:335).

An online self-administered questionnaire comprising Likert-scale questions was developed for the study. The Likert scales enable researchers to examine attitudes, personality characteristics, and other psychological variables in a study (Liu, Lee & Conrad 2015:953; Nadler, Weston & Voyles 2015:71). Following the procedure advocated by Boone and Boone (2012:2), the researcher used Likert-type items to measure electricity customers' perceptions regarding participatory communication during an electricity tariff-review process in accordance with proposed practical guidelines. However, a Likert scale's drawback is its tendency to yield biased answers for "Agree" or "Disagree". Moreover, the respondents are inclined to respond to questions that are intense through use of adjectives such as "strongly" (Liu *et al* 2015:953; Weijters, Geuens & Baumgartner 2013:368). A five-point Likert scale format was used so that the reliability of the questionnaire could be assessed before data collection (Du Plooy 2009:142-146). Scores were assigned on a positively worded scale with Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Perfectly designed Likert items must comprise an odd number of response categories with a central neutral response. The items must have an equivalent number of positive and negative responses “above and below the neutral middle response” (Emmerson 2017:488; Steyn 2016:29). The five-point scale must generate enough variance among the participants of the study for subsequent statistical study afterwards (Steyn 2016:29). The online self-administered questionnaire focused on six areas derived from practical guidelines for participatory communication during electricity tariff-review processes. Short and clear statements were formulated (see Annexure 4).

An online self-administered questionnaire was appropriate for those respondents of the accessible population who could read and write, and use and have access to the internet (see Weijters, *et al* 2013:368-381). Similarly, Albaum and Scott (2012:183) maintain that techniques such as hand-delivered questionnaires could be used in cases in which respondents have no internet access, which was also the case in this study. The respondents who received hard copies of the same questionnaire could read and write. They responded to the survey questions themselves and the researcher did not have to read the statements to them.

Telephonic, email and WhatsApp follow-ups were made so as to encourage the respondents to respond in acceptable numbers. In this manner, the response rate for the self-administered questionnaire was enhanced. The data were analysed with the help of a qualified statistician from UNISA through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

4.4.4.2 Moderator’s guide for focus group discussion

According to Henderson (2009:01), for a focus group discussion, a moderator’s guide must be developed. The moderator’s guide which serves as a road map for discussions from the beginning to the end of the entire endeavour. In a moderator’s guide the questions that are related to the study so as to gather the required data, must be present (Henderson 2009:1-2). A moderator guide was developed as a tool to guide the sequence of questions that the participants had to respond to. The moderator’ guide entailed ground rules for the discussion so that the participants would understand how the discussions would be conducted. The guide focused on getting insights into how the entire communication process with electricity customers was conducted by LEWA (see

Annexure C). The prepared moderator's guide was pre-tested on four participants who did not participate in the actual research to establish the relevance of the statements for the would-be research participants.

Due to LEWA's lean organisational structure, the researchers physically contacted eight potential participants and requested their prior consent to deliberate in the group discussion. However, only six LEWA employees agreed and were recruited to participate in the focus group. The six members of staff, (two were senior officials from key regulatory departments and four from middle management officers), excluding the moderator participated in the focus group. Hence the group consisted of technical, non-technical and communication professionals who are involved in the stakeholder interaction activities at various points during the electricity tariff-review process. The selected participants had, among other duties, executed outreach programs to enhance public participation during tariff- reviews. They had prepared logistics of holding public consultations, facilitated dialogue with electricity customers and analysed their comments on tariffs.

The focus group discussion was held at LEWA's offices after the participants had been notified of the precise date, time and venue of the group discussion two weeks before the event. The choice of the venue proved very cost-effective and convenient for the participants as well. The gender composition was balanced, the participants' age difference was taken into consideration while participants were requested to grant permission to the recording of the discussions which they did not object to.

The moderator directed the focus group discussions. Participants were requested to introduce themselves to one another, so they could be at ease with each other before the discussions commenced. The purpose of the discussion was explained to all by the moderator after which they were asked to sign the consent form as proof that they had agreed to participate in the study. The moderator probed the extent to which LEWA followed the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication steps during the electricity tariff-review process. The discussion explored the participants' views opinions and experiences on the process of participatory communication during the cross-sectional period covered by the study. Time management is very critical during focus group discussions. Among other things, time keeping enables the researcher to explore critical issues related to the topic in good time (Henderson (2009:1-2). The session lasted for about one and a half hours and was conducted in the morning hours as agreed with LEWA. During the time participants were fresh and expressed their feelings, perceptions and attitudes on the issues. In particular, the discussions sought to address both research questions 2 and 3 (see Chapter 1, Section 1.5.2). The data from the focus groups discussions were recorded and translated from Sesotho into English using a professional translator. The data was transcribed to facilitate its analysis. A transcription refers to a written record of the discussions which the researchers can share with other researchers interested in the research (Liamputtong 2015:2). The participants were informed that the transcription would be treated with confidentiality.

4.4.4.3 Qualitative document analysis

A careful selection of all LEWA communication artefacts that are helpful in relation to the stakeholder communication and education activities was done for the analysis. The researcher had access to the documents and had accordingly sought permission to use them from LEWA. The permission was granted. The documents are reflected in Table 4.1 in Section 4.4.6.

The study's target population, accessible population and its parameters are outlined below.

4.4.5 The study population

In this section, the concepts of study population, target population, accessible population and population parameters are discussed theoretically and in relation to the study.

A study population refers to the collection of units from which the sample is actually selected (Babbie *et al* 2009:174). All electricity customers who participated in the electricity tariff reviews from 2016 to 2017 constitute the target population for the survey data collection method. With regard to the focus group, the study population comprised 24 employees who are the LEWA staff complement. The entire collection of LEWA communication artefacts was the study population.

The target population refers to the totality of the "objects or subjects" (elements) that the researcher is concerned about or to which he or she intends to generalise the findings to (Taylor 2012:1; Du Plooy (2009:56). The target population for LEWA documents was communication artefacts issued or produced by LEWA during the cross sectional period covered by the study, and other pertinent regulatory tool documents (see Table 4.1). Regulatory tools refer to strategies an organisation may use to execute its mandate as well as provide "metrics that assist in the evaluation of … performance" (Glicksman & Markell 2018:327). The target group for the focus group was 13 employees at both middle and senior management levels from LEWA. For the survey, the target group was the electricity stakeholders who participated in the survey.

The accessible population refers to the population that the researcher had access to and from which the sample was drawn (Bracht & Glass 2011:2-3). The accessible population for the electricity customers was the 150 respondents who were part of the survey. These stakeholders had registered their names with LEWA during the 2016 and 2017 electricity tariff reviews processes and submitted comments on LEC electricity tariffs review application. The accessible group for the focus group was six employees at both middle and senior management. All LEWA communication artefacts were available and were thus the accessible population was electricity customers, LEWA documents and LEWA employees.

The sampling method is subsequently discussed for the survey, focus groups and qualitative document analysis respectively.

4.4.6 The sample method and size

A sample refers to sources such as people, textual materials, objects from which researchers obtain data from and these represent a bigger population (Leedy & Omrod 2010:146). In qualitative studies, the scope of the study, nature of the topic, data quality and study design determine the sample size (Starks & Trinidad 2008:1374). Sampling refers to a group of procedures that are employed to select a sample from a larger population. The aim of the exercise is to execute the research with a manageable group so that the results can be generalised to the larger population (Wienclaw 2013:1; Bracht & Glass 2011:2-3).

There are two types of sampling types, namely, probability and non-probability (Fritz & Morgan 2010:3-4). Probability sampling refers to when the researcher selects a sample that is representative in line with the purpose of the study. A representative sample enables the researcher to generalise findings from the sample to the entire population (Fritz & Morgan 2010:3-4;

Wienclaw 2013:1). Probability sampling methods include simple random sampling, stratified sampling, and cluster sampling (Schwandt 2011:1; Du Plooy 2009:115).

In studies using a non-probability sampling type, the sample is not randomly selected, meaning that not each unit has an equal chance of being selected (Schwandt 2011:1; Fritz & Morgan 2010:4-5). The selection, however, does not necessarily lead to a sample that is not representative of the population. It may, however, be a challenge to determine the extent to which the sample is representative (Schwandt 2011:1; Fritz & Morgan 2010:4-5). Examples of sample methods using a non-probability sampling method are a convenience sample and purposive sample.

A convenience sample refers to a sample that is selected simply because the researcher had access to it. Particular criteria are applied to select the accessible population to deliberately investigate the research question. The convenience sampling is advantageous as the researcher can access the study sample with fewer costs. Nonetheless, its drawback is that the sample limits the chances of drawing a probability sample as it is anticipated that not all selected subjects will satisfy the requirements (Salkind 2012:1-2).

Purposive sampling is used in cases which are selected for theoretical reasons to provide relevant examples of a phenomenon (Durrheim 2009:50). Purposive sampling can be done in qualitative designs. Theoretical or purposive sampling strategies assume that real phenomena can be explained using "direct engagement between theory and empirical accounts" following an interpretative and inductive method of sampling (Emmei 2014:02-05).

In this study, a non-probability sampling method, namely the purposive sample method was used for the survey, focus group and the qualitative document analysis respectively. Tongco (2007) explains that it is not unusual to use a non-probability type of sample such as a purposive sample for a survey. Also important to note is that this study did not focus on the representativeness of the sample, but rather, on the in-depth and rich information which the participants and selected documents could provide, in attaining the objectives of the study (see Tongco 2007).

For the online survey, a sampling frame was used to select the sample. A sampling frame refers to a list whereby each and single one of the sampling units has been assembled. A sampling frame is assembled after the population of interest has been identified (Schnyder 2019: 1-3). The sample frame for the respondents for the questionnaire was the register of electricity customers who participated in electricity tariff-review processes in 2016 and 2017. The sample frame was requested from LEWA where such records are kept, and the researcher was allowed access to it. Electricity customers from the areas in which LEWA held public consultations were invited by telephone and via WhatsApp to participate in the survey and their consent to participate was also sought. The online self-administered questionnaires were then disseminated to the respondents with internet access to their email addresses via a link to the Google Form where they could access and complete the survey. The participants' responses were captured directly into the researcher's survey database (see Annexure D).

Hard copies were printed and delivered to 20 respondents who had no access to the internet and who had indicated their willingness to participate. The hard copies of the questionnaire were collected by the researcher upon completion. The 10 hard copy responses which were obtained in this way were also keyed into the database spreadsheet with responses. The data was collected during the period 15 December 2017 to 25 January 2018. The link was deactivated after the cut-off date. In a survey, the response rate is important. The response rate refers to the percentage of selected units who participate in the survey (Stoop & Harrison 2012:8). From the 150 electricity customers who had access to the questionnaire, 127 responded to the survey, resulting in a response rate of 84.6%.

A small focus group is ideal especially for cases where group members know about or are motivated by the topic under discussion (Chauke 2015:149). The six participants for the focus group were purposively selected because they had some prior experience with interacting with electricity customers during the electricity tariff review processes.

When it comes to the qualitative document analysis, documents which could address research questions 2 and 3 were purposively selected in accordance with the practical guidelines in Chapter 2. The pertinent documents are illustrated in Table 4.1 below. With these documents, the researcher could triangulate and corroborate the findings of the survey and focus group.

Table 4. 1: Documents used for qualitative document analysis

Document	No	Number of Pages/ per document	Reason for analysis
Lesotho Constitution	1	74	Searching for the clauses supporting consultations
LEA Act, 2002 as amended	1	67	Establishes LEWA and functions
LEWA Annual Reports (2016 and 2017)	2	60	Communication artefacts with all stakeholders
LEWA quarterly newsletters (2016 and 2017)	8	30	Communication artefacts with all stakeholders
LEA 2011 External communication strategy	1	26	Provides the manner of communication between LEWA and stakeholders and vice-versa
Lesotho Energy Policy 2015-2025	1	39	Overall Government policy on electricity matters
LEWA radio notices on LEC public	2	4	Communication artefacts with all stakeholders during tariff review
Newspaper notice on electricity public consultations transcripts	2	2	Communication artefacts with all stakeholders during tariffs
Brochure on tariff review	1	4	Educates stakeholders on tariff review
Advertorials on tariff review	2	4	Educates stakeholders on tariff review
LEC tariff review applications to LEWA (2016 and 2017)	2	40	Record of all LEC drivers during the 2016 and 2017 tariff reviews
Lesotho Tariff filing procedure	1	20	Outlines pertinent tariff review procedure

Document	**No**	**Number of Pages/ per document**	**Reason for analysis**
LEWA final press releases on LEC tariffs	2	6	Communication artefacts with all stakeholders during electricity tariff review
	Total no of documents 26	Total no of pages 694	

4.4.7 Unit of analysis

A unit of analysis refers to the "what" of what is being investigated and that can be an object, phenomenon, entity, process or an event (Babbie *et al* 2009:84). In concurrence with the above, Keller (2012:1-2) observes that the unit of analysis refers to the smallest elements that are being subjected to some analysis in a study. The unit of analysis must be ascertained because the inability to do so may end in biased or invalid results (Adams 2012:1). The researcher should ensure that research question(s) are definite, as well as the data that is required to answer the research question(s). One of the most important considerations in conducting research is to determine what the unit of analysis is. According to Keller (2012:1) "the primary unit that will be the subject of statistical analysis" is, or must be identified. When individuals are the origin of data and the emphasis of the study conclusions, they become unit of analysis. Similarly, where groups are the origin of data and the emphasis of the study conclusions, they become unit of analysis (Check & Schutt 2017:1-06).

The unit of analysis for the survey was electricity customers (individuals) who participated in the study. The questionnaire data illustrates the respondents' perceptions on the LEWA communication with them during the process of electricity tariff review.

For the focus group, the unit of analysis was the individuals who participated in the session. The analysis of focus groups data is dependent entirely, on the epistemological and ontological assumptions behind the research (Barbour 2014:1). In the study the individuals expressed their own experiences in relation to the strategies of and execution of processes of communication during electricity tariffs processes by LEWA.

Documents are literary, written or graphic devices that facilitate for information to be shared and 'stories' to be offered (Coffey 2014:26). The unit of analysis for the qualitative document analysis was thus a social artefact. These social artefacts are analysed for purposes of explanation or description (Coffey 2014:26; Babbie *et al* 2009:87).

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Sun (2018:2) data refers to an extensive collection of empirical objects that includes "historical documents, newspaper articles, TV programming, field notes, interview or focus group transcripts, pictures, face-to-face conversations, social media messages and others". Data analysis transforms raw data, which enables the researcher to answer the research question (Durrheim 2009:52). Similar to research methods, data analysis techniques can also broadly be categorised into quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative procedures use statistics to explain the data while qualitative ones establish themes in the data and the interrelationship between them (Durrheim 2009:52). Approaches of analysing qualitative data are not identical as they have different origins, theoretical approaches, and goals for which the data is generated (McCurdy & Ross 2017:1). Walliman (2009:268- 321) suggests that data analysis is not a linear but reiterative process, meaning that the researcher analyses the same data several times

4.5.1 Data analysis methods used for this study

In the sub-sections below the data analysis methods used for this study are explained.

4.5.1.1 Data analysis for the online self-administered questionnaire

The online self-administered questionnaire provided quantitative data about electricity customers' perceptions of LEWA participatory communication during the processes of electricity tariffs hearings. From the Google Form application used for the online survey, a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet of all the obtained responses was first made. The data was then imported into a

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and analysed with the assistance of a qualified statistician from UNISA to attain descriptive information.

The quantitative data obtained through the survey (obtained online, as well as via hard copies) were first examined to discover and eliminate any potential errors. For this study, descriptive statistics were deemed the appropriate as they presented the respondents' perspectives in terms of their agreement and disagreement to survey items, in order to address research question 3. An exploratory factor analysis was not considered for the analysis since the goal of the study was not to identify underlying relationships between variables. Rather the study's goal was to obtain perceptions of participatory communication during an electricity tariff-review process based on own experiences. In addition, see also the limitations of this study, as discussed in Chapter 6.

For both the LEWA documents (see Table 4.1) and the focus group discussion, a thematic analysis of the obtained data was performed. Thematic analysis is first discussed theoretically, and then in relation to the different steps, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2012; 2013).

4.5.1.2 Thematic analysis

A *theme* refers to a precise pattern found in the data in which one is interested and themes can be regarded as "recurring typical theses that run through a lot" of documents (Altheide & Schneide 2017:14-17). In thematic analysis, a theme of a coding category can refer to the manifest content of the data. An example would be mention of the term "stigma" in a sequence of transcriptions (Ayres 2008:1). The concept of "stigma may have both manifest and latent meanings (Ayres 2008:01). Manifest content refers to the content that is "physically observable in the messages". Latent content by contrast "focuses on the underlying messages found in the message or the message's theme(s)" (Stacks 2013:2).

Thematic analysis refers to a data reduction and analysis strategy in which qualitative data is segmented, classified, condensed, patterned (themed) and reassembled to enable insights into communication (Hawkins 2018:1; Liamputtong 2015:10; Schwandt 2011:1-2). Thematic analysis can be used to analyse data from several research methods, such as interviews, observation, and written material (Hawkins 2018:2-4; Lapadat 2012:1-3). The structures and meaning that the participant or reader identifies in a text are made explicit through thematic analysis (Gavin 2008:4).

The steps for the thematic analysis for this study, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2012; 2013), were done as outlined below.

Step 1: Getting acquainted with the data

Once data have been collected, they must be prepared in order to enable analysis. In the study, data preparation was done through the transcription of the recorded discussion from the focus group and identification of relevant LEWA literature sections which indicate the process of LEWA communication during an electricity tariff review. Braun and Clarke (2006:35) suggest that the thematic analysis process commences when a researcher familiarises herself or himself with the data. During this early phase, it is important to read the data several times in order to develop ideas about what it entails (Braun & Clarke 2006:35). Jugder (2016:3) concurs that familiarisation with the data involves "reading and re-reading through all the data collected to get the sense of the entire data". In summary, the step of data familiarisation enables the researcher to understand the depth and breadth of the data collected by making notes and coming up with ideas for initial coding.

Step 2: Production of initial codes

Following familiarisation with the data the researcher she must generate primary codes from it. The coding of data refers to the process of converting collected information or observations to a set of meaningful, consistent groups (Sun 2018:2). Codes are labels or tags which are used to give meaning to collected data while concurrently classifying, condensing, and explaining every part of the data (Thornberg & Charmaz 2014:8) ; Walliman 2011:17). Codes help to summarise and re-present data in order to enable the researcher to present a methodical account of the recorded or observed phenomenon (Sun 2018:2). Codes are concepts that link data with theory. There are generally two methods of generating codes. A code can either be predetermined by the researcher (deductively) or transpire inductively from the coding process (Braun & Clarke 2006:18-19). For this study, the coding was done deductively by considering the practical guidelines for participatory communication.

When conducting the initial data coding (also referred to as open coding*)*, a researcher has to create and make brief codes. The codes must be plain, precise and dynamic and he or she must work fast but cautiously through the data (Thornberg & Charmaz 2014:8). In this study, the open (initial) coding was informed by the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication.

As observed above, the coding process encompasses writing notes on the text being analysed or using markers or coloured pens to signify potential patterns. After a code is recognised, it should be matched with the relevant data excerpt that exhibits that code (Thornberg & Charmaz 2014; Braun & Clarke 2006). Excerpts from focus group discussions and qualitative content analysis which establish a specific code were gathered and collated together within a set code. Lastly, the entire data set was coded and a list of identified codes was harmonised with data excerpts (Thornberg & Charmaz 2014). This process was applied to both focus group data and thematic analysis of documents.

Step 3: Searching for themes

At this level, recognised codes are grouped into possible themes. According to Chauke (2015), a theme refers to "broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea". Data codes serve as a way to tag, assemble and consolidate data, enabling the researcher to condense and integrate data (Ayres 2008:1-2). Themes go beyond ordinary reporting, as they provide a deeper understanding within an interface, text, or message. Themes illuminate information about a process or processes that are happening within communication processes (Hawkins 2018:01). Braun and Clarke (2013:122) maintain that identifying themes in data is similar to "coding your codes" to ascertain correspondence with the data. Following the establishment of initial themes for this study, the review of the themes was undertaken. At this stage, 12 themes were identified for the focus group. The themes were in line with participatory communication guidelines, as proposed in Chapter 2.

Step 4: Revising themes

According to Braun and Clarke (2013:05), identified themes must be revised to confirm that they are congruent with both the codes excerpts and the entire data set. Revising themes has the benefit of prompting the researcher to consider whether the identified themes convey a persuasive argument regarding the data. Revised themes "begin to define the nature of each individual theme, and the relationship between the themes" (Braun & Clarke 2013:5). In some instances, it may be essential that two themes are joined or split into more themes. A researcher may even to start afresh with the process of theme development. (Braun & Clarke 2013:05). This stage is fundamentally about the quality checking of the step of revising themes. The step is of great significance, especially where the researcher may not remember the entire data set from the top of his mind (Braun & Clarke 2012:60-61). The 12 focus groups themes were revised to 9 following this stage of revision.

Step 5: Improving and naming themes

This phase is an extension of the previous one, for at this level the researcher is required to go into detailed writing entailing the analysis of every theme (Braun & Clarke 2013:5; Braun & Clarke 2012:66-69). The researcher must ensure that every identified theme stands out on its own and conveys a special message and that it is within the overall story about the data. The researcher must detect the deepest meaning behind each theme and develop a short, succinct and informative name for it (Braun & Clarke 2013:5). Braun and Clarke (2012:66-69) posit that good thematic analysis must entail themes that "(a) do not try to do too much, as themes should ideally have a singular focus; (b) are related but do not overlap, so they are not repetitive, although they may build on previous themes". Finally, nine themes were identified for the focus group (see Section Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2). For the thematic analysis of the documents, all four predetermined themes were key to the findings (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.3).

Step 6: Producing the report

According to Braun and Clarke (2013:5), in qualitative research, it is necessary that a researcher must write an analysis. During this phase, the researcher merges the analytic, narrative and vibrant data pieces. The aim is to convey an articulate and credible narrative about the data and put it within the framework of the literature (Braun & Clarke 2013:5). Even in deductive thematic analysis, the researcher must not only be concerned with description but has to present a convincing position that they are responding to the research question. In order to be a proficient writer, a researcher must practice often so that he or she may avoid repetition, rephrasing, evade complication, and writing in the passive (Braun & Clarke 2012:66-69).

4.6 THE VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE FINDINGS

In this section, the concepts of validity and reliability are first explicated theoretically and then in relation to the study's three data collection methods (see also Chapter 1, Section 1.6.9). Ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings constitute essential steps by a researcher to eliminate errors in measurement (Leedy & Omrod 2010:29). From a qualitative perspective, a researcher assumes that individuals, groups and organisations are not static because they show diverse views/ attributes under varying circumstances (Ellis 2015:1). Qualitative researchers substitute the criterion of reliability with that of dependability. Dependability refers to the degree to which another reader would be persuaded that the findings of a study are as the researcher posits. In addition, transparency is an essential part of qualitative research (Tuval-Mashiach 2017:126). Dependability is determined through "rich and detailed descriptions that show how certain actions and opinion are rooted in, and develop out of, contextual interaction" (Leedy & Omrod 2010:28-30; Van Der Riet & Durrheim 2009:93-94). For this study, a set of validity and reliability measures were applied to self-administered questionnaires while another set of validity and reliability measures were applied to the one focus group and thematic analysis.

Validity refers to the degree to which a measuring instrument tests what it is supposed to be assessing (Wahyuni 2012:77; Babbie *et al* 2011:122; Du Plooy 2009:135). A valid measuring instrument must assess the study concepts in the manner it is intended to. Validity is further connected to the accuracy and dependability of the data collection method, data and findings. Validity is a critical "measuring concept in social research" that emphasise the wholeness of the research outcomes (Swart 2010:131; Van der Riet & Durrheim 2009:90).

There are numerous types of validity of a study and these can be determined in different ways. The types of validity include internal, external, measurement, interpretive, construct, content, predictive, face validity and statistical validity (Newton-Suter 2012:3; Leedy & Omrod 2010:92; Swart 2010:131; Van der Riet & Durrheim 2009:90). For this study, construct and internal validity were important considerations.

Markus (2012:02) asserts that *construct validity* refers to "to the collection and application of validity evidence intended to support the interpretation and use of test scores as measures of a particular construct". In concurrence, Dilbeck (2018:2) maintains that *construct validity* refers to a rational interpretation which is made from some measure or test that produces results that adequately support a theoretical position or basis.

As pointed out in Chapter 1, section 1.6.9 Maul and Katz (2018:1), Leighton (2012:1-2) as well as Van der Riet and Durrheim (2009:90) maintain that *internal validity* refers to the extent to which research evidence support a claim about "causal relationship" between independent and dependent variables. The aim is to exclude alternative (noncausal) explanations for the evidence. The conditions can be changes in the measuring device or measuring procedures between a pre-test and post-test (Van der Riet & Durrheim 2009:90).

The *reliability* (of the study findings) refers to the extent to which research findings can be imitated or replicated by another researcher (Swart 2010:130; Van der Riet & Durrheim 2009:92). In addition, *reliability* refers to when identical results are attained by repeating the study (Swart 2010:130; Van der Riet & Durrheim 2009:92). Reliability relates to the consistency of the same measure when the entity has not changed (Wahyuni 2012:77; Leedy & Omrod 2010:130; Du Plooy 2009:28).

In communication research, the validity and reliability of a research method are enhanced through methodical triangulation (see Section Chapter 5, Section 5.4). The validity and the reliability of each data collection technique discussed below are enhanced using both quantitative and qualitative approaches (see Section 4.6.1). Quantitative data can increase the validity or transferability of some qualitative studies (Schreiber 2012:1). The validity and reliability of each of the data collection techniques are now discussed.

4.6.1 Validity and reliability of the online questionnaire

Piloting the study's questionnaire ensured some internal validity, since the statements were pre-tested on a sample of four respondents. The aim is to assess if respondents would understand the questions during the study (Steyn 2016:34; Olsen 2012:2-4). A total of four respondents were used in the pilot phase of the questionnaire statements. In addition, the online survey responses were automatically captured in a database, thereby eliminating potential errors (Nishishiba, Jones & Kraner 2017:07) (See Section 4.4.1.6). As a further step towards attaining construct validity as well as reliability for the survey, the development of the statements in the questionnaire was guided by the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication during an electricity tariff-review process, as outlined in Chapter 2. In addition, the UNISA statistician assisted with the determination of scale reliability and validity to ensure that the right constructs were measured consistently.

Since purposive sample used for the survey, the findings may not be generalised to the larger population of electricity customers in Lesotho. External validity was not the key focus of the study because the aim of the study was not to generalise the findings to the larger population (see Chapter 6, Section 6.7). External validity refers to the degree to which the data and its context can be generalised to the broader population and settings (Leedy & Omrod 2010:99; Van der Riet & Durrheim 2009:90).

4.6.2 Validity and reliability of the moderator's guide

Chauke (2015) contends that creating a clear sequence of verification (evidence) of data collection steps and using numerous sources of data enhances internal validity. These steps are elucidated in Section 4.5.1.2. The discussions of the focus group were recorded and later transcribed. In addition, participants were furnished with copies of transcripts, so they could verify the record and they also listened to the recorded audio.

Internal validity was enhanced because questions used in focus group discussions were first pre-tested to ensure they measured what they were supposed to. In addition, construct validity was considered by formulating questions in line with the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication during an electricity tariff-review process, as outlined in Chapter 2. For Leedy and Omrod (2010:100), participant validation and providing thick rich descriptions enhances construct validity which was important with regard to the questions in the moderator's guide. The questions in the moderator's guide enabled the researcher to focus on the purpose of the study and assisted in eliminating ambiguities which could occur during when data were collected (Vaughn, Schumm & Sinagub 2012 1-9). In this study, the purposive sample for the focus group was drawn from LEWA and therefore research conclusions of this study can only be generalised to LEWA and not to the larger population.

For this study, the reliability of the focus group data was important in terms of its consistency and neutrality (confirmability). *Consistency* relates to the "trustworthiness" by which the data collection methods have been implemented. In order to do this, a researcher must sustain ensure that his/ her findings can be so replicable that an independent researcher can arrive at similar or comparable findings (Wahyuni 2012:77; Leedy & Omrod 2010:130; Du Plooy 2009:28). Neutrality (or confirmability) is attained when truth value, consistency and applicability have been addressed. In this manner, consistency is reflected by recognising the intricacy of persistent interaction with participants and that the methods used and study outcome are inherently linked to the researchers' theoretical position, experiences and perspectives (Wahyuni 2012:77; Leedy & Omrod 2010:130; Du Plooy 2009:28). These should be explicated and distinguished from participants' accounts. Ryan, Gandha, Culbertson and Carlson (2013:330) note that focus groups "provide direct evidence about similarities and differences in participants' opinions and experiences". In support of the above, Bielenia-Grajewska (2018:2) asserts that confirmability is aimed at "recognizing and investigating systematic biases that take place in research" which constitute threats to the validity of the research and those can be either intentional or involuntary.

For this study, reliability was also safeguarded through proper documentation of the research data and a focus group data analysis framework, as suggested by Braun and Brauch (2006) and embraced by Onwuegbuzie, Dickson, Leech and Zoran (2009) and Maguire and Delahunt (2017). The transcriptions of the focus group discussion and recording are available on request.

4.6.3 Validity and reliability of the qualitative document analysis

Similar to qualitative content analysis, the concepts of confirmability (construct validity), credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity) and dependability (reliability) are also important when it comes to rigour during a qualitative document analysis (Chauke 2015:163). These are overviewed in the following sub-sections.

4.6.3.1 Dependability

According to Bielenia-Grajewska (2018:1), dependability refers to the "stability of data and the degree to which data are collected in a way that is precise and reliable". Dependability can be accomplished by triangulation and mixing of methods. In order to ensure dependability, the process of intracoder reliability was used. Intracoder (also known as intrarater or intraobserver) reliability offers an assessment of the relative reliability (consistency) within which a coder codes documents over some time (Chen & Krauss 2011:2; Van den Hoonaard 2012:2). Intracoder reliability assesses the extent of "measurement errors" ensuing from reasons such as researcher's carelessness, disposition, noise, exhaustion, and changeability of targets' behaviour that transpires throughout a period (Chen & Krauss 2011:2; Van den Hoonaard 2012:2). A coder makes a judgement about targets' behaviour at two different instances that are separated by a definite amount of time. This correlation coefficient represents an estimate of intracoder reliability (Chen & Krauss 2011:2). In the study, the coding of the LEWA documents was done in two separate sessions to ensure some consistency.

4.6.3.2 Transferability

The concept of transferability underscores that validity is attached to a certain given framework (Bielenia-Grajewska 2018:02). According to Dick (2014:1) transferability is thus comparable to or a replacement for the terms "generalisability" and "external validity" in quantitative research. In this sense, transferability relates to the degree to which the findings of a study can be transferred (generalised) to other settings (Bielenia-Grajewska 2018:2; Chauke 2015:110). Transferability refers to "whether the results are presented in a way that allows other researchers to evaluate whether the findings apply to their research context" (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2011:11).

In order to enhance the transferability of the findings "the action research cycle of planning, action and critical reflection provides space for such thoughtful attention in the reflective phase, though it is more valuable if practised at all times" (Dick 2014:4). Diversity of data sources (data triangulation), researchers (investigator triangulation), theory (theory triangulation) and methods (methodological triangulation, which was used for this study) are some varied methods that may enhance the transferability of results (Dick 2014:4). A discussion of the transferability of findings has been made above, that the results could be transferred to the study subjects only.

4.6.3.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is aimed at "recognizing and investigating systematic biases that take place in research", which constitute threats to the validity of the research and those can be either intentional or involuntary (Bielenia-Grajewska 2018:2). In concurrence, Chauke (2015:164) posits that the notion of conformability is similar to that of neutrality and objectivity in positivism, which closely symbolises construct validity. To ensure confirmability, methods and procedures used in the qualitative document analysis are clearly explicated while the documents used are accessible to be re-analysed by other researchers. This is the case with LEWA documents while the documents are also available.

4.6.3.5 Credibility

According to Jensen (2012:1), *credibility* refers to the "methodological procedures and sources used to establish a high level of harmony between the participants' expressions and the researcher's interpretations of them". As such, a qualitative researcher has to establish a great standard of consistency in his or her work. The consistency will enable the readers and research participants to understand aspects such as the rationale for the selection of a particular research design. Furthermore, they would identify the rationale for selecting certain study participants, and the themes and codes that emerge (Jensen 2012:1; McGinn 2012:2). McGinn (2012:2) further argues that credibility should be considered alongside other criteria for trustworthiness, such as "objectivity, reliability, validity, plausibility, generalisability, authenticity". *Credibility* is generally used in qualitative studies in place of the term *validity* and the two concepts focus on the degree to which a research finding is truthful (Rubin 2018:1-30; McGinn 2012:2).

There are methodological procedures that can enhance the credibility of a study. Some of them include establishing sufficient contact with the participants and developing an understanding of the background of the study. Observance of the procedures enables the researcher to obtain the required data and to discuss the data from various angles to obtain a complete representation. The researcher would triangulate data and undertake member checking (Jensen 2012:1). The use of recording devices facilitates researchers and their assessors in reviewing data resources after leaving the field (McGinn 2012:4). The researcher had also developed an understanding of the study, had detailed focus group discussions and familiarised himself with the participatory communication literature.

4.6.4 Triangulation of the overall findings

In order to enhance the reliability and validity of the overall findings, the analysed data from the three collection techniques were triangulated. Triangulation comprises the assessment of two or more forms of evidence with regard to a given research object (Morris 2018:2). Triangulation enhances the quality of research findings for both the researcher and the readers. This is so because triangulation is a strategy that intends to bring some “rigor and depth” to the methodology part in a research investigation (Morris 2018:2). Triangulation is seen as a way to add some strictness to both qualitative and quantitative research so as to ensure that bias is not introduced when a single data collection and interpretation method are used. The researcher must examine the data in a critical manner, recognise methodological shortcomings, and use different techniques to assess results and interpretation. Specifically, triangulation is common in qualitative research as a procedure or method to search for stronger precision, use of cross-referencing, or exhibit the corroboration of data (Flick 2018:2; Morris 2018:2).

There are several types of triangulation, which include data, investigator, theory and methodological triangulation (Flick 2018:6). As mentioned elsewhere, this study was concerned with methodological triangulation.

Methodological triangulation refers to the concurrent use of numerous data collection methods to arrive at the most comprehensive and exhaustive findings for a research problem. In this study, triangulation of methods entailed a survey, focus group and qualitative document analysis. In qualitative research, a mixture of “observation, interview, and document review and artefacts” may be employed to answer research questions (Morris 2018:3; White 2012:2). Researchers can also use “quantitative methods to triangulate with qualitative methods” (Morris 2018:3; Hastings 2012:2; Rothbauer 2012:3-4).

However, critics of triangulation opine that combining theories or methods must be focused and well thought out so as to use ideas which would be complementary rather than oppositional. Triangulation accepts “one reality and one conception of the object under study which can be found and confirmed in multiple ways” (Morris 2018:4). However, some ontological and epistemological perspectives hold that objective reality is not achievable (Rothbauer 2012:5; Morris 2018:4; Hastings 2012:3).

4.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the research methodology of the study was explicated and operationalised. The study followed both a positivist and interpretivist research paradigm, which is reflected in the discussions of the main topics relating to the study’s research design. Consequently, the research problem statement and research questions were delineated. Furthermore, the data collection methods, the target and accessible population, units of analysis and sampling method were discussed. The data analysis steps that were followed to seek validity and reliability of the measurement instruments were addressed both theoretically and in the context of the study. The chapter ends with a discussion of the triangulation of the research methods and data in order to arrive at the answer to the questions posed by the study. In the next chapter, Chapter 5, the findings and interpretation of the data are outlined in detail.

CHAPTER 5: STUDY FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the findings of the survey, focus group and a qualitative document analysis are discussed and interpreted in accordance with the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication within in an electricity tariff-setting process, as outlined in Chapter 2. The chapter concludes with a discussion and interpretation of the overall findings.

5.2 PRESENTATION OF DATA

According to Leedy and Omrod (2010:294-295), analysed research data should be presented in an accurate and systematic manner for the reader to comprehend and make sense of it. The findings of the survey are first explicated using descriptive statistics in the form of tables and graphs. The findings from the focus group and qualitative document analysis are presented in accordance with themes. The findings of the study are elucidated in the sections below.

5.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the findings from the survey, focus group and qualitative document analysis are discussed. This is done by considering the study's research questions and the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication in an electricity tariff-setting process as outlined in Chapter 2.

5.3.1 Findings of the survey

While considering the proposed practical guidelines, the findings of the survey are now elucidated in accordance with the different sections of the questionnaire (see Annexure B). The answers ranging between "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" were considered as being positive, while the answers ranging between "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" were considered as negative. According to Wu and Leung (2017:527), when arithmetical operations cannot be done, Likert scales are regarded as ordinal scale measurements. The items therefore could not be aggregated into a composite scale because they were considered as an ordinal scale with each item being discrete. The numbers in an ordinal scale merely illustrate the sequence of the items with no significant comparative distance between the points on the scale (Boone & Boone 2012). The study considered a univariate analysis because it did not focus on the character or dispositional features of the respondents and with no measurement of relationships being performed (Gideon 2012:101; Waititu 2015).

As explained in Section 5.2 above, as well as in Chapter 4, the questionnaire responses were analysed through descriptive statistics. Loeb, Dynarski, Reardon, McFarland and Reber (2017: vi) argue that descriptive statistics is a suitable communication and data visualisation procedure. Descriptive statistics convert primary data into reported findings in a format that is meaningful for each type of intended audience. Through descriptive statistics, researchers recognise data patterns that are aligned to a specific research question so as to explain the "who, what, where, when, and to what extent" of it (Loeb *et al* 2017:38). Moreover, a descriptive analysis provides an appropriate outline about given populations and situations, to answer the research question (Loeb *et al* 2017:38-39). Below the findings on the various sections of the questionnaire are discussed statement-by-statement in relation to the practical guidelines on participatory communication during an electricity tariff review (see Annexure D).

Section A: Prior planning for communication

Section A of the questionnaire evaluated how electricity customers participated in the planning of appropriate stakeholder communication before the electricity tariff-review process commenced. This was in accordance with the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication in Chapter 2, Section 2.8. Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1 depict the responses to various survey statements on how respondents viewed their communication with LEWA during electricity tariff review.

Table 5. 1: Involvement of electricity customers in planning for communication prior to tariffs review process

Survey statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
1. I became aware about the public consultations about tariff reviews on national media channels.	n=18 (14.29%)	n=24 (19.05%)	n=16 (12.70%)	n=53 (42.06%)	n=15 (11.90%
2. A week after LEWA received the LEC application it conversed with me regarding my opinion on the need for an electricity tariff review.	n=31 (24.41%)	n=44 (34.65%)	n=15 (11.81%)	n=29 (22.83%)	n=8 (6.30%)
3. Privately owned media afforded me an opportunity to express my opinion to LEWA about electricity tariff reviews.	n=18 (14.40%)	n=38 (30.40%)	n=30 (24.00%)	n=24 (19.20%)	n=15 (12.00%)
4. LEWA communicates with me in a logical manner (strategy).	n=27 (21.43%)	n=34 (26.98%)	n=24 (19.05%)	n=31 (24.60%)	n=10 (7.94%)
5. LEWA messages in print media were clear enough so that I could comment on the proposed electricity tariff prices.	n=22 (17.32%)	n=25 (19.69%)	n=23 (18.11%)	n=43 (33.86%)	n=14 (11.02%)

Survey statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
6. LEWA must preferably use new forms of media (for example, website, emails, social media), to reach out to me before the process of electricity tariff review took place.	n=12 (9.45%)	n=7 (5.51%)	n=6 (4. 72%)	n=38 (29.92%)	n=64 (50.39%)

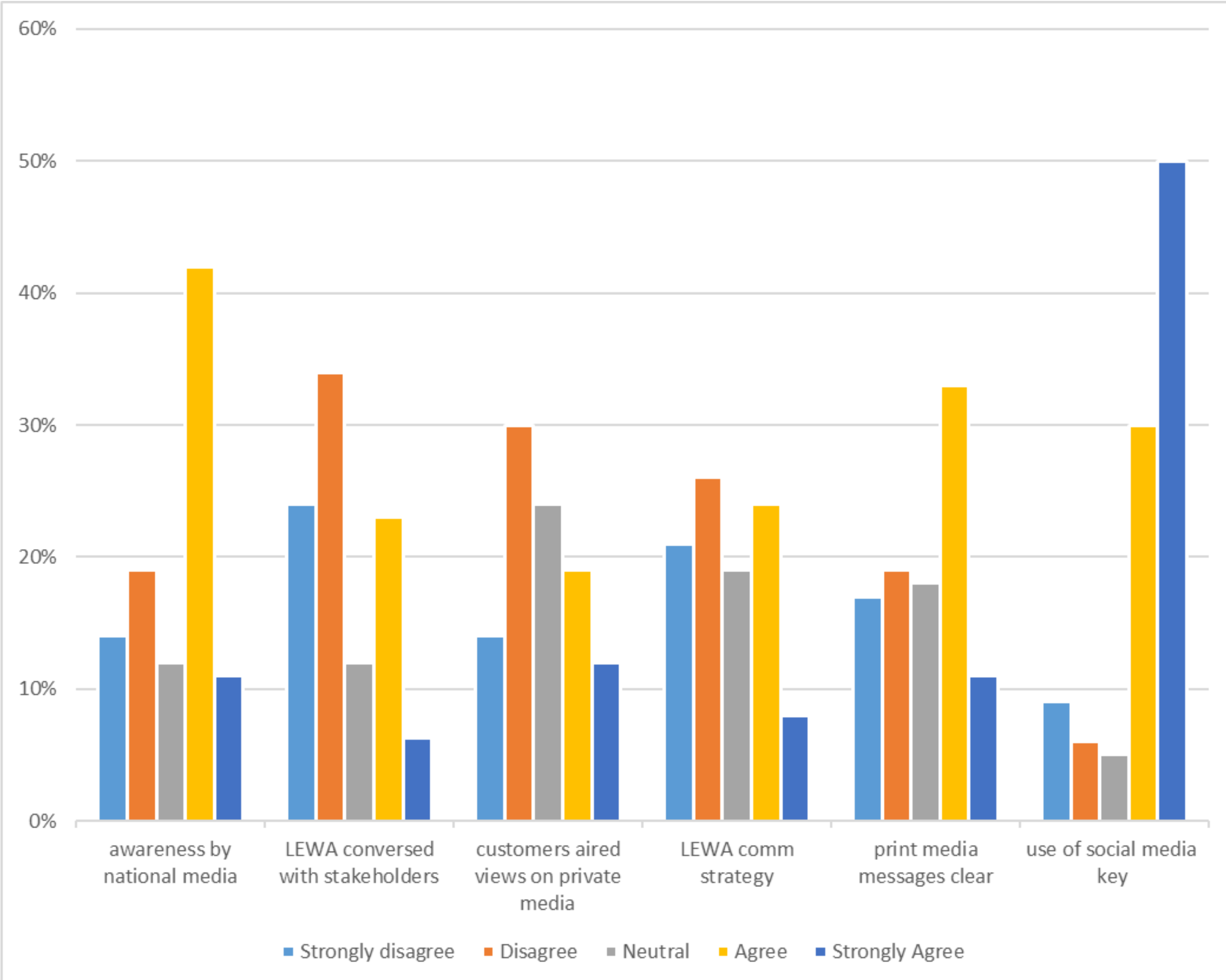

Figure 5. 1: Electricity customers' perceptions of their involvement in communication prior to participating in an electricity tariff-review process

Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1 illustrate obtained responses in relation to statement 1. Most respondents (42.06%) became aware of the electricity tariff review public consultations on government-owned national media, in comparison to 19.05% who disagreed. About 14.29% strongly disagreed that they had heard any notices on tariffs from the national media, as compared to 11.90% who strongly agreed they had. About 13% of respondents were neutral, meaning they were not sure if the national media had played any part in raising their awareness about the tariffs. This implies the national media was somewhat effective in raising electricity customers' awareness of subsequent tariff-review processes. In concurrence, Bishu *et al* (2018:503) maintain that media coverage can significantly promote development endeavours by acting as an information intermediary and influencing public opinion. The national media has a countrywide coverage in Lesotho.

Regarding statement 2, most of the respondents (34.65%) indicated that, a week after LEWA had received the application from LEC, it did not undertake a two-way communication with them soliciting their opinions on the proposal. This was in comparison to 22.85% who indicated they had been consulted. A further 24.41% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they were consulted, as compared to 6.30% who strongly agreed that they were consulted. About 12% were neutral, meaning that they were uncertain if LEWA had taken part in two-way communication regarding their opinions on the need for an electricity tariff review after receipt of the application from LEC. This finding implies that LEWA must continuously interact with electricity electricity customers in participatory communication so that, when an LEC application is lodged, they understand the issues in it. LEWA simply requests that written comments and inputs on the reasonableness of the tariff application be submitted to it before a given deadline (see Section 3.6 in Chapter 3). Oral presentations by electricity customers during hearings are like a question and answer session. The finding corresponds with the position held by Welton (2018:581-585) position that, for stakeholders to make a meaningful contribution on energy issues such as efficiency, they need a substantial amount of education, guidance and other tailored-made resources.

Statement 3 sought to establish if privately owned media enabled the respondents to express their opinions about electricity tariff reviews. The aim was to find if private media had played any role in promoting information sharing on tariffs processes (see Section 2.5.1 in Chapter 2). Most respondents (30.40%) disagreed, as compared to 19.20% who agreed. A further 24.41% strongly disagreed that the privately-owned media had played any role in information sharing and awareness enhancement, while 12% strongly agreed to the statement. The neutral respondents stood at 24%. This implies that most respondents have not yet embraced or appreciated the private media as a platform for discussing tariff-review issues. LEWA has not fully used the privately-owned media space to communicate with electricity customers. Conversely it may be argued that the privately-owned media do not allow enough space for the stakeholder awareness-raising on tariffs because unlike advertisements they do not bring much financial gain. This finding corresponds with Moehler and Singh's (2011:276) argument that, in many African countries, private media requires active and critical citizens, so that they can compete with state media for influence and resources. Citizens listen to public broadcasters, especially in countries having enhanced press freedom and less corruption. However, Kalyango and Vultee (2012:119) state that, although state-owned media are widely used as a source of news in Africa, they are sometimes mistrusted and regarded to be less trustworthy than the privately-owned media.

Statement 4 sought the respondents' perspectives on how LEWA communicates with them during the process of electricity tariff determination. The respondents who indicated that LEWA lacks a clear communication strategy during an electricity tariff review were 26.98%. By comparison, 24.60% of the respondents indicated to the contrary (see Annexure D). About 21.43% of the respondents strongly disagreed that LEWA had a communication strategy for electricity tariff-review processes as compared to 7.94% who strongly agreed. A further 19.05% of the respondents were neutral. This implies that LEWA must incorporate electricity customers' inputs when a communication strategy on tariffs is designed. This finding connects with what Steyn and Pugh (2008:19) assert, that, when communication is practised at a strategic level, it plays a "mirror function" wherein it scans the environment within which the organisation operates. Communication specialists monitor developments occurring in the environment so as to be able to discern both their implicit and explicit consequences, especially in relation to the electricity customers' needs, sensitivities and preconceptions. From the responses, it is evident that LEWA has not engaged electricity customers in designing a participatory communication strategy, as suggested by Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009), and outlined in the proposed practical guidelines.

Statement 5 investigated if LEWA's public notices and press releases publicising LEC tariffs application in the print media were clear so that electricity customers could comment on the proposed electricity tariffs. Most respondents (33.86%) indicated that they read and understood LEWA notices on tariffs determination processes on print media, as compared to 19.69% who indicated to the contrary. A further 11.02% of the respondents strongly agreed that they read LEWA messages on print media, in comparison to 17.32% who did not. About 18.11% of the respondents were neutral. This finding indicates that the messages that LEWA distributes to the print media have to some extent been read by electricity customers. This finding is corroborated by Nyilasy *et al* (2011:174) who maintain that, despite the challenges that economic and technological changes have brought, newspapers are still perceived as one of the "most believable and trustworthy sources of information" in contemporary times.

In statement 6, the study sought respondents' perspectives on how new forms of media could raise public awareness of the next electricity tariffs process. The use of LEWA website, emails and social media platforms may further promote informed deliberation therein by electricity customers. Most respondents (50.39%) strongly agreed with the statement, as compared to 9.45% who strongly indicated to the contrary. A further 29.92% of the respondents indicated in the affirmative as compared to 5.51% who indicated to the contrary. For this statement, there was a low rate of neutral respondents, at only 4.72%. This finding implies that there is a need for LEWA to enhance the use of new forms of media, such as Facebook or Twitter, to improve interaction with electricity customers. Social media has played an increasingly important role in the development of communication strategies maintenance of stakeholders' interests, as well as stimulating dialogic communication (Haro-de-Rosario *et al* 2017:169-172).

In summary, findings in this section of the questionnaire indicate that LEWA has not discussed the electricity drivers' issue with electricity customers (see Section 2.8 in Chapter 2). In a sense, LEWA embraces some degree of undertaking to engage with electricity customers by raising their awareness of the holding of electricity tariff reviews on national media but less on private one. LEWA needs to balance private-public media usage to gain maximum coverage which could result in enhanced awareness raising (see Section 2.5.1 in Chapter 2). The majority of respondents were not aware about for LEC's application drivers for tariff increase application. Most respondents felt that a communication strategy must be developed to make the electricity tariff-review process participatory. Many respondents who read LEWA's notices on tariff determination processes in print media understood them. New forms of media, however, have not been used to raise electricity customers' awareness and promote meaningful deliberation on tariff reviews before the process of electricity tariff review took place. It should therefore be an important consideration that LEWA and electricity stakeholders should collectively participate in enhancing planning for communication needs in the future.

Section B: Steps for the invitation to participate in public consultation

Section B of the questionnaire the study sought to ascertain the steps or procedure LEWA should follow to entice electricity customers to participate in electricity tariff-review events. The emphasis was on respondents' experiences/views on the logical steps that should be followed for them to participate in a tariff-review. The proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication informed the design of the questions (see Section 2.8 in Chapter 2).

As such, four aspects relating to four statements were measured, as reflected in Table 5.2 and Figure 5.2. Table 5.2 below depicts respondents' views regarding the steps that were followed from the finalisation of the tariffs document by LEC to the actual participation.

Table 5. 2: Steps of invitation for electricity customers in electricity tariffs review

Survey statement	**Strongly Disagree (1)**	**Disagree (2)**	**Neutral (3)**	**Agree (4)**	**Strongly Agree (5)**
7. Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC) should inform me about the reasons for the proposed electricity price review application before submitting it to LEWA.	n=14 (11.11%)	n=12 (9.52%)	n=11 (8.73%)	n=23 (18.25%)	n=66 (52.38%)
8. Lipitso (public gatherings) should be used to supplement raising awareness about electricity tariffs consultations.	n=3 (2.36%)	n=5 (3.94%)	n=8 (6.30%)	n=40 (31.50%)	n=71 (55.91%
9. LEWA should invite me personally to take part in the electricity tariff review.	n=3 (2.36%)	n=18 (14.17%)	n=42 (33.07%)	n=41 (32.28%)	n=23 (18.11%)
10. I could speak freely to other stakeholders during tariff review public consultations.	n=1 (0.80%)	n=10 (8.00%)	n=24 (19.20%)	n=63 (50.40%)	n=27 (21.60%)

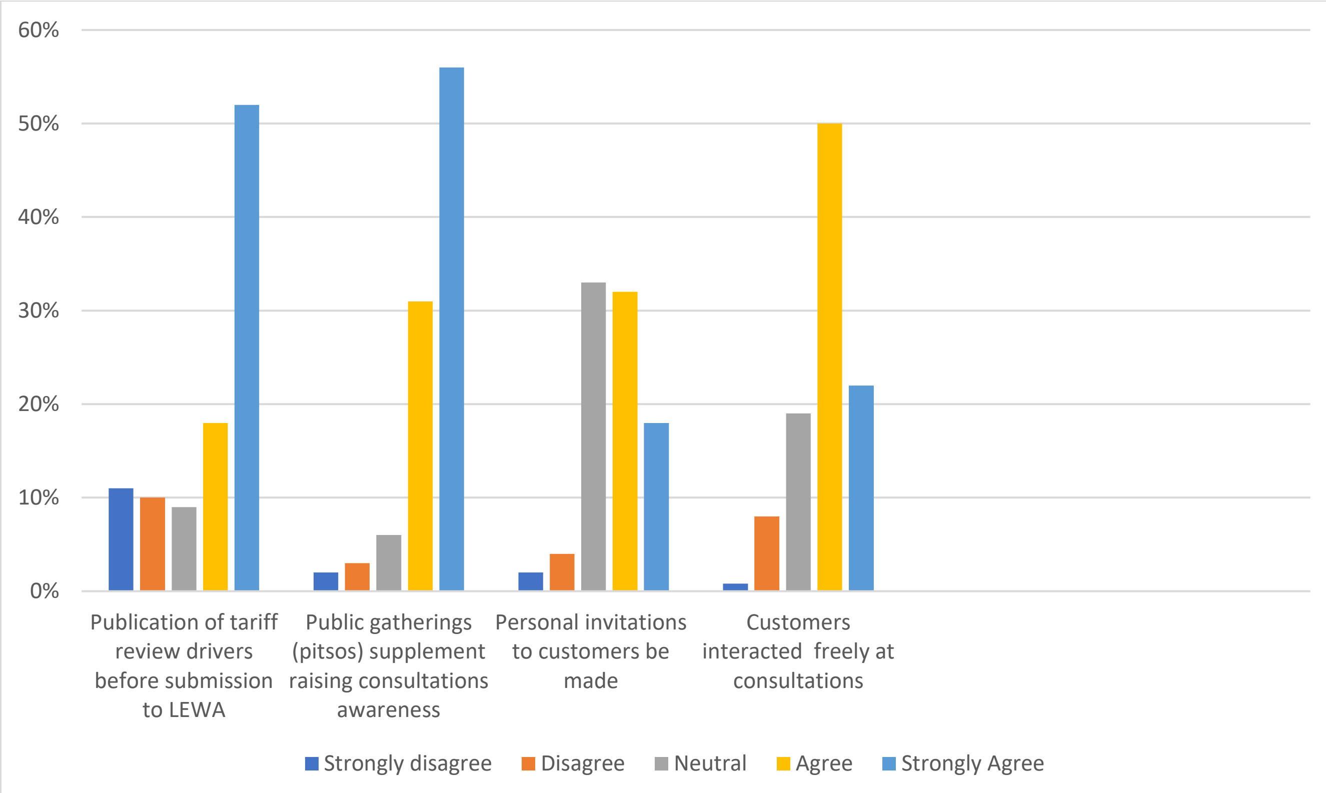

Figure 5. 2: Electricity customers' perceptions relating to own deliberations at electricity tariff-review

As is evident from Table 5.2 and Figure 5.2, more than half of the respondents (52.38%) strongly agree with statement 7. Statement 7 is on whether LEC should inform them about the reasons for the proposed electricity price-review application even before submitting it to LEWA. In comparison, 11.11% of the respondents strongly disagree that the utility should enable the public to scrutinise its application before its submission. Another 18.25% of respondents indicated their preference for LEC to raise public awareness of tariffs, as compared to 9.52% who did not indicate a need for awareness-raising of tariffs drivers. Only 8.78% of the respondents were neutral. The high number of respondents indicating a need for more information on the application could be suggesting that their perception that it is not transparently determined. This is congruent with the arguments of Campbell *et al* (2016:362) that in many settings electricity customers regard public consultations as neither honest nor important, since they legitimise decisions which have already been made by the powerful with little or no consideration of their impact on the public being made.

To statement 8 regarding the use of “lipitso” (public gatherings) to supplement awareness-raising activities about electricity tariffs consultations, most respondents (55.91%) strongly agreed. This was in comparison to 2.36% who strongly disagreed. The results further show that 31.50% of respondents indicated that lipitso should serve as invitation platforms about electricity tariffs consultation. The percentage of respondents who indicated that public gathering meetings are not useful was 3.94%. The percentage of the neutral responses was 8.78. The result shows that lipitso (public gatherings) could be held to supplement raising awareness and even invite the public for electricity tariffs consultation because it is one of the embedded open cultural methods of public communication. This finding corresponds with Servaes’ (2016:1-7) argument that participatory approaches must be consistent with local cultures in order to be sustainable and not be seen as foreign-imposed and only meant to benefit the powerful and active members of the community.

Statement 9 probed the respondents’ preferences regarding whether LEWA should make personal invitations to them to enhance to take part in the electricity tariff review or not. According to Laplume *et al* (2008:1158-1162), it is critical for any organisation to act in an ethical manner so that electricity customers may support its existence and goals. An interesting result here is that most of the respondents (33.07%) were neutral. A further 32.28% of the respondents indicated that personal invitations would be welcome, in comparison to 14.17% who indicated to the contrary. About 18.11% strongly agreed that personal invitations would be welcome in comparison to 2.36% who strongly disagreed with the statement. The results illustrate that the respondents can attend consultation even when they get no personal invitations.. The findings are in contrast with those of Hoffmeister *et al* (2017:87), who maintain that, when used in a targeted manner, invitations entice their recipients to act in a positive manner to the one issuing the invite.

In statement 10, the study wanted to establish if participants could speak freely with each other during tariff review public consultations. Speaking freely would make electricity customers’ views on electricity tariff review to be heard by others. As reflected in Chapter 2, one of the conditions of genuine participation is open and free dialogue. Most of the respondents (50.40%) indicated that they had interacted or conversed freely with other participants during the consultations, as compared to 8% who indicated that they did not. A further 21.60% of respondents strongly agreed that they had freely conversed with other participants, in comparison to 0.80% who strongly disagreed. About 19.20% of respondents were neutral. The results indicate that the participants had freely communicated with others at the hearings and managed to express their own opinions regarding the tariffs issues. The findings are congruent with the argument by Meade (2017:326) arguments that, when allowed to engage in community dialogue, participatory communication, and presenting various interpretations, the public is enabled to voice its own experiences about the various aspects of a development issue facing it.

In a summary regarding the steps that LEWA followed to invite electricity customers to the electricity tariffs-review sessions, LEWA must embrace some transparency. The electricity customers must understand the drivers of the application. Electricity customers also welcomed the use of cultural communication methods, such as public gatherings in support of raising awareness about consultations. In addition, the respondents had, in the nature of participatory communication, interacted or conversed freely with others during the consultations. However, LEWA must take into consideration that respondents strongly felt that LEC should inform them about the reasons for the proposed electricity tariff review application, even before submitting it to LEWA. Lastly, the respondents did not place much emphasis on getting personal invitations to the hearings, as shown by their neutrality. LEWA must explore additional ways of getting more participants at the tariff reviews to enhance the quality of discussions there.

Section C: Access to the electricity tariff review documents

Section C of the questionnaire sought to establish the electricity customers' views on how LEWA facilitated prior access to LEC's tariff review application after receiving it (see Section 3.6 in Chapter 3 and the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication in Section 2.8 in Chapter 2). Access to the document should facilitate electricity customers' better understanding of the application's contents. This would culminate in them making informed contributions to the tariff reviews. As noted in Section 3.6, the application is interrogated during the actual hearings. Access is often associated with empowerment and lack of access is seen as a source of impoverishment. Hence, people lacking access to resources are not aware "of their own role in the fight against poverty" (Thomas 2008:33). Table 5.3 below reflects the responses made to statements in this section.

Table 5. 3: Electricity customers' access to LEC tariff-review application document

Survey statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Total
11. I had access to the Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC) electricity tariff review application documents submitted to LEWA.	n=34 (26.77%)	n=49 (38.58%)	n=16 (12.60%)	n=17 (13.39%)	n=11 (8.66%)	n=127 (100%)
12. During the actual public consultations events LEC presenters communicated the reasons for its application to me in a clear manner.	n=33 (26.61%)	n=50 (40.32%)	n=17 (13.71%)	n=19 (15.32%)	n=5 (4.3%)	n=124 (100%)
13. The contents of the LEC application were written in a technical language that I could understand.	n=13 (10.32%)	n=23 (18.25%)	n=58 (46.03%)	n=26 (20.63%)	n=6 (4.76%)	n=126 (100%)
14. I can make more inputs in electricity tariff reviews if the LEC application documents are disseminated at least seven days in advance.	n=4 (3.17%)	n=3 (2.38%)	n=25 (19.84%)	n=56 (44.44%)	n=38 (30.16%)	n=127 (100%)

The responses in respect of these questions are presented in a graph, as illustrated in Figure 5.3.

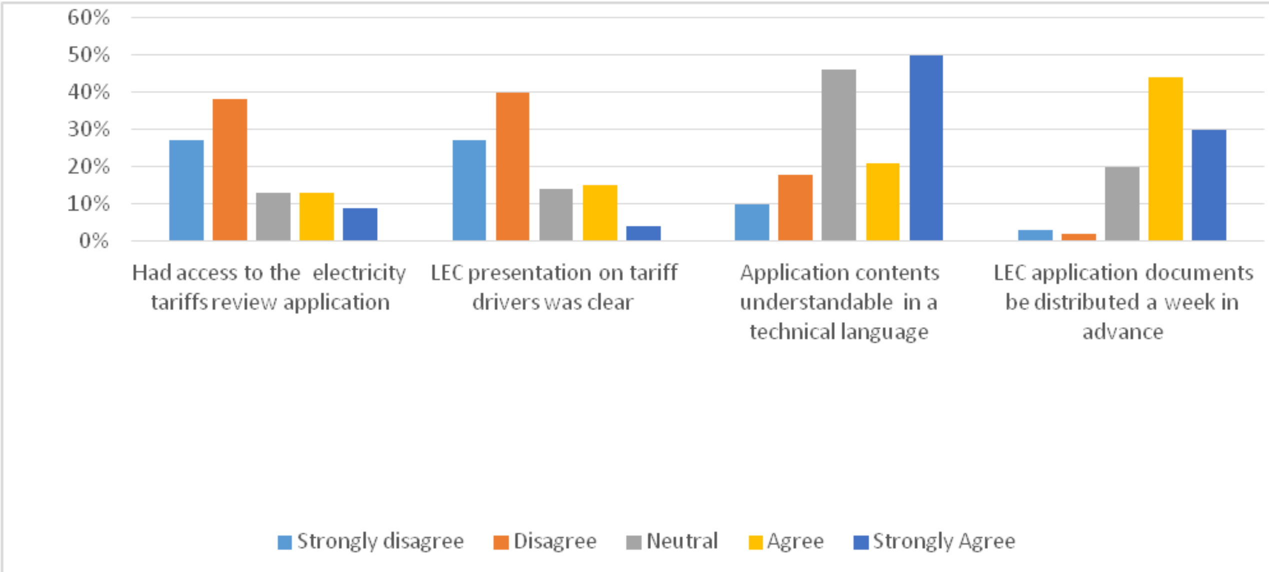

Figure 5. 3: Electricity customers' access to LEC tariff application documents.

Statement 11 tested whether the respondents had access to the LEC electricity tariff review application documents submitted to LEWA or not. As can be seen from Table 5.3 and Figure 5.3, the majority of the respondents (38.58%) indicated that they had no access to LEC's application documents prior to the consultation taking place, as compared to 13.39% who indicated they had had access. A further 26.77% of the respondents strongly disagreed they had no access to LEC's application, in comparison to 8.66% who strongly agreed that they had had access to the documents. This finding is interesting because LEWA notifies the public to access the document from its offices in Maseru or the website, and at local government offices in the districts. About 12.60% of the respondents were neutral, meaning they were not sure if they had access to the tariff application documents or not. The results indicate that LEWA has to improve the strategies of availing LEC tariff applications to many electricity customers. The findings are supported by Marais *et al*'s (2017:36) argument that citizens should be aware of government plans and actions so to influence them. In this way, transparency and participation depend on both LEC and LEWA providing trustworthy information before, during and after electricity tariff consultation.

In statement 12, the researcher sought to ascertain whether, during the actual public consultation events, electricity customers agreed that LEC presenters communicated the reasons for its application to them clearly or not. As suggested in Section 2.2.1 in Chapter 2, there must be parity of conditions between sender and receiver of communication for it to be effective. Most of the respondents (40.32%) indicated that LEC's presentations were not comprehensible, as compared to 15.32% who indicated they were. A further 26.61% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they understood LEC tariff review presentation in comparison to 4.03% who strongly agreed. About 12.60% of the respondents were neutral, meaning they were not sure. The results indicate that LEC must clarify its presentations in order to be understood by the electricity customers, especially taking into consideration their varying levels of education. The findings are congruent with Sebola's (2017:25-30) arguments that, although persuading people to participate in consultations is not easy, nonetheless effective communication methods must be employed to ensure they do.

The exploration of how the respondents regarded the nature of the LEC's application, that is, if the electricity customers understood its technical contents, is made in statement 13. The finding was interesting in that a vast majority of respondents (46.03%) were neutral, which means they may have not endeavoured to read it and were thus not sure about the application's contents. A further 20.63% of the respondents indicated that they the contents of the application were understandable, compared to 18.25% who indicated that they were not. The respondents who strongly disagreed with and those who strongly agreed with the statement were at 10.32% and 4.76% respectively. The findings indicate that most of the respondents may have not read the application. This finding contradicts Tufte and Mefalopulos' (2009) arguments that making necessary documents available enables electricity customers to be part of a development endeavour. The results could mean that the electricity electricity customers attended the consultations without reading what the application entails, which would in the longer term affect their contribution.

Statement 14 relates to the electricity customers timely access to the LEC application. The aim was to understand their perceptions on how access to the document and their participation in tariffs could be enhanced. Most of the respondents (44.44%) indicated that they could make more inputs in electricity tariff reviews if the LEC application documents were disseminated and reached them at least seven days in advance. This was in comparison to 2.38% who disagreed. Moreover, 30.16% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, in comparison to 3.17% of the respondents who strongly disagreed with it. About 19.84% of the respondents were neutral. The results illustrate that LEWA has to improve the time in which documents are made available to electricity customers by depositing them at areas where they can be accessed, such as libraries. As noted in Section 3.6 in Chapter 3, documents are distributed to districts from Maseru and the time factor could be important. The finding is consistent with Thomas (2008:36), who maintains that access can be affected by factors that exist within any state. These factors include the extent of public empowerment initiatives, pertinent regulations, political will and the capability of civil society to understand issues (Thomas 2008:36).

It may therefore be suggested that improving access to tariff application documents is key to the tariff-review process as it enables the participants to be informed and empowered. LEWA, according to the respondents, did not enable the participants to have access to LEC's document prior to the consultation taking place. In addition, respondents pointed out that LEC's presentations on the justification for tariff review were not comprehensible. Due to the high percentage of neutral responses, it may be argued that many of the respondents did not read the application. The respondents indicated that they could make more inputs into electricity tariff reviews if the LEC application documents were disseminated and reached them at least seven days in advance. This was another indicator that LEWA ought to improve its logistics and procedures which are pertinent to public access to the application.

Section D: Framework for the holding of the public consultations

In Section D of the questionnaire, the researcher sought to explore the perceptions of electricity customers of the time allocated for electricity tariff reviews (public hearings), the coverage of areas visited and frequency of the events. The statements address the questions that are related to the legal and regulatory framework within which the hearings are held in accordance with the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication in Section 2.8 in Chapter 2. Table 5.4 below reflects the responses to statements in this section.

Table 5. 4: Public hearings preparation framework

Survey statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
15. The consultations must take place in all 10 districts in the country, including mine.	n=6 (4.72%)	n=3 (2.36%)	n=3 (2.36%)	n=30 (23.62%)	n=85 (66.93%)
16. The electricity tariff review legislation must be changed to allow me more time to present my opinion on the electricity tariff review.	n=1 (0.79%)	n=8 (6.30%)	n=22 (17.32%)	n=55 (43.31%)	n=41 (32.28%)
17. The consultation period for an electricity tariff review event should preferably not occur annually.	n=10 (8.00%)	n=23 (18.40%)	n=20 (16.00%)	n=39 (31.20%)	n=33 (26.40%)
18. The electricity tariff review public consultations may be held anytime when so required.	n=10 (7.94%)	n=16 (12.70%)	n=24 (19.05%)	n=54 (42.86%)	n=22 (17.46%)

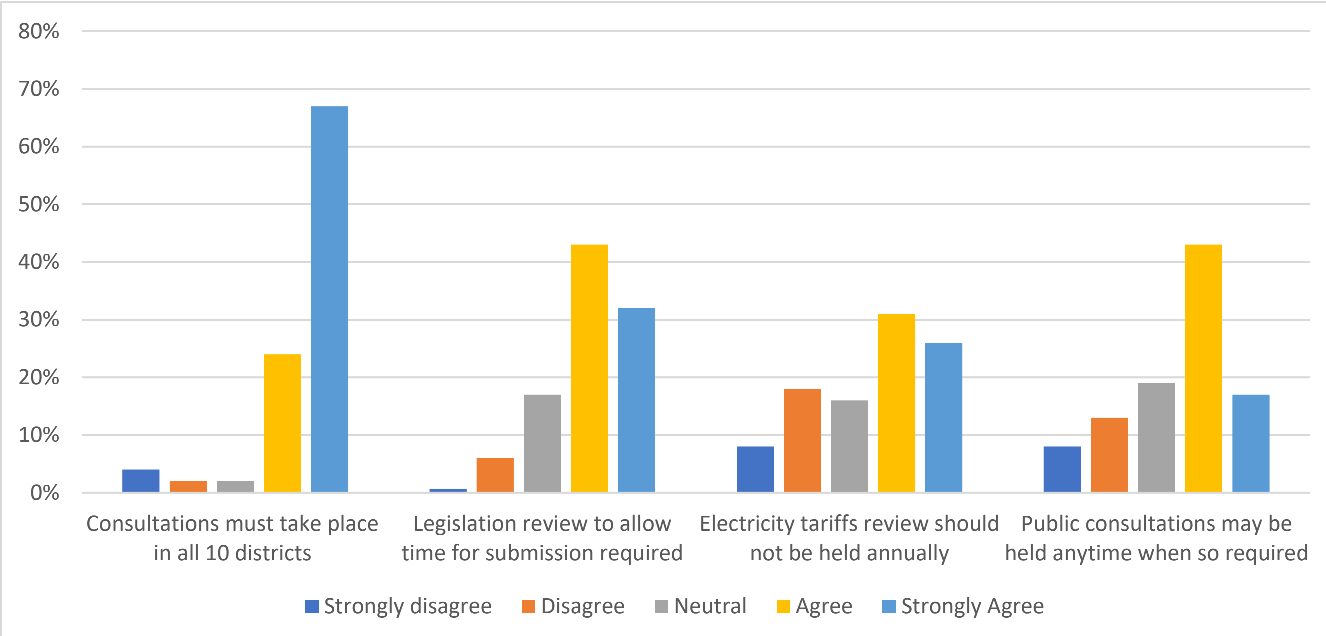

Figure 5. 4: Electricity customers' responses regarding LEWA's public hearings framework

Statement 15 explored the respondents' views regarding the holding of the public consultations throughout all the ten districts in Lesotho, so as to enhance the inclusion of more electricity customers (see Section 3.6 in Chapter 3). As is evident from Table 5.4 and Figure 5.4, most respondents (66.93%) strongly agreed that public consultations/hearings must be held in all districts, as opposed to 4.72% who disagreed. A further 23.62% of the respondents indicated that the consultations must be held countrywide, as opposed to 2.36% who disagreed. About 2.36% of the respondents were neutral. The result indicates that most of the respondents felt that more public hearings must be held in the districts to enable more electricity customers to attend and participate, as well as afford them some recognition. This finding supports the conclusion by Naidoo and Ramphal (2018:90) that public participation can be enhanced by, among other things, being people-centredness and optimal communication. In this sense, people centredness may be a plural form of the concept of person-centredness. Person-centredness refers to a standing or ranking that is conferred upon a person by others, "in the context of relationship and social being" and suggests acknowledgement, esteem and confidence (McCance, McCormack and Dewing 2011:5). The benefits of authentic communication have been outlined before (see Section 2.2 in Chapter 2). Due to the fact that LEWA held three hearings annually for a tariff review application in 2016 and 2017, this result means that the number of hearings must increase so that more electricity customers may participate in them.

In Statement 16, the researcher investigated the respondents' views regarding the review of electricity legislation so as to afford the public more time to present its opinion on the electricity tariff-review process. Most respondents (43.31%) indicated that it would be appropriate for policy-makers to amend the electricity legislation to extend the time for consultations. However, 6.30% of the respondents disagreed. A further 32.28% of the respondents strongly agreed that the review of the electricity legislation would allow them more time to present their opinions on the electricity tariff review. This was in contrast to 0.79% who strongly disagreed. About 17.32% of the respondents were neutral. The findings illustrate that the respondents need more time to reflect on the tariff review application before making submissions or participating in the events. Although the LEA Act 2002, as amended, allows LEWA three months to determine the electricity review application, it would seem the time may be insufficient. During this period, there is some pressure on LEWA to reach as many electricity customers as possible. According to Torruella *et al* (2018:06), in a democratic setting people having divergent interests should meet and come to a mutual agreement which is premised on "mutual respect and common interest."

Regarding statement 17, the study probed whether electricity tariff-review events should preferably not be held annually. The rationale was to establish if the current practice of determining electricity tariff could be replaced by one in which tariffs are set at a given level for a certain number of years (multi-year electricity tariff review). A multi-year electricity tariff structure saves time for stakeholders; the annual increases are determined some years in advance (see National Energy Regulator of South Africa, NERSA, press release dated 10 December 2018). Most of the respondents (31.20%) agreed to the statement, as opposed to 18.40% of respondents who disagreed. A further 26.40% of the respondents strongly indicated that electricity tariff review events should preferably not be held annually. This was in comparison to 8% of the respondents who strongly agreed that electricity tariff review events should be held annually. The number of respondents who felt neutral about this statement was 16%. The findings indicate that the respondents do not agree that electricity tariff reviews should be reviewed annually. The introduction of a multi-year tariff structure could be necessary, as it provides some certainty in terms of the levels of electricity tariffs to all electricity customers in the short to medium terms. As Makholm (2017:30) argues, in electricity markets that operate under a multiyear tariffs setup electricity tariffs are regulated in advance, so that generators, companies, regulator and electricity customers know about multi-year forecasts. The mid-term nature of the process brings in some degree of predictability in tariff increase patterns for electricity customers.

The electricity customers' views on the need for electricity tariff-review public consultations to be held anytime when required is explored in statement 18. In the Southern African region, electricity tariffs keep changing at least annually (see Chapter 3, Section 3). Lesotho, in particular, has no viable coal reserves to boost the generation of electricity and that has the impact of escalating electricity tariffs (Makonese *et al* 2018:40). Most respondents (42.86%) agreed to the statement while 12.70% indicated that they disagreed. A further 17.46% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, as opposed to 7.94% who strongly disagreed. About 19.05% of the respondents were neutral. The results show that most of the respondents were aware that electricity tariffs might change often. Although the reason for this finding is not evident it could be argued that electricity customers want to participate in tariffs hearings that are transparent regardless of frequency of holding them. In that vein, this finding could be consistent with Crane's (2018:1-10) position that actions by a firm towards any of its stakeholders can demonstrate its credibility and "determine to what degree other stakeholders will assume vulnerability" and be prepared to deal with it in the future.

In summary, the findings above illustrate that LEWA has a challenge with regard to consulting electricity customers as widely as possible. This aspect is related to that of unrestricted and open dialogue (see Section 2.8 in Chapter 2). Many respondents strongly indicated that public consultations/hearings must be held in all districts. A review of the electricity legislation is required to allow electricity customers more time to make up their opinions on the electricity tariff review. Most of the respondents indicated that the electricity tariff review events should preferably not be held annually. Most strongly respondents agreed that public consultations may be held anytime when so required. The last two findings indicate that electricity customers prefer some transparency and predictability in the way reviews of tariffs are held (see sections 2.4.1, 2.5.1 and 2.7.3 in Chapter 2).

Section E: Stakeholder communication during the electricity tariff review

Section E of the questionnaire intended to establish electricity customers' perceptions of their communication during the public consultations/hearings in accordance with the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication in Section 2.8 in Chapter 2. Table 5.5 below depicts the responses that relate to how electricity customers view their communication during an electricity review process.

Table 5. 5: Electricity customers' perceptions of communication during public hearings

Survey statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
19. I could give my inputs to LEWA during the actual public consultations meetings because I was well informed.	n=10 (7.87%)	n=35 (27.56%)	n=21 (16.54%)	n=47 (37.01%)	n=14 (11.02%)
20. By exchanging opinions with others during public consultations I became more aware how electricity price levels affect me as an individual.	n=6 (4.69%)	n=14 (10.94%)	n==29 (22.66%)	n=54 (42.19%)	n=25 (19.53%)
21. I could exchange tariffs background information with other participants during the tariffs review process.	n=4 (3.13%)	n=13 (10.16%)	n=29 (22.66%)	n=70 (54.69%)	n=12 (9.38%)

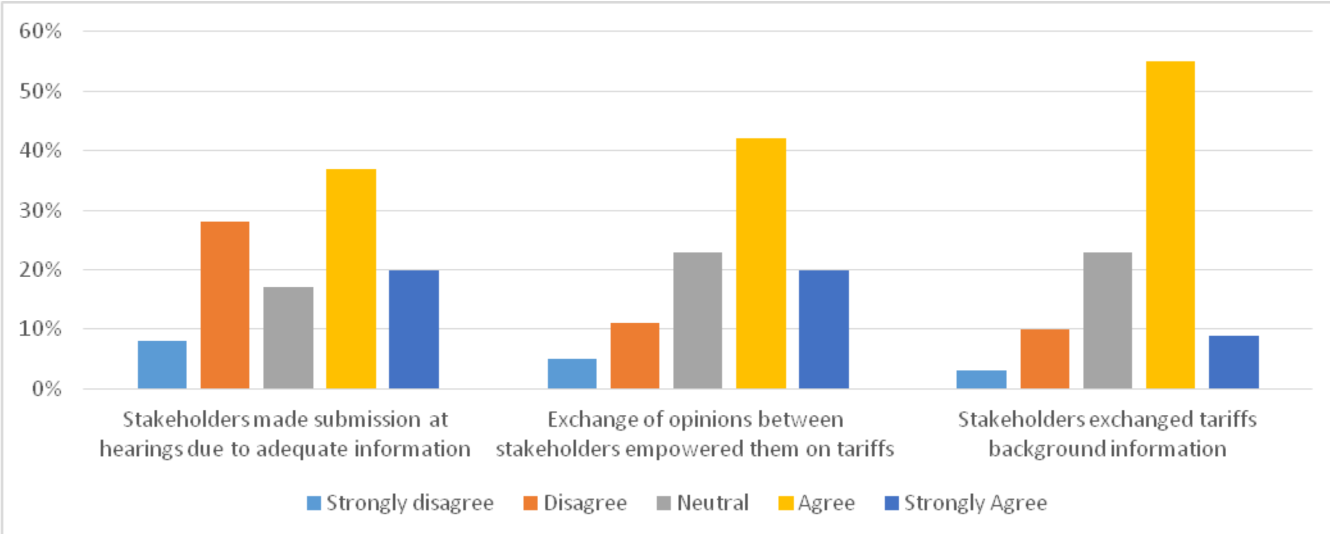

Figure 5. 5: Electricity customers' perception on communication during public hearings

Under statement 19, the questionnaire tested whether electricity electricity customers could make inputs to during the actual public consultations meetings because of having prior knowledge on electricity tariffs issues. The aim of the statement was to determine if electricity customers interacted during the tariff-review processes.

It can be seen from Table 5.5 and Figure 5.5 that most of the respondents (37.01) responded in the affirmative, in comparison with 27.56% who indicated to the contrary. A further 11.02% strongly agreed that they had given their inputs to LEWA during the actual public consultation meetings, as compared to 7.87% of respondents who strongly disagreed. About 16.54% were neutral, meaning they were not sure whether they made quality submissions, or not. The finding shows that most of the respondents had made contributions to the tariff-determination process. The finding is congruent with Mefalopulos's (2008) argument that, in a consultative process, stakeholders may make inputs, although the decision-making power does not rest with them. Moreover, as Freeman *et al* (2010:8) maintain, business decisions should not be separated from ethics.

Statement 20 focused on the exchange of opinions between electricity customers during public consultations. The exchange of opinions is expected to generate awareness among them on how electricity tariffs levels affected them and it contributes to their empowerment (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3). Free interaction enables stakeholders to examine and discover important issues, hazards and present observations. This facilitates the bringing up of important priorities and suggestions within a comprehensive range of options. Free interaction promotes the engagement of all stakeholders on their primary perceptions of the suggested change (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:24). Most of the respondents (42.86%) indicated that they had exchanged opinions with other electricity customers, in comparison to 10.94% who indicated they had not. A further 19.53% of the respondents strongly agreed to have exchanged opinions with others during public consultations, in comparison to 3.13% who strongly disagreed. About 22.66% of the respondents were neutral. The findings indicate that most respondents communicated with others at the public hearings and shared some information on tariffs. The findings are consistent with the position of Maxwell and Carboni (2014:301-302), who maintain that people who are not networked depend on “face-to-face and phone communication”. When convened together, electricity customers used two-way communication to share ideas on effect of tariffs.

Statement 21 investigated whether electricity customers were able to exchange information on tariffs and related matters with other participants during the tariff-review process. The majority of the respondents (54.69%) indicated they had shared the tariffs document and background information with others, in comparison to 10.16% who did not. Moreover, 9.38% of the respondents strongly agreed that they had shared tariffs document and background information with others, compared to 3.13% who strongly disagreed. About 22.66% of the respondents felt neutral. The finding illustrates that most electricity customers were able to circulate the documents on tariffs among themselves and exchange information. However, this finding is not supported by Marais *et al* (2017:36), who argue that, in most organisations, sharing information has been associated with risk and vulnerability that is reflected by power relations and obtains in participatory settings. However, the sharing of documents is essential to promoting change through empowerment (Servaes 2016:4).

In interrogating electricity customers’ views on stakeholder communication during the actual electricity tariffs, this is an area where LEWA has to some extent complied with the proposed guidelines on participatory communication. The majority of the respondents indicated they had made inputs during the hearings, while most also had exchanged opinions with other electricity customers. This is evident because the respondents shared tariffs document and background information with others during the public-hearing sessions.

Section F: Evaluation of tariff-review process

Section F of the questionnaire focused on the extent to which LEWA and electricity customers collectively monitored and evaluated the electricity tariff-review process. The basis was the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication in Section 2.8 in Chapter 2. Table 5.6 and Figure 5.6 summarise the responses to the statements in this section.

Table 5. 6: Electricity customers' views regarding the outcome of public hearing processes

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
22. The outcome of the electricity tariffs review demonstrates that the LEWA took my expressed views into consideration.	n=25 (19.69%)	n=27 (21.26%)	n=44 (34.65%)	n=17 (13.39%)	n=14 (66.93%)
23. After each tariff review, I discussed the impact of approved tariffs on our daily lives with LEWA.	n=24 (19.05%)	n=59 (46.83%)	n=44 (34.65%)	n=17 (13.39%)	n=14 (3.17%)
24. The impact of the previous year's tariffs on review should inform LEWA's decisions for the next year.	n=5 (3.97%)	n=4 (3.17%)	n=18 (14.29%)	n=59 (46.83%)	n=40 (31.75%)
25 During the time between annual electricity price reviews LEWA endeavours to empower me on electricity review matters through training on electricity review matters.	n=24 (19.35%)	n=34 (27.42%)	n=27 (21.77%)	n=28 (22.58%)	n=11 (8.87%)

In Figure 5.6, electricity customers' responses in relation to their assessment of the outcome of participating in tariff review are depicted.

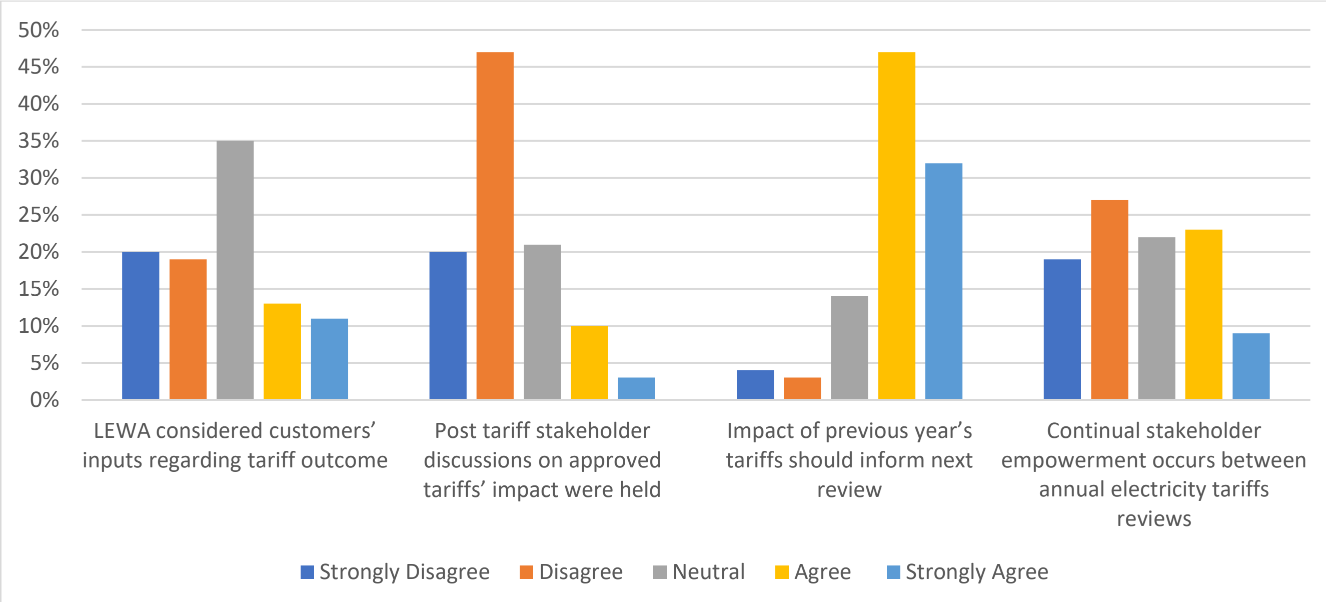

Figure 5. 6: Electricity customers' views on electricity tariff-review processes

Statement 22 focused on the outcome of the electricity tariff review and investigated electricity customers' perceptions of whether LEWA took their inputs into consideration or not. Table 5.6 and Figure 5.6 illustrate that most respondents (34.65%) were either not aware as to whether LEWA considered their inputs or they were indifferent, as they were neutral. A further 21.26% of the respondents disagreed that EWA considered their inputs, in comparison to 13.39% who agreed. Lastly, 19.69% of the respondents strongly disagreed that LEWA considered their inputs in comparison to 11.02% who strongly agreed with it. The finding shows that the majority of the electricity customers felt that their inputs were not considered by LEWA. This finding does not support Costello's (2017:54) argument that in contemporary time stakeholders tend to have access to more information, new technologies and market developments. In this sense they and are not like traditional stakeholders who merely pay bills without questioning the status quo. Based on the finding, it is probable that electricity customers feel marginalised from the process.

Regarding statement 23, the questionnaire explored whether electricity customers had discussed the impact of approved tariffs on their daily lives with LEWA after each tariff review. Most respondents (46.83%) indicated to disagree that they had discussed the impact of tariffs on their lives with LEWA, as compared to 10.32% who indicated to agree. A further 19.05% of respondents strongly disagreed they had the opportunity to discuss the impact of tariffs on their lives with

LEWA, as compared to 3.17% who strongly agreed. About 20.63% of the respondents were neutral about this statement. The finding indicates that there is a need for LEWA to initiate the creation of platforms to discuss the impact of approved tariffs with electricity customers. As Welton (2017:297) argues, education initiatives on reducing the electricity bills, such as introduction of small-scale renewable generation and installing rooftop solar panels, can be helpful in mitigating the impact of electricity tariffs increases on stakeholders. It is therefore contended that such initiatives should be discussed in the platforms where the post-tariff impact is evaluated.

Statement 24 examined respondents' perspectives on whether the impact of the previous year's tariff review should inform LEWA's decisions on tariff-review for the following years. As such, LEWA has to consider the impact of the previous year's tariffs whenever new tariffs are approved through participatory communication endeavours. The majority of the participants (46.83%) indicated that LEWA should consider the overall impact of the previous tariffs when deciding on new ones. This figure was as opposed to 3.17% who indicated to the contrary. A further 31.75% strongly indicated that LEWA should consider the overall impact of the previous tariffs when deciding on new ones, as compared to 3.97% who strongly indicated to the contrary. About 14.29% of the respondents were neutral. This finding may suggest that most respondents were able to understand the economic relationship between the annual tariffs adjustments and their ability to afford electricity services. As Mefalopulos (2008:40) argues, genuine communication increases the way the participants express themselves, their awareness of issues and involvement therein. Furthermore, Krueger-Henney (2016: 51-53) suggests that listening to the concerns of the disadvantaged is beneficial for researchers who want to address social problems. It is therefore contended that this argument can equally apply in the electricity- tariff setting. In this regard, Jönsson (2010:394) asserts that participatory communication is not only intensely slanted towards dialogue and reflection but also to the taking of relevant remedial action.

Statement 25 investigated whether LEWA has endeavoured to contribute to the empowerment of electricity customers on electricity review matters through education on tariffs issues. The ongoing activity should ideally be undertaken between annual electricity price reviews as part of empowering electricity customers on tariffs. Fourie (2009:1-30) maintains that empowerment does not only refer to where people think critically about their problems, but also on the incorporation of action. In other words, empowerment relates to the attempt to deal with the issue that has been identified by electricity customers, or aligning their discussion to real life issues. The majority of the respondents (27.42%) indicated they disagreed that LEWA has endeavoured to empower them on electricity review matters through education, as compared to 22.58% who indicated they agreed. Furthermore, 19.35% of the respondents strongly disagree that LEWA has endeavoured to empower electricity customers on electricity review matters through education, in comparison to 8.87% who strongly agree. About 21.77% of the respondents were neutral, which underscores their lack of awareness or indifference over the matter. The finding under this statement is congruent with Burger’s (2017:17) argument that, in order for empowerment to occur, good relationships should be established among groups with diverse skills sets, knowledge and experiences so that solutions to problems can be arrived at collectively. As indicated in Table 2.3, qualitative indicators such as the robustness of local debates, degree of gender equity and information equity can be used to evaluate participatory endeavours’ rigour. Other indicators include collective self-efficacy, sense of ownership, cohesion and social norms.

On the whole, the evaluation of the impact of tariff-review process illustrates that LEWA has not implemented any evaluation or monitoring , as described under Section 2.8 in Chapter 2. Most respondents were either not aware as to whether LEWA had considered their inputs or they were indifferent, as they were neutral in their responses. Respondents disagree that they had the opportunity to discuss the impact of tariffs on their lives with LEWA. Electricity customers rather felt that LEWA should consider the overall impact of the previous tariffs when deciding on new ones. In addition, they disagreed that LEWA has endeavoured to empower them on electricity review matters through education. These perspectives would mean that LEWA still has much to accomplish in terms of ensuring genuine participation. By not following up the impact of tariff reviews with electricity customers, LEWA may not be complying with the proposed practical guidelines (refer to Section 2.8.2). The demographics of the survey respondents are reflected in Table 5.7 below.

Table 5. 7: Demographics of the respondents

Gender	Customer's gender	n=respondents	Percentage (%)
	Female	65	51.18
	Male	62	48.82
	TOTAL	127	100.00
Age group	**Respondents' age**	**n=respondents**	**Percentage (%)**
	18-35	37	29.60
	36-55	69	55.20
	56-70	18	14.40
	71-80	1	0.8
	TOTAL	125	**100**
Number of respondents' dependents	**Number of dependents per respondents**	**n=respondents**	**Percentage (%)**
	0-5	101	80.80
	6-10	3	2.40
	11-15	20	16.00
	16-20	1	0.80
	TOTAL	125	**100**
Years as electricity customer	**Years as electricity customer**	**n=respondents**	**Percentage (%)**

	0-5	9	7.56
	6-10	8	6.72
	11-15	22	18.49
	16-20	26	21.85
	21+	54	45.38
	TOTAL	119	**100**
Gross income (M)	**Gross income (M)**	**n=respondents**	**Percentage (%)**
	0-1000	4	3.77
	1001-5000	14	13.21
	5001-10 000	23	21.70
	10 001-20 000	38	35.85
	20 001+	27	25.47
	TOTAL	106	**100**
Customer category	**Customer category**	**n=respondents**	**Percentage (%)**
	Domestic	110	90.91
	Industrial	4	3.31
	Commercial	4	3.31
	General purpose	3	2.48
	TOTAL	121	100.00%

As illustrated in the above Table 5.7, the study had a total of 127 electricity stakeholders. The gender composition of respondents was 51.18% female and 48.82% male. This kind of female response could be a positive development since women traditionally have lower participation in the mainstream electricity sector issues in Lesotho (Lesotho Energy Policy 2015-2025). This result may suggest that, females have begun putting more focus on participation in electricity tariff reviews. Most respondents in the survey (55.20%) were between the ages of 36 and 55 and are arguably the most active during public hearings. One (1) respondent (0.8%) was in the age group 71-80. Over 90% of respondents had been electricity customers for more than five years. A further 45.4% of the 119 respondents had over 21 years' experience as electricity customers, in comparison to nine (9) customers (7.56%) who had between 0- and 5-years' experience. A total of 38 respondents (35.9%) earned a gross monthly salary of between M10, 000.00 and M20, 000.00. In comparison four or 3.77% of the respondents had a gross monthly salary of between M0.00 and M1, 000.00. The group earning between M10, 000 and M20, 000 represents a middle-income group. Most of the respondents who totalled 101 or 80.8% had between none to five (5) dependants. Other electricity customers were the industrial, commercial and general purpose at 3.31%, 3.31% and 2.48% respectively. It may therefore be argued that these categories were representative of all income groups of the Lesotho electricity customer landscape. The above demographics indicate that the respondents were a suitable group selected to respond to the survey statements. The findings of the focus group discussions are reflected in Section 5.3.2 below.

5.3.2 Focus group findings

The qualitative data for the focus groups were analysed using thematic analysis (see Section 4.5.1.2 in Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion) and involved the processes of data collection, reduction and analysis. Nine themes which were identified from the data analysis for the focus groups were: (1) preliminary communication research; (2) pre-public consultation procedures; (3) consultation communication strategy; (4) electricity customers communication interaction; (5) access to tariff application; (6) traditional and new forms of media use; (7) trust and listening; (8) addressing electricity customers communication challenges; and (9) sustainable engagement. The analysis of the findings from focus group data is made under each of the themes.

Theme 1: Preliminary communication research

This theme relates to the kind of initial research that LEWA undertakes so as to facilitate electricity customers' involvement in planning to identify key issues for electricity tariff reviews. The modes of communication LEWA uses when investigating electricity customers' opinions on electricity tariff reviews (before the actual process of electricity tariff review takes place) is explored (see Section 3.6 and 3.7 in Chapter 3 and Section 2.8 in Chapter 2). Some of the participants' comments on this theme are as follows:

"Yes, what we do is not [communication] research per se."

"I am not sure … the use of the term research correctly in this context, I don't know if this can be termed research in the strict sense of the word."

"We hold public meetings at district levels, in fact for all stakeholders before this process starts. It is in these public meetings where we sensitise the latter about tariff review processes".

"LEWA's research on stakeholder's communication needs must be undertaken regularly throughout the year not only during tariffs."

As can be seen from the statements above, most participants maintained that no prior research was done to determine electricity customers' communication requirements in relation to tariffs review. As a result, their participation was not optimal. LEWA's only sensitises electricity customers on legal processes for electricity tariff-review. This finding connects with findings by Harjusola-Webb and Robbins (2012:99-110) and Tufte & Mefalopulos (2009:26), that undertaking prior communication research is the initial step in participatory communication endeavours. LEWA has to improve its initiatives and undertake prior communication research with electricity customers during the sensitisation stage. The codes which were derived from the findings of this theme are illustrated below in Table 5.8.

Table 5. 8: Theme 1: Preliminary communication research

Codes	• No initial communication research per se; • Term "research" cannot be strictly used; • District public meetings only sensitise public on general regulatory issues not tariffs only; and • Communication research needs to be an ongoing endeavour.

Theme 2: Pre-public consultation procedure

This theme relates to what actually transpires from the time when the public is invited for public consultations until the event is held. The idea is to investigate if the procedure allows for the electricity customers to interact dialogically so they may make meaningful inputs into the designing of the procedure design. The mere attendance of the stakeholders is not enough to render a participatory process genuine (Flemmer & Schilling -Vacaflor 2016:183). Some of the participants' comments on this theme are as follows:

"LEWA usually makes public announcements requesting people who may have suggestions and comments to bring them in respect of the proposed tariffs by LEC. Those who wish to make verbal comments (at hearings) to notify LEWA timeously."

"What I understand is that this [notification] is a legal obligation which must be met, a procedure that must be followed when LEWA receives a proposal for tariff increase".

"As it has already been explained … I understand that we have to publicise the receipt of LEC tariff application and seek the views of Basotho"

"The law says if a tariff is lodged or proposed by LEC and LEWA does not interrogate it and make a decision on it within three months, the proposed tariff will automatically come into effect."

The findings indicate that electricity customers are not afforded the opportunity to design a tariff-review procedure. LEWA notifies the public to comment on the reasonableness of tariffs and does not invite public comments on the procedure. As was mentioned in Section 3.7 in Chapter 3, public consultations on electricity tariff reviews are held because the law so requires. The manner or procedure by which such consultations have to take place, is, however, not stipulated. LEWA alone may determine the extent to which it engages in a participatory process with electricity customers. However, in consultations, personal respect and dignity are indispensable and people want engagement and meaningful consultation (Bardouille-Crema, Chigas & Miller 2013:64).

Meaningful participation in consultations is hampered by, among other things, the use of informational communication models over participatory ones (Waisbord 2008:505-510). A formal process of written consultation procedures is important in designing public policy outcomes and how the participants themselves refine their competencies in the subject matter under discussion (Lundberg & Hysing 2015:16). In some jurisdictions, consultations are compulsory and open for the public and all draft bills, governmental and ministerial decrees must be circulated on the government's webpage (Vértesy 2016:115). The codes which were derived from the findings of this theme are reflected in Table 5.9 below.

Table 5. 9:Theme 2: Pre-public consultation procedure

Codes	• LEWA follows the law in publicising LEC application; • Public invited to comment only on tariffs not procedure; • Public hearing procedure not decided by electricity customers; • Timelines for process stipulated by law (not negotiable); and • Tariff must be processed within three months.

Theme 3: Consultation communication strategy

This theme focuses on how overall guiding communication strategy is formulated during tariffs. LEWA must engage in participatory communication with electricity customers so as to conscientise them and listen to their opinion on electricity tariff reviews. The primary communication objective of the process is to engage with electricity customers and empower them on the regulation of electricity tariff reviews. A participatory communication strategy presents and articulates the identified problem(s) to key stakeholders and must be cognisant of the audience's knowledge, perceptions and priorities (Mulu & Pineteh 2016:8; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:20). Some of the participants' comments on this theme are as follows:

"I think that to meet what is expected [in determining tariffs] we need to have different strategies which are innovative and yet meet the requirements of the law. For example, if the law says we should involve electricity customers, we got to determine how we can achieve this."

"The primary objective (smiles) of our communication … is to ensure that everyone who will be affected by LEWA's decisions on tariffs must be part of the process so they may feel comfortable as part of joint decision-making".

"It is right to engage electricity customers and other stakeholders for fostering collective ownership, of the review process".

"*I think the issue of communication strategy was not addressed fully in that although LEWA has a document on strategy, it was made some time ago (outdated) and its focus was on awareness raising*."

"… (Communication) strategy helps to avoid misunderstandings and complaints that LEWA serves the interests of LEC whereas in actual fact we are supposed to work with LEC and the electricity customers. We should not be elitist".

The findings show that the participants understand that, for meaningful participation to occur, a communication strategy that enhances electricity customers participation in electricity tariffs must exist. Although in 2011 LEWA developed a communication strategy document (see Section 4.4.6.3 in Chapter 4), it may not be adequate to address participatory communication on electricity tariff-review processes. According to Otto and Fourie (2016:28), the"dialogical pedagogy" approach rejects the customary approaches of "banking education" wherein outside "educators" or specialists just transmit what they know to ordinary people (learners) in submissive, hollow "holders" and "packets". The latent meaning here is that LEWA has been inclined to use a monologic mode of communication during tariff reviews. In line with participatory communication thinking, electricity customers must be involved in devising a communication strategy that facilitates the involvement of all in the determination of electricity tariffs. The codes which were derived from the findings of this theme are illustrated in Table 5.10 below.

Table 5. 10: Consultation communication strategy

Codes	• LEWA and electricity customers s must develop an innovative communication strategy; • Stakeholder communication must be all-inclusive; • Stakeholder ownership of communication strategy critical; • Existing communication strategy monologic; and • New strategy must engender positive perceptions on LEWA.

Theme 4: Electricity customers' communication interaction

This theme seeks to explore how electricity customers can communicate and interact during the actual electricity review process. The emphasis was with regard to understanding the manner in which LEWA's communication activities during the actual tariff review shapes the extent and nature of electricity customers' participation therein. Effective consultation increases the degree of transparency in decision-making about matters which may have an important impact on huge numbers of people (Campbell *et al* 2016:361). The significance of participatory activities, therefore, may be contingent on how they are conducted and how obtained public responses are used (Campbell *et al* 2016:361). Some of the participants' comments on this theme are as follows:

"*Throughout the year we must educate people on the tariffs processes. This step has a potential to assist them identify relevant issues and shall be useful at the end of the year when the actual tariff review is undertaken."*

"The majority of people who attend public consultation only complain about the quality service from LEC ... They do not talk about matters pertaining to electricity tariff reviews per se but service issues. We have not succeeded in making them to focus the tariffs issue which is the main issue".

"I also ask myself as to whether it is easy to separate these two issues [service and tariffs) in normal tariffs deliberations. For example, the public would invariably argue that LEC should not be allowed an increase because its quality of customer services is poor."

"The people we engage with during the year tend to differ with the people we invite directly when we undertake a tariffs review. How many times have we sat with stakeholders, factory workers or

even the industrial users of electricity? These groups make a lot of effort to be present during the tariffs review presentations".

"It seems to me that the consultations are meant for LEWA board alone since the discussions therein are dominated by it. Yet the spirit behind the public hearing is to solicit views from the public, not the board."

"I have also realised that the presentations by the utility during hearing trigger people's thoughts and discussions more than the submitted technical documents."

The findings in this theme demonstrate that, LEWA's public participation communication procedures may have improved over time. Notwithstanding there is still a need to address unequal power relations and information asymmetry between LEWA and electricity customers. They (electricity customers) may not be aware of the issues that should be brought for debate in public consultations because some want to discuss issues not related to the electricity tariff review. Different electricity customers have varying perceptions of what the hearings should be about. However, participation conceptually encompasses numerous and divergent "epistemologies, methodologies and imagined goals", and symbolises unrelated "evaluative measures" (Otto & Fourie (2016:21). Participatory approaches should be executed by outside facilitators or various interested parties, as well as local communities and their members. The participants communicate to arrive at reciprocal understanding about development and processes of social change (Otto & Fourie 2016:29). The codes which were derived from the findings of this theme are illustrated below.

Table 5. 11:Theme 4: Electricity customers communication interaction

Codes	• Continuous education could influence the quality of tariffs debates; • Participants should approach issues holistically; • Tariffs and electricity quality of service issues interrelated; • LEC's presentation triggers more responses from electricity customers ; and • LEWA Board dominates discussions at hearings.

Theme 5: Access to tariff application

This theme expresses the issues relating to the electricity customers' access to tariff review application documents. Access to the documents enables electricity customers to make informed and insightful contributions on the deliberations on the electricity tariff review (see Section 5.3.1.3). The theme also focuses on timely access to documents by the public. In some jurisdictions, such as the European Union, legislation dealing with access to documents exists. Legislation enshrines "deliberativeness, legitimacy building and accountability" through access (Adamski 2014:520). As such, access to documents is ethical and central to participation. Some of the participants' comments on this theme are as follows:

"The utility should … present the application to stakeholders in a simpler form before discussions (public hearings) are held to enhance people's participation".

"Participants always complain that they have not had an opportunity to read and understand (tariff application). They also prefer to have the document well beforehand so that they (may) form their opinions on tariffs well ahead of time."

"Not every person becomes aware of and actually reads the (tariff) document. Then subsequently some customers complain that they were not informed of how the tariffs decisions were made. This underlines the fact that they do not read".

"So, let us educate them more during the year about the processes and drivers of determination of electricity tariffs and their role therein."

The findings on this theme demonstrate that some electricity customers at public consultations do not have access to tariffs application documents well before the public hearings are undertaken. Alternatively, electricity customers who have access to the documents do not read them. In addition, it could be that some are not aware as to how they could access the documents. The significance of the lack of access to documents is that LEWA has to improve strategies of distributing them to electricity customers. There is a connection between access and consultation in participatory endeavours. Access by the stakeholders should be in relation to the "products, means and forms of communication" (Caprino & Martínez-Cerdá 2016:45). This is so because where consultations are not genuine, ordinary people delegate their rights to be consulted to technical specialists who act as negotiators (Flemmer & Schilling-Vacaflor 2016:183). They are at a disadvantage since they have no one looking after their rights and interests (Flemmer & Schilling-Vacaflor (2016:183). The codes which were derived from the findings for this theme are illustrated Table 5.12 below.

Table 5. 12: Theme 5: Access to tariff review application document

Codes	• LEC tariff documents must be written in simple language; • LEC tariff documents must be made available to customers on time; • LEC tariff documents are not read tariff application document; and • LEWA must maintain consumer education on tariffs.

Theme 6: Traditional and new forms of media use

This theme articulates the relevance of the traditional and new forms of media in the facilitation of participatory communication during an electricity tariff review. The evaluation of existing and potential benefits of the application of different media forms is made in the context of undertaking successful participation. Burger (2017:16) suggests that the idea that people should own the media systems has been propagated by UNESCO. The citizenry should be dynamic participants in the public sphere where opinions are weighed and stronger views influence government policy. Social media and newer forms of media attract the young, and citizens as a means of online participation (Vesnic-Alujevic 2013:256). Social media must be used for building awareness, enhancing organisation reputation and increasing customer interest (Haro-de-Rosario *et al* 2017:169-172). Some of the participants’ comments on this theme are as follows:

“We must … be open to using different forums of our platforms of communication such that we do not limit our evaluation or measurement of customers’ understanding only to the questions they pose only. I think there are a number of techniques, I know that in the past we talked about Facebook and other forms of social media as being useful in this regard.”

"I do think it (social media) is one of the platforms that could be used. The other one is to convene public gathering, the other one is to use radio stations … to secure airtime especially in peak times in order to target the specific audiences".

"Your target audience will help to inform the method of communication with that particular group. If I may make an example, when we wish to talk to people in the rural areas the method will be different to the method when you talk to people in urban areas".

"I was thinking about using short message system (SMS) text messages similar to the way mobile networks do although the amount of text you can sent is limited. LEWA may also consider the use of call back messages regarding tariffs. The regulated utilities must use these platforms to communicate with customers."

"We could have different activities during that meeting such as roadshows and have banners … most people are interested in the content of LEC presentations and not its technical aspects and others".

This theme's findings underpin that LEWA may be using traditional communication media such as radio and newspapers, thus minimising the effect of new ones. The traditional media may not be totally effective in reaching out to both urban and rural audiences. Still, some participants feel that a balanced use of both traditional and new media could be beneficial. People prefer communication media that require a minimal application from them and do not consume their time (Dyll-Myklebust & Zwane 2015:75). LEWA must consider the new forms of communication, especially because LEWA has, a functional website where interactive portals could be placed. The codes which were derived from the findings of this theme are outlined in Table 5.13 below.

Table 5. 13: Theme 6: Use of traditional and new forms of media

Codes	• LEWA must explore the use of social media for tariffs communication; • Authority needs to enhance the use of electronic media and public gatherings; • Authority has to design media messages for specific target publics; • LEWA must embark on road shows to enhance the publicity of applications; and • LEWA should have call back for messages regarding tariffs.

Theme 7: Trust and listening

This theme includes issues relating to trust and listening in the context of participatory communication. As suggested in Section 2.2 in Chapter 2, trust and listening facilitate cooperation and foster partnerships among electricity customers. Trust and listening are interconnected and interdependent on each other, although the two are different concepts (Schultz & McGinn 2012:767–797). Listening entails accepting and comprehending the message from the speaker and demonstrating "supportive behaviour" to improve the interaction between speaker and listener (Burnside-Lawry 2012:104-115). Trust presupposes that electricity customers show some interests in the subject matter being deliberated upon. Trust refers to "assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something; one in which confidence is placed; dependence on something future or contingent" (Gonzalez 2017:357). According to O'Reilly *et al* (2018:167), participatory learning approaches afford stakeholders a trusting collaborative setting, a "safe space" where stakeholders respect dissimilar opinion and experiences, and to learn from each other. Some of the participants' comments on this theme are as follows:

"I think that we fail to involve the customers when the decision on tariffs is made so we can explain why we came to the decision we made … we should go back to them before we announce the decision".

"I believe that the public should constantly receive information from LEWA at all times, not only during the tariffs processes. This is because some judging from comments members of the public make, it is as if we always agree to the proposal by the utility –LEC".

"In the majority of the cases, the bases for request for tariff increase that LEC propose remain the same except that they adjust figures every year. The utilities should always report to the public on those issues as well as challenges even before request for another tariff increase".

"I suggest we should go to every district as opposed to holding regional district meetings".

"The community also needs to workshop their discussion on tariffs within themselves before they participate in them … Some customers … requested that an executive summary be done in Sesotho and presented in the same language".

This theme's findings indicate that, LEWA has endeavoured to communicate tariff review outcomes to electricity customers. However, the quality of the feedback or listening to their needs could be inadequate and must be improved. For an organisation to listen to what its stakeholders want, it must have certain attributes. The attributes include "commitment from top management, participative decision making, trust, credibility, openness, and transparency" (Burnside-Lawry 2012:111). Listening is one of the prerequisites for any meaningful participatory setting (O'Reilly *et al* 2018:159-161). According to Krueger-Henney (2016:51-53), listening leads to trust because the sustainable understanding of fundamental issues involved in dialogue is made. Some consideration must be made to create spaces for critical analysis and reflection between stakeholders in participatory undertaking in areas such as critical literacy and listening in participatory video exchanges (Royds 2015:67-77). In this regard, participatory media provides some avenue for some participatory spaces (Waller, *et al* 2015:57-60). Lastly, LEWA has to build trust among the stakeholders that it is an impartial regulator that listens to customers. The codes which were derived from the findings of this theme are illustrated in Table 5.14 below.

Table 5. 14: Theme 7: Trust and Listening

Codes	• Stakeholder feedback needed before the process is concluded; • Stakeholders must see LEWA as an impartial body; • Stakeholders in all districts must be afforded the opportunity to participate in public hearings; and • Stakeholder need to undergo a tariff appreciation workshop

Theme 8: Addressing electricity customers' communication challenges

This theme investigates how the LEWA employees perceive the effectiveness of existing LEWA public communication strategies in helping the electricity customers' understand and participate in an electricity tariff-review process. The problems associated with that communication and possible impact on participation in the electricity tariff-review process are highlighted. Ndlela

(2019:43) posits that it is important that an organisation understands the priorities of its stakeholders so it may accordingly adjust its communication with them. Some of the participants' comments on this theme are as follows:

"*We need to agree on the type of audience, will it be factory workers, ordinary customers, or who else? If we know our audience the task (of communicating) is then made simpler".*

"The information from reports that we make from inspections and audits of LEC must be used to assess activities that must or have been carried out to address the issues that have been raised by the public and the utility during tariffs review".

"Maybe we, as staff of LEWA, should also think about splitting into smaller groups and have multiple meetings with stakeholders in their areas and engage in communication with them so as to enhance the impact of communication during tariffs".

"We should also call the stakeholders as well as media when we publicise the decision since sometimes the media does not report accurately what we explained to them. This will enhance the public understanding of tariffs".

This theme's findings indicate that LEWA must clearly unpack tariffs issues and undertake an analysis of its electricity customers, as that will enhance its participatory communication endeavours with them. The organisation has not targeted specific electricity customers on tariffs nor prepared relevant messages with the aim of eventually engaging in two-way communication. As Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) argue, a mix of both one-way and two-way communication approaches are important in maximising the impact of communication on participatory endeavours. The monologic features of communication can be used in awareness-raising on tariffs, while participatory ones are ideal for motivating stakeholders to participate. Burger (2017:15) suggests that participatory communication is founded on the notion of genuine dialogue – where all parties that are participating in a developmental process are realistically and sincerely keen to deliberate on issues. Additionally, LEWA must take into consideration attainable suggestions by electricity customers in the quest to address tariff-related matters. These include compelling LEC to be efficient in its business operations. The codes which were derived from the findings of this theme are illustrated in Table 5.15 below.

Table 5. 15: Theme 8: Addressing electricity customers' communication challenges

Codes	• Electricity customers' communication requirements must be diagnosed; • LEWA inspections on LEC's services must indicate tariff-related issues that should be addressed; • Monologic and dialogic communication to be used by LEWA to communicate to stakeholders; and • Tariffs processes be well-publicised generate customer awareness and motivation.

Theme 9: Sustainability of the tariff-review process

This theme explores how the electricity tariff-review process can be undertaken in a sustainable manner, in which electricity customers find solutions to issues that are important to them (see Section 2.8.2 in Chapter 2). With reference to electricity, some of the important issues are quality of services, affordability of electricity services. Therefore, the emphasis is on strategies that should be employed to keep the electricity customers interested to participate in tariffs issues. Evaluation and monitoring of the participatory endeavour is necessary. A participatory communication process should be measured in its entirety and not at the level of results only (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:35; Brown 2014:2-3). Some of the participants' comments on this theme are as follows:

"*I think we have been trying to improve on our past experiences and practices because when we started regulation we did not have these public group discussions and presentations during electricity tariffs reviews where people can now interact freely"*.

"LEWA could hold pertinent ordinary electricity customers' sessions in the morning hours and then allow them to voluntarily stay and participate in the afternoon sessions when technical issues are presented".

"I wish to stress this point … (pauses) for example … just as in Tanzania we should have exit meetings with electricity customers representatives. Exit meetings held before the final decision

on tariffs is announced to the public. The regulator informs electricity customers of the proposed outcome and presents it for interrogation by those present".

"People seem uninterested; it is not the same as during previous times. We need to motivate people and do something to change this poor attendance at hearings. Else we will end up with fewer people coming every year".

The theme's findings illustrate that at times electricity customers are not able to attend public hearings throughout the entire electricity tariffs review process. In practice, LEWA has improved participation through the introduction of some platforms such as mixed group discussions. Open discussion platforms, however, only take place at actual public consultation venues and do not address the monitoring and evaluation of the outcome of the endeavour. The public must dominate discussions, instead of the LEWA board. Burger (2017:2-10) suggests that, in developing countries, public consultation or engagement is tied to the development agenda. She points to global initiatives such as the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that advocate for the establishment of partnerships among groups in the social, public, NGOs, third sector and business sectors (Burger (2017:2-10. Similarly, the Lesotho Energy Policy 2015-2025 (2015:3) provides that the participation of local stakeholders in the energy supply chain should be pursued through collaboration. As emerged from the group data, exit meetings are necessary. The codes which were derived from the findings from this theme are illustrated in Table 5.16 below.

Table 5. 16: Theme 9: Sustainability of the tariffs review process

Codes	• LEWA must improve on customer engagement strategies; • Public must commence and dominate hearings sessions; • Tanzanian model of tariff exit meetings must be implemented; and • Customers' attitudes towards tariff review needs to be changed over time.

The demographic information of the participants for the focus group is depicted in Table 5.17.

Table 5. 17: The demographics of the focus group participants

Gender	n=6 (100%)	Age group	Position	Average no of Public hearings attended
Female	3 (50%)	30-46	Management	5 per person
Male	3 (50%)	40-60	Management	10 years

In the next section, the results of the qualitative document analysis for LEWA documents are provided.

5.3.3 Findings of the qualitative document analysis

In this section, the findings of the thematic analysis of the qualitative document analysis are explained (see the documents listed in Table 4.1 in Chapter 4). The findings are elucidated in accordance with four predetermined themes derived from the nature of participatory communication in an electricity tariff review setting. The guidelines are as reflected in Table 2.3.2 and the practical guidelines in Section 2.8, Chapter 2. The themes were allocated practical meaning in accordance with predetermined themes and the nature of participatory communication in an electricity tariff setting (see Section 2.7.5 in Chapter 2). In addition, the analysis of the document was guided by the thematic analysis procedure followed by Braun and Braun (2006), which has been outlined in Section 4.5.1.2 in Chapter 4. The four themes as identified were: (1) collective identification of electricity tariffs drivers by electricity customers; (2) collective design of communication interventions; (3) joint empowerment actions between LEWA and electricity customers; and (4) dealing with identified tariffs issues (action-reflection-action).

Theme 1: Collaborative identification of electricity tariffs drivers by customers

Theme 1 relates to determining the extent to which electricity customers were able to know and understand the full basis of LEC's tariff applications for reviews during the tariff-review processes (see Section 3.7.1). According to the operational definition of this category, a free and open electricity customers' efforts to collaboratively identify tariffs drivers remains one of the central tenets of participatory communication theory. Collaboration takes the form of dialogue undertaken in full consideration of electricity customers' socio-cultural backgrounds, knowledge and awareness. Through dialogue, electricity customers in electricity tariff determination should able to identify exactly what the development (electricity tariff (review) issue is about and how to assess it. According to Saul and Saul (2012:16), there should be changes in values and beliefs on the part of all stakeholders, in relation to solving a development issue by constructing new knowledge and practices, working collectively, and being open to two-way communication. Dialogue at this level should help zoom into the drivers of electricity tariff review (see Chapter 2, Section 2.6.).

Findings relating to this theme demonstrate that the central idea conveyed by LEWA documents on electricity tariff review is that the public should comment on the reasonableness of the LEC application. The public is expected to make inputs although only LEWA has a final say on the outcome of the review process (see sections 3.6 and 3.7). For example, the Lesotho Tariff Filing Procedure (2012) provides that "Public hearing(s) shall be held in accordance with the law and with the Authority's procedures". In addition, LEA (Electricity Price Review and Structure) Regulations (2009:208-211) provide that "additional rules and regulations may be issued from time to time". The regulations add that "…if necessary, the Procedure will be amended for consistency with the new regulations or rules" (LEA (Electricity Price Review and Structure) Regulations (2009:208-211). Other documents carry latent meaning by which it may be surmised that the dialogue between electricity customers only takes place during the actual hearings process. The documents are presented in technical language (see LEC tariff application for 2016:12-15). Documents do not explicitly express how LEWA has facilitated for electricity customers to identify the issues around tariffs, yet it is implied in the above regulatory instrument.

The documents vaguely indicate that that LEWA took electricity customers inputs into consideration when determining tariffs. For example, the 2017 LEWA press release says the outcome of tariff review was reached "based on the facts and evidence presented to LEWA by both the LEC and the public" (LEWA press release on tariffs (2017: 2-3). In this sense, the documents indicate that at least some consideration of public inputs was made, albeit without elaboration as to how that was done.

LEWA's annual reports, Lesotho Energy Policy 2015-2015 and LEA tariff brochures state LEWA is committed to engaging in open tariff determination consultation processes (2016 LEWA Annual Report, Lesotho Energy Policy 2015-2025 and 2015 LEA Customer Tariff Brochures). The Energy Policy states that consultations have to be implemented within the framework of the "empowerment of broader stakeholders on energy issues to bring them on board for informed participation…" (2015-2025 Lesotho Energy Policy: 10-30). Over and above, LEWA's regulatory principles include "teamwork, collaboration and consultation" (LEWA Annual Report 2016/17: i-ix). Another key document, the Lesotho constitution, vaguely embraces public consultation in all public affairs. In this regard, it is argued that, as Vértesy (2016:115) and Lundberg and Hysing (2015:16) posit, public consultations must be compulsory and open for the public and a procedure set by electricity customers.

It is obvious from the findings regarding this theme that LEWA's main message to electricity customers during tariffs processes is that the organisation is mandated to protect their interests. The message emphasises that regulation is meant to benefit the electricity customers. However, all stakeholders did not identify the drivers of electricity tariff reviews in dialogic interactions. According to Liambas and Kaskaris (2012:185), dialogue establishes the critical medium to connect a person's awareness, enabling the individual to compose, articulate and adjust knowledge for "the world and the relationships/associations within the real world". Consequently, the analysed LEWA documents do reflect some limited genuine stakeholder dialogue on electricity tariffs. Table 5.18 reflects the codes, sub-categories and meaning of the codes within the context of the study.

Table 5. 18: Codes relating to collaborative identification of tariffs drivers

Sub-categories	Stakeholders are free to exchange opinions with LEWA	Meaning within the context of the study
Codes	LEA functions in the Act: “To pprotect the interests of all classes of consumers of electricity as to the terms and conditions and price of supply	LEWA regulates electricity supplies in Lesotho to ensure customer protection
	Advertorial: Stakeholders and the public are allowed to express views	LEWA seeks stakeholders’ views during tariffs
	Authority must consult before making decisions	LEWA must act in a transparent manner
	Several documents: LEWA determines own public hearing procedure	LEWA tariff procedure is not designed by all stakeholders
	Language in which applications are presented is technical	Technical language could be a communication barrier

Theme 2*:* Collective design of communication interventions

Theme 2 relates to the presentation and articulation of identified development problem(s) in Theme 1 above by key stakeholders. The activity is informed by electricity customers’ knowledge, perceptions and priorities in the formulation of a communication strategy to be used (see Chapter 2, Table 2.3). In the study, this theme is on the articulation of electricity tariffs drivers by electricity customers in the formation of relevant communication interventions to enable electricity customers to genuinely participate in the process. The communication strategy must be designed in a manner that is specific, measurable, accurate, realistic and time-bound, that is, SMART (see Table 2.3). The operational definition of this theme is based on Freirean thinking that, in dialogic communication, power relations in human relationship bring about inequality and poverty (Bolin 2017:756-760). In order to address this anomaly, ordinary people’s dormant abilities are revitalised when they are allowed to set their own development priorities. In this manner they are completely able to realise their potential (Msibi & Penzhorn 2010:226). Participants in tariff determination, including vulnerable groups such as women, child-headed households, the poor and the unemployed, should have the time and space to make their own inputs in the formulation of a participatory communication strategy. When the views of the marginalised groups are considered, communication activities that seek to attain the essential change pertaining to an electricity tariff-review process are put into operation successfully.

The findings from the analysed documents demonstrate that both LEWA and electricity customers are aware of the requirement to communicate with each other during tariff determination processes so that the process becomes successful. LEWA's current public awareness campaigns use media such as television programmes, radio notices, magazine and newspaper adverts. In addition, the district administrators' offices and the organisation's website are channels of communication. This occurs from the time of the announcement of the receipt of a tariff application until when electricity customers make inputs on the reasonableness of the tariff review application. LEWA has an obligation to receive the views of electricity customers by law. Analysed documents indicate electricity customers attended the electricity tariff review session. Despite this, there is no mention or evidence from the documents of electricity customers making input into the communication strategy used by LEWA. LEWA has an external communication strategy document which does not provide as to how participation by electricity stakeholders in communication efforts for an electricity tariff review can be enhanced. However, the LEWA 2014/15 -2018/19 Strategic Plan (2010:4) articulates an undertaking by LEWA to assess electricity customers' needs (in regulatory affairs). According to Aldridge (2015:9), participatory endeavours address issues of power at various levels of development and the stories and voices of participants are regarded as being critical, both in the design and objectives of participatory approaches. The voice of the participants should be considered as important by LEWA during this aspect of public consultations (see sections 2.4.2 and 2.8 in Chapter 2). Table 5.19 below reflects the codes pertaining to the collective design of communication interventions.

Table 5. 19: Codes pertaining to the collective design of communication interventions

Sub-categories	**Stakeholders to agree on communication interventions**	**Meaning within the context of the study**
Codes	Communication strategy's purpose: "To communicate and consult with stakeholders at all times"	LEWA to communicate in two phases: awareness-raising and motivation
	2016 and 2017 Tariff determination: "inputs from stakeholders considered"	This aligned to international best practices of soliciting stakeholder viewpoints
	2016 and 2017 press releases: Different stakeholder groups participate in tariffs review	LEWA must take the views of many stakeholders into consideration regarding communication needs
	LEWA brochures: Determine stakeholders' awareness about LEWA and stakeholders' information requirement"	Civic education on tariffs need to be done in collaboration with stakeholders

Theme 3: Joint empowerment actions between LEWA and electricity customers

Theme 3 is based on the concept of liberating pedagogy which is closely tied to that of dialogue. According to Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009:20-40), the liberating pedagogy concept endeavours to narrow the distance between the privileged and the underprivileged. This theme is on determining where activities identified by electricity customers are executed. In a praxis method of teaching, development, or research, people must see themselves as their own sources of inspiration or role models in the struggle for and attainment of a better life. Praxis refers to "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it", which enables the disadvantaged to explore different and numerous perspectives and ideas (Mudehwe-Gonhovi *et al* 2018:140-157; Cortez 2013:50-60). Endeavours that are nominally termed as being *empowerment* have at times led to repression and not liberation (Lu & Ares 2015:112; Atkinson 2010:441) (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4.1). Electricity customers should in this context reflect and act on the problems that they have already delineated collectively so as to generate shared knowledge and help to build trust among each other through empowering each other. The implementation of the agreed communication strategy should reflect such understanding.

Findings from the analysed documents demonstrate that, with regard to joint empowerment during an electricity tariff-review process, LEWA documents have two categories. The first category is of documents that manifestly and latently reflect that LEWA seeks to promote joint empowerment with ESI stakeholders. The group includes the Tariff Filing Procedure, LEA Act 2002 as amended, LEA (Electricity Prices Review and Structure) 2009, tariffs, determination documents, LEWA external communication strategy, brochures, newsletters and Energy Policy. In these documents, it is indicated that LEWA is obliged to consult electricity stakeholders before making any decision that may have an impact on them. Some documents detail the comments that stakeholders made during the hearings. The second group of documents, such as the LEC Application, Bulk Electricity Purchase, and LEC Financial Statements in the application, are of a technical nature. They are not prepared in a manner that may empower ordinary electricity customers, mainly due to the nature of their presentation.

According to Cortez (2013:50), liberating pedagogy entails components which include non-neutrality, critique, dialogue, praxis and concern for transformation". Education is perceived to be a political act which cannot be neutral because the educator must aim at empowering the learners through critical thinking and action (Malebese 2019:1-8; Cortez 2013:50). Applied to the study, LEWA must promote electricity customer education in an interactional way to culminate in the development of critical thinking in open discussion of the electricity tariff review issues. The other component of liberating pedagogy is praxis. Regarding transformation, this means that the critical educator should be preoccupied with a greater vision of constructing a fair, caring and open community (Cortez 2013:50-60).

LEWA documents indicate that the organisation has improvised techniques to enable participants at a tariff hearing to interact and present their collective views on the subject matter (see Table 5.16). Furthermore, electricity customers are allowed to seek clarification on the aspects of the application not clear to them from both LEWA and LEC. In the documents, electricity customers could express views on the affordability of tariffs and how government should provide funding for LEC operations. Electricity customers also suggested that a multi-year tariff application and introduction of a government subsidy should be considered. In summary, there are indications that LEWA electricity customers' empowerment efforts do exist, although they need to be refined. Table 5.20 below reflects the codes pertaining to the joint empowerment actions between LEWA and electricity customers.

Table 5. 20: Codes relating empowerment of electricity customers

Sub-categories	**Major tariffs issues arising from electricity customers**	**Meaning within the context of the study**
Codes	2016 and 2017 tariffs determination, brochures and press releases: Introduce pro-poor mechanisms	Vulnerable groups cannot afford increases in tariffs
	2016 and 2017 tariffs determination , brochures and press releases: Finding alternative funding framework for LEC	Government must fund LEC operations
	2016 and 2017 tariffs determination, brochures and press releases:: Introduce subsidy policy on electricity	Relevant policy must be formulated by government
	2016 and 2017 tariffs determination , brochures and press releases: Multi-year tariff structure be in place	This to enable prediction of future tariffs by electricity customers

Theme 4: Dealing with identified tariffs issues (action-reflection-action)

Theme 4 relates to the action that must follow the implementation of the outcomes of collaborative identification of tariffs drivers, design of communication interventions and communication (empowerment) activities between LEWA and electricity customers. The concept, also known as action-reflection-action, is closely tied to the other three discussed above.

Despite the prominence that it puts on dialogue and reflection, participatory communication is also intensely slanted towards the taking of action. In this line of thinking, people should not only think critically about their problems but also that they should incorporate action. Incorporating action refers to the people's attempt to deal with the issue that has been identified, aligning the communication to real life issues (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009). Within an electricity tariff-review process, once the electricity customers have discussed the problems related to tariffs, those issues should be addressed through solid action. Ghiggi, Kavaya and da Rosa-Oliveira (2012:214) maintain that "people should not waste time in dealing with their development problems". Applied to the study context, this means people should push to have a greater influence on the outcome of electricity tariff reviews, instead of waiting for them to be resolved at a later date.

From the analysed documents, a few reflect LEWA has a vision to address the issues that electricity customers and LEWA identified during tariffs determination. As already noted, this commitment is manifestly seen in corporate statements of LEWA. The statements embrace a vision of LEWA being and these have been outlined under section 3.6, Chapter 3.

The documents that focus on developments in the post-tariff period indicate that the authority has followed on some of the issues raised with LEC. The issues were raised by electricity customers during the public hearings or consultations. The electricity customers have recommended the review of bulk electricity import contracts with ESKOM and EDM (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.2). In general ESKOM's bulk supply tariffs are lower than EDM's (see 2017 LEC tariff determination). Customers further proposed that LEC must reduce its operational costs. Electricity customers further suggested that electricity infrastructure must be insured against losses. They recommended that energy efficiency practices be introduced in the country (see 2017 LEC tariff determination). Analysed documents, such as brochures and newsletters, carry latent messages that indicate that LEWA seeks to direct LEC to address issues raised during electricity tariffs. However, the 2016 and 2017 tariff determinations manifestly outline them. Issues relating to how stakeholders can conserve energy and reduce high bills and by implication high imports from utilities such as Eskom are covered in educational brochures (LEWA general brochure 2012:1-5). Bulk electricity purchase costs are passed on to stakeholders by the utility (LEC 2016 Tariff Application Write up: 1-9).

Another important development has been the establishment of LEWA district based committees which act as watchdogs on issues relating the quality of both supply and services rendered by LEC (LEWA newsletter July- September 2017).

Applied to electricity tariff reviews, this means that electricity customers should be concerned about tariffs drivers, so they may be totally conscious and dedicated to participating in addressing them. It is not sufficient to state these principles only on documents. Table 5.21 below reflects the different codes pertaining to dealing with identified tariffs issues (action-reflection).

Table 5. 21: Codes on ealing with issues emanating from electricity customers (action-reflection)

Sub-categories	Record of issues proposed by customers during tariff hearings	Meaning within the context of the study
Codes	2016 and 2017 tariffs determination, brochures and press releases: Review of current bulk electricity import contract required.	Eskom and Southern African Power Pool (SAPP) bulk tariffs could benefit customers more than those of EDM.
	2016 and 2017 tariffs determination, brochures and press releases: Reduction in LEC's operational costs necessary	Increased productivity and sustainability of the company could result in lower tariffs and sustainability of the Company.
	2016 and 2017 tariffs determination, brochures and press releases: LEC must provide reliable data	The public need to make informed inputs based on accurate data in reflected application documents.
	2016 and 2017 tariffs determination, brochures and press releases: Electricity infrastructure be insured against losses	Insuring infrastructure enables LEC to claim for losses instead of burdening customers with annual tariffs increases.
	2016 and 2017 tariffs determination, brochures and press releases: Energy efficiency practices be implemented.	Electricity customers may save on electricity bills. Communicating efficiency key to awareness on saving electricity and small tariffs increases in medium to long terms

In the last section of this chapter, the overall findings of the study are now discussed.

5.4 OVERALL DISCUSSION OF LEWA'S COMMUNICATION DURING AN ELECTRICITY TARIFF-REVIEW PROCESS AND ELECTRICITY CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROCESS IN LINE WITH THE PROPOSED PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION

In this section of the study, LEWA's communication during electricity tariff reviews and electricity customers' perceptions of the process are discussed in line with the practical guidelines of participatory communication explained in Chapter 2 and applied to the context of the study. This is done by means of triangulating both qualitative and quantitative data obtained in the study, as well as describing how LEWA communicates during an electricity tariff-review process.

The results collectively demonstrate that, despite some indication that LEWA seeks to raise electricity customers' awareness on the holding of electricity tariff reviews, planning for communication is not yet participatory. As noted in 5.3 above, private media afforded electricity customers little opportunity to discuss tariff issues, resulting in their inadequate awareness of LEC's application and the tariff drivers. This finding is supported in the focus group theme that indicates that, though sensitisation to electricity tariffs was being undertaken at LEWA communication events, no prior research is done to determine electricity customers' communication requirement for tariff review participation. Additionally, LEWA documents suggest the organisation's main message is arguably parochial, focusing only on the protection of the interests of electricity customers on tariffs level. This means that LEWA must regard the electricity customers as important stakeholders in the process. The joint identification of the issues behind electricity tariff reviews must be done collectively. As Otto and Fourie (2016:212) maintain, the communicative action theory dialogical communication is instrumental in the conceptualisation of a participatory approach to development.

Regarding the importance of the joint formulation or design of a communication strategy in electricity tariff review, the findings illustrate that a participatory communication perspective must be inculcated at LEWA. Wanyoike (2011:25-26) suggests that an effective communication strategy should be aligned with the context of its recipients, be intensive so to "violate people's expectations". The strategy must be clear, unambiguous and not abstract. As the survey indicated, most respondents agreed that an effective communication strategy must be developed and implemented. In addition, the focus group discussion underlines a requirement to have a communication strategy that enhances electricity customers' participation in an electricity tariff review setting by revising the existing strategy document. LEWA's communication strategy does not address participatory communication relating to electricity tariff-review processes, as it is mostly diffusionist not participatory in orientation.

The study also highlights the need for LEWA to use of new forms of media to promote awareness and insightful deliberations during the electricity tariff reviews. Most survey respondents may have read LEWA notices on tariff-determination processes in the print and electronic media and understood them. According to the focus group discussion findings, LEWA embraces traditional communication media such as radio, newspaper and public notices, all of which may not be effective in reaching out to different electricity customers. The tariffs documents should, in addition, be made available to electricity customers using social media platforms, which can be effective and this is not supported in the findings. LEWA should consider employing a mix of both traditional and new forms of media to complement each other. As Gerhmanne (2018:65-67) suggests the latter can revive critical areas, such as people's culture in development.

The findings relating to steps for inviting electricity customers to consultations are contradictory. The survey established that respondents felt that LEC should inform them about the reasons for the proposed electricity price review application even before submitting it to LEWA. It was further agreed by respondents that "lipitso" could supplement raising awareness about consultations. However, by contrast, focus group data illustrates that LEWA needs to upscale other methods of soliciting electricity customers' participation, as they do not have full confidence in the process. The gender composition of the participants reflected that women's attendance has increased. The development is consistent with 2015-2025 Lesotho Energy Policy's aim to increase women's participation in energy issues. The implication here is that there is a need to further explore the most appropriate means to entice ordinary electricity customers to the electricity tariff review for more participation apart from normal ones.

The other finding was in relation to the issue of access to LEC's document prior to the consultation taking place. The survey respondents indicated that LEC's presentations were not comprehensible. This is corroborated by the focus group findings that some of the electricity customers at public hearings do not have access to tariffs application documents. The LEWA documents indicate that some electricity customers have only complained about LEC's poor service delivery and thus had no focus on the tariffs driver. Lack of access to LEC application documents or ignorance could have been the underlying reasons for the electricity customers' responses. Regarding how the respondents regarded the technical contents of LEC's application, a clear majority (46.03%) were neutral. A conclusion drawn here would be that the electricity customers may have not read the documents even if they had access to them. That underscores the need to present the documents in user-friendly terms and distribute them widely. Den Boer (2016:126-130) argues that access must be framed within the context of human rights and security, citing examples within the European Union. In this study, the issue of access is regarded as a fundamental human right to electricity customers which must be addressed at the structural level.

The results on the framework for holding the public consultations were also examined. The survey results indicate that public consultations/hearings must be held in all districts. Indeed, focus group data confirm that electricity tariff reviews are held because the law so requires. The manner or procedure by which such consultations have to take place is, however, not stipulated. LEWA alone may determine the extent to which it engages in a participatory process with electricity customers. Focus group findings are consistent with findings from the survey, that public hearings should be held in more places and in a manner that promotes genuine participation. LEWA documents corroborate the above findings as they provide that LEWA alone currently determines the hearings procedure. The procedure for public hearings must be decided upon by the electricity customers and documented. In addition, the law must make it mandatory for electricity customers in electricity sector to be consulted. In their study on legal and pertinent aspects of public consultations in Poland, Bakowska-Waldmann *et al* (2018:164) assert that modern information technology tools have been used to enable lay people to participate in public consultation. It is contended that the use of some ICT applications to facilitate more participation in an LEWA setting must be explored. As noted in section Chapter 2, Section 2.7.5, Sîrbu *et al* (2015:1) hold the view that the use of ICT can influence the extent of success of participatory endeavours in many areas of contemporary life, including communication.

With respect to review of the electricity legislative framework to allow people more time to formulate and present their opinions on the electricity tariff review, the results are consistent. The survey respondents concurred that the electricity tariff review events should preferably not be held annually. In concurrence focus group data pointed out that, among other things, workshops should be held for electricity customers' education or discussion on tariffs. LEWA documents demonstrate that both LEWA and electricity customers are aware of the requirement to communicate with each other during the tariff determination processes. LEWA has an express obligation to receive the views of electricity customers, by law, and not vice-versa. In the light of the above findings, it is maintained that various pieces of electricity legislation need to be developed. The legislation must aim, among others, to allow ordinary people more time to have inputs into regulatory processes in Lesotho. The electricity market is developing and cannot be deregulated to function on its own (see Chapter 2, Section 2.8.1.1). Adamski (2014:52) points out that, in the European Union, legislation seeks to ensure there is "deliberativeness, legitimacy building and accountability" in public consultations (see Chapter 2, Section 2.8.1.1).

In terms of electricity customers' communication during the hearings, the survey demonstrates that respondents have exchanged opinions with other customers on electricity tariff reviews. The respondents shared the tariffs document and background information with others during the sessions. In congruence with this, the focus group theme findings demonstrate that LEWA's public participation proceedings may have improved over time. However, there is still a need to upscale dialogic communication efforts to address unequal power relations and information asymmetry between LEWA, LEC and electricity customers. Findings from the analysed documents indicate that documents such as LEWA external communication strategy, brochures, newsletter and Energy Policy seek to promote informed discussions between electricity customers as they are educative in nature. The second group of documents, such as the LEC application (including financial statements), bulk supply costs documents and regulatory accounting guidelines, are of a technical nature. The latter group of documents should be adequately revised to make them comprehensible by various techniques, such as workshopping them with customers or regular education endeavours. The latter group of documents have the information that is so central to the entire discussion on electricity tariff reviews. In concurrence with the above, Castelnovo (2013:92-94) and Willems *et al* (2016:461) maintain that the electricity customers in the public sector expect public organisations to operate with transparency, accountability, fairness, democratic participation, and empowerment of individuals and the community.

On the participatory evaluation of the impact of tariff-review processes after new tariffs have been set, the results are varied. The survey data indicated that LEWA did not consider electricity customers' inputs during hearings, when determining tariffs and in the post tariff determination period. In corroboration of this, focus' group findings are that, despite some effort being done by LEWA to communicate tariffs to electricity customers at the end of every review process, there is still a need for improved feedback and deliberation mechanisms. However, in contrast, the thematic analysis of documents latently indicates that LEWA has followed up on some of the issues raised by electricity customers on the improvement of LEC's operational efficiency. Electricity customers suggested that there should be a review of bulk electricity import contracts and a reduction in LEC's operational costs. They added that electricity infrastructure must be insured against losses, and energy efficiency practices should be introduced to stop the escalation of electricity tariffs (LEWA 2016 Tariff Determination 2017:01-30; LEWA general brochure 2012:01-05). In this sense, the LEWA documents do give an account of the issues which electricity customers regard to be critical to be incorporated into LEWA's final tariff-review decision. The mixed findings illustrate that LEWA must hold regular feedback sessions with electricity customers after the tariff decision has been made, to promote accountability. As LEWA has not complied fully with this requirement, a starting point would be to hold exit meetings with electricity customers representatives. The exercise could improve electricity customers' trust in the public consultation process.

According to the survey findings, electricity customers did not discuss the impact of approved tariffs on their lives with LEWA. In support of this, focus group data indicate that the organisation has not targeted specific groups of electricity customers on tariffs nor prepared targeted messages, with the aim of eventually engaging in two-way communication with them. The LEWA documents do not give an account of the channels that LEWA used to discuss the impact of the tariffs with electricity customers. The findings indicate that LEWA needs to be more transparent in assessing the impact of its decision (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4.1). As pointed out in Chapter 1, Section 1.4.2, McKee *et al* (2008:262) and Mefalopulos (2008:42) maintain that, where communication is geared towards empowering people, even the marginalised and disenfranchised acquire some confidence and development project objectives are realised in a sustainable way.

Lastly, electricity customers suggested that LEWA should consider the overall impact of the previous tariffs when deciding on new ones. They disagreed that LEWA has endeavoured to empower them regarding electricity review matters through other initiatives education. The focus group data similarly suggest that electricity customers were not able to participate in all the stages of electricity tariff determination from the beginning to the end. The LEWA corporate statements are outlined in Section 3.6, Chapter 3. The organisation has improved participation through the introduction of some platforms, such as group discussions. Another important development has been the establishment of adhoc district-based committees. The committees are key in discussing issues relating to the quality of both supply and services rendered by LEC. As Freeman *et al* (2010:291) suggest, when an organisation acts in a responsible and ethical, both stakeholders and organisations "share a common humanity … [and] build more effective methods of value creation". The inconsistent findings here also reflect that LEWA should pay attention to this aspect and improve on it. As reflected in Chapter 2, Section 2.7.3, monitoring and evaluation is necessary throughout the entire process of participatory communication (Mulu & Pineteh 2016:8; Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:35). Table 5.22 below summarises LEWA's compliance with the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication within the context of an electricity tariff-review process.

Table 5. 22: LEWA's compliance with the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication within the context of an electricity tariff-review process

Participatory communication Criterion	Theoretical basis	Role in electricity tariffs setting	Current status and recommendations based on new knowledge acquired
Involvement of electricity customers in identification of development	Facilitates broad discussion of issues including the "cause and effect" of development problems, the best options and the media environment which are agreed upon	Vulnerable groups such as women, child-headed households, the poor and the unemployed should have time and space to identify issues such as access and affordability of electricity and to participate in the search for sustainable solutions to them	Done to a very minimal level. Recommendations: - LEWA must ensure stakeholders are able to address the problem collectively. - New media forms and ICT applications must be used. -A more effective approach to invite customers is required. -Reviews should not be annual but multiyear and must cover the whole country. -Structural issues relating to access to documents should be addressed - Legislative framework must be reviewed -Documents must be accessed widely, freely and on time.

Participatory communication Criterion	Theoretical basis	Role in electricity tariffs setting	Current status and recommendations based on new knowledge acquired
Design of the participatory communication	The strategy presents and articulates the identified problem(s) to key customers in line with audience's knowledge, perceptions and priorities consider when monologic (one-way) or dialogic (two-way) communication modes can be used	Multi-modal communication approach, which refers to the use of a diversity of communication networks/tools for broadening the scope of prospects of the public to participate, in tariffs	-Done to a very minimal level. Recommendations: -The existing communication strategy not designed to be participatory. Remedies: -Involve all in the design of strategy. -Identify the sequence of communication interventions for inclusivity.
Implementation of collective communication	The communication plan that details certain aspects, namely, the audience or customers to be addressed, essential activities, financial and human resources required, responsible person or institution, timeframes for completion, and indicators to be used at this level	Local platforms such as community radio stations and new forms of the media or spaces must be made available to enable them to empower them on how to use electricity efficiently or demand appropriate time-of-use tariffs.	Done to a very minimal level. Recommendations: -Public must be given plenty of time during hearings to articulate opinions. -Specific tasks allocated to communicators at different stages of implementation of tariffs determination process. This

Participatory communication Criterion	Theoretical basis	Role in electricity tariffs setting	Current status and recommendations based on new knowledge acquired
Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of communication activities	Evaluation involves a close review of the progress of the communication interventions and assessing their results	Concerns of customers regarding the rationale for electricity tariffs should be addressed. For example, whenever a new need arises for adjustment in electricity tariffs these should appear genuine to most customers	Done to very minimal level. Recommendations: —Exit meetings required before tariffs are announced -Continuing education needed. -Regular communication necessary between customers mandatory -LEWA must improvise further on communication groups and entrench group discussions during tariffs.

5.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the findings of this study were elucidated by discussing the survey and the qualitative document analysis and focus group discussion. The survey responses were analysed using descriptive statistics, while for the focus group and qualitative document a thematic analysis was done. These findings were then triangulated to support an overall discussion of the results. The overall findings were discussed and explained in accordance with proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication within the context of an electricity tariff setting at LEWA. In the next chapter, the study's conclusions, recommendations and limitations are stated.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This last chapter is focused on whether and how the study's research problem and research questions were answered. Conclusions arising out of this study are outlined while the significance of the findings of the study is explained. Finally, the study's limitations and recommendations for future studies are delineated.

6.2 ADDRESSING THE STUDY'S RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As illustrated in Chapter 2, the proponents of participatory communication have argued that top-down communication approaches in development are less effective than participatory ones. Consequently, in development communication debates, there is an inclination towards a more participatory approach and its inclusion in development efforts. Notwithstanding this, a regulatory process of electricity tariffs setting at LEWA has over the years faced a problem of low electricity customers' participation, as evidenced by poor attendance, few submissions and reduced vigor of interaction during meetings. This clearly indicates that some electricity customers are left outside the process. It was therefore imperative to investigate the extent to which LEWA communication during the tariff-determination process has been participatory from electricity customer perspective in a cross-sectional study. Consequently, the study addressed four research questions as outlined below.

Research question 1: What are the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication within the context of public consultations to promote public involvement during an electricity tariff-review process?

There are a few main insights from the study when it comes to this research question. The involvement of electricity customers in the identification of issues (drivers) around electricity tariff reviews is a key requirement. The role of the new forms of media and ICT applications is very important, and they should be used at all stages of awareness-raising. Electricity customers would then participate and interact with both LEWA and LEC in determining and discussing the impact of tariffs. The current methods for inviting electricity customers to participate in the hearings have not yet been effective and it is imperative that new ones be explored. The existing procedure of public hearings as platforms for information exchange may be inadequate in view of the constraint it places on free dialogue, as it involves mostly board committee and LEC discussing technical issues in a supposedly public space. The hearings should not be held annually but at least once every three years to give electricity customers assurance of stability of determined electricity tariffs. In this way, LEC will plan accordingly, so it does not feel compelled to have to apply for a tariff review every year. Structural impediments, such as time and administrative barriers to accessing LEC application documents, should be addressed at the two levels. The first is preparation of user-friendly presentation by LEC. The second is the timeliness of the delivery of the documents to electricity customers. LEWA should consider extending the deadline for receiving written public inputs to cover the entire public hearing period. As illustrated in Annexure A, a typical public notice specifies the deadline for receiving inputs. The constraints brought about by the legislative framework for public consultations should be addressed by amending the law to create longer time for public consultation. That will arguably facilitate effective electricity customers' participation in tariffs review.

Regarding the steps of designing the communication strategy, it was found that, whenever electricity customers are not involved in the design of communication interventions (in the sense of utilising both monologic and dialogic modes of communication), the impact of communication is minimal. Of greater importance would be to design communication interventions which enable the marginalised electricity customers to express their opinions. Such a development would mean that current LEWA communication approaches must allow for the identification and prioritisation of electricity customers' needs.

The monitoring and evaluation of the impact of communication activities must entail holding exit meetings with electricity customers groups before end-user tariffs are announced. In the short term, LEWA should outline the basis for its tariff decisions and present them during exit meetings. Long-term measures would encompass electricity customers' empowerment efforts through continuous education on tariffs being initiated and maintained. Regular communication between electricity customers on assessing the impact of tariffs should be mandatory. LEWA must empower electricity customers committees in the districts to promote regular robust discussions and even during tariff-reviews. The electricity customers ought to understand that by participating in the process they are taking responsibility for their own development.

To get to this understanding, the research question was dealt with theoretically by means of a literature review and was also measured with a survey, focus group and thematic analysis. A literature review of the development communication evolution, with particular emphasis on participatory communication, was undertaken to understand the perspectives that other scholars and practitioners in the field follow. Thereafter, the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication within the context of public consultations to promote public involvement during an electricity tariff-review process were developed. The goal was to assess (measure) the LEWA communication practices during an electricity tariff review**.** The guidelines, together with the reviewed literature, were instrumental in the development of three measuring instruments. The three were an online self-administered questionnaire, a moderator's guide for the focus group discussion and thematic analysis of LEWA documents (see chapters 2, 4, 5, 6 and Annexure A).

Research question 2: In what ways did LEWA deal with development communication from a participatory communication perspective?

The analysis of the communication between LEWA and electricity customers for an electricity tariff review illustrates that the practice obtaining during electricity reviews is largely not consistent with the underpinnings of development communication. The involvement of stakeholders in tariff-review process only occurs during public hearings. As explained in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.2, this form of participation can be described as "participation by consultation" (Mefalopulos 2009:11). Thus, the principle of dialogue in a participatory communication setting is only partially met when electricity customers communicate during the formal sessions of the public hearings. Throughout the year, the LEWA should be doing more to educate the public on the rationale for electricity tariff review public consultations. Post tariff determination reports should be availed for public access. Consequently, time can be created for awareness-raising and motivation for the electricity customers to participate in tariff reviews. This could also help in trust-building in that LEC would be seen to be prepared to be cost-effective in its operations and not propose new tariffs annually. The inadequacies or inconsistencies identified make LEWA communication during the tariff-review process from 2016 to 2017 largely inclined towards the modernist communication paradigm approach.

To get to this understanding, this research question was explored theoretically and measured. Other scholars' contributions on the topic were reviewed to relate to the latest thinking on electricity tariff setting in regional and international settings. Through the literature review, the researcher was able to develop measuring instruments to assess perceptions of how LEWA dealt with participatory communication during the electricity tariff-review process from 2016 to 2017, within the context of the proposed guidelines. The administration of the measuring instruments was pursued and the ensuing data analysed and interpreted (see Chapter 2, 4, 5, 6 and Annexures A, B and C).

Research question 3: In what way should LEWA's participatory communication have complied with the proposed practical guidelines to facilitate public involvement during an electricity tariff-review process?

The application of the proposed practical guidelines for participatory communication within the context of public consultation to promote public involvement in an electricity tariff-review process underscores a few points. In order for the process of electricity tariff review to be successful, LEWA must take into consideration electricity customers' consumption or categories. The assessment should enable LEWA to obtain an insight into electricity customers' communication needs. The current categorisation of customers into broad groups, as indicated in Annexure B, has become obsolete and must be replaced by a consumption-based categorisation electricity customers may be charged for their consumption. Techniques that are applicable to communication research, such as surveys and focus groups, may be used to get this required information. A *transect*, which is a detailed study of different stakeholders to acquire a deeper understanding of a given group's physical reality, is necessary (Tufte and Mefalopolus (2009:25). A Venn diagram technique, which would depict the various interactions or relationships between stakeholders in the electricity sector, could be instrumental for evaluating relationships. The same technique may be further used when stakeholders identify the drivers for annual tariff reviews (problem tree) (see

Tufte & Mefalopolus 2009:25). As already noted, electricity customers would then design a participatory communication strategy wherein individual or group tasks are allocated to ensure successful implementation. The activities that are set out in the strategy would be implemented using both monologic and dialogic modes of communication. When the participatory communication techniques have been implemented, the electricity customers should jointly assess the impact of the endeavour in terms of enhancing participation during an electricity tariff-review process. Finally there must be enough time for approved tariffs to be published before being implemented so people may be aware of them and adjust.

To get to this understanding, the researcher addressed this research question theoretically in the literature and in the measurement. A literature review concerning the topic was undertaken so as to provide the researcher with a theoretical background on practical guidelines to facilitate public involvement in an electricity tariff review. The arguments presented by Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009), Servaes (2008), Waisbord (2015), Thomas (2008), Baŭ, (2014) and Freeman (2010) were helpful in this regard. This knowledge was used to develop the measuring instruments as indicated in Chapter 4, section 4.4. The measuring instruments assessed the extent to which public involvement in an electricity tariff review at LEWA should have complied with participatory communication. The measuring instruments were then used to gather the data which were later analysed and interpreted (see chapters 2, 4, 5, 6 and Annexure A). The research problem has been solved, since new insights were obtained from the study that contribute to a better and deeper understanding of how public involvement in electricity tariff review at LEWA can be enhanced.

Research question 4: How can the proposed practical guidelines be adapted as a heuristic for participatory communication during an electricity tariff-review process?

This research question was dealt with by considering the overall findings of the study. In Section 6.3, revised proposed practical guidelines obtained from the study's findings are explained. Furthermore, in Table 6.1, the proposed steps for participatory communication in an electricity tariff-review process are explicated.

LEWA must collaborate with other bodies and structures to ensure that its communication strategy is successful by, for example, establishing and strengthening partnerships with professional bodies, civic organisations, media associations, and customer associations. These will proactively work with LEWA to help it achieve its goals.

The investigation of the underlying aspects of the research problem has also helped to produce new information to the development communication field. Participatory communication practical guidelines were applied in the context of facilitating public involvement in electricity tariff review in one regulatory organisation and the electricity sector in Lesotho. Research in this area has been lacking. Through the attained information, recommendations to address the research problem were formulated. The study findings may also serve to guide other organisations in the region on how to institutionalise participatory public consultations for electricity tariff consultations through dialogic communication. As argued in the findings, interest in electricity tariff reviews at LEWA has decreased due to the negative perceptions that electricity customers may be having about the process. Electricity customers regard the legal regulatory framework for tariff setting as not enabling their full participation and biased towards LEC. LEWA embraces modernist communication approaches at various stages of the public consultation, instead of participatory ones during most stages of the process. Addressing the three aspects could be a heuristic for electricity tariff review processes.

6.3 PROPOSING STEPS FOR PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION DURING A TARIFF-REVIEW PROCESS BASED ON THE STUDY'S FINDINGS

In Section 2.8.2 in Chapter 2, the practical guidelines for participatory communication during an electricity tariff review were proposed. The process of electricity tariff review is largely an endeavour that is originated by one of the stakeholders in the electricity sector in Lesotho, which is LEC (see Chapter 3, Section 3.7). Once completed, the process has an impact on every electricity stakeholder (especially electricity customers) in Lesotho. Hence a participatory communication approach in electricity tariff review has to be followed. Following some study findings, new insights were obtained. Participatory communication practical guidelines that could be a heuristic for electricity tariff review processes are made in cognisance of the four concepts of dialogue, participation, empowerment, and cultural identity, which resonate throughout the participatory communication literature and to some extent the study findings (see Chapter 2).

As a starting point in the electricity tariff setting, it would be paramount to come up with a communication programme suited to make the electricity tariff-review process participatory. The process of planning developments in the Lesotho ESI tends to be elitist and not participatory. Government agencies, regulators and financiers tend to dominate it. As Mqadi *et al* (2018:69) suggest, stakeholders must participate in the modification of current strategic electricity sector planning approaches and design an integrated resource plan (IRP), to fit a new power utility business environment. Although this observation is made in the South African context, it is deemed proper for Lesotho ESI to have an IRP. An IRP concurrently takes into consideration "equity, environmental protection, reliability, and other country-specific goals" in the formulation of cohesive power plan system (Mqadi *et al* 2018:64). LEC has to apply for a review in electricity tariffs within the context of an IRP, where stakeholders collectively assess all issues related to it assessing its performance during established benchmarks. IRP implementation involves planning to meet customers' needs for electricity and peak demand in a way that satisfies multiple and often competing objectives (Decotis 2017:25). Competing objectives could be the need to achieve the affordability of electricity tariffs for consumers on the one hand. On the other hand cost-reflective tariffs are necessary for LEC's organisational sustainability. As observed the electricity tariff reviews drivers are not understood by most ordinary customers in Lesotho. As a result, knowledge sharing between stakeholders is very important. Through Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal (PRCA) techniques, which put the emphasis on appropriate communication systems and ways to develop information-sharing mechanisms among all stakeholders in a development effort, the problem can be addressed (Naidoo 2010:76). The PRCA techniques include community mapping, transect, semi-structured interviews, Venn diagrams, and the identification of priority areas for development and problem-solution analysis (Mefalopulos 2009:25; Naidoo 2010:70-76). The PRCA techniques should be introduced during the participatory communication programme to guarantee relevance and ownership by all stakeholders. According to Kakeneno and Brugha (2016:398), information shared among stakeholders must be "accessible, differentiable, abstractable and understandable". In the same way, the information on tariffs must enable electricity customers to structure or fix the problem at the root of the need for annual electricity tariff reviews. Problem-solving and decision-making are often regarded as having the same meaning, or the latter is presumed to include the former; yet the two complement each other (Bhardwaj, Crocker, Richard & Wang 2018:292).

Participatory communication endeavours are negatively affected by wrong or poor allocation of resources or the lack of the same. Once the electricity customers have assessed the nature and rationale for an electricity tariff review, they should identify ways of communicating the solution to the problem.

A participatory communication programme must be implemented following a participatory communication strategy design. The strategy should be implemented using a mix of professional, as well and creative, insights. An action plan must be available wherein representatives of electricity customers must execute some tasks. Therefore, the communication activities must be aligned with the customer needs identified during the first stage of a communication needs assessment (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009:20-40). In the context of electricity tariff reviews, the communication strategy must consider the needs of electricity customers so that relevant communication interventions are targeted at specific groups, to enhance their understanding of issues and subsequent participation

As noted consistently in the study, a participatory communication endeavour must be monitored and evaluated throughout the entire communication programme. Monitoring of progress made in terms of the intended outcomes and evaluating the final results of the intervention is undertaken. The role of culture is critical. As Baú (2018:37) and Servaes (2016) assert, in a participatory setting traditional values must be safeguarded and observed. For the electricity tariff review, the traditional methods of communication should be included in the mix of those employed to monitor the effectiveness of the communication process of enhancing electricity customers' participation in a tariff review. The evaluation of the endeavour should be undertaken in a way that is "verifiable, measurable, refinable and usable" (Kakeneno & Brugha 2016:398). Table 6.1 below summarises the proposed steps of a participatory programme within the context of an electricity tariff-review process, based on the study's findings.

Table 6. 1: Proposed steps of a participatory communication programme during an electricity tariff review process based on the study's findings

Phase	Description	Proposed actions within an electricity tariff review setting
1	Identifying stakeholder communication needs through Participatory Communication Assessment (PCA)	- Electricity customers' participation/broad consensus must first inform electricity sector's IRP development. -Identify the various stakeholder groups to electricity tariffs -Genuine participation by electricity customers important -Throughout the entire process, genuine two-way communication necessary -Full basis for LEC tariff review applications be known from the onset -Socio-cultural setting of the customers must be considered. -Possibility of enhanced participation enabled by socio-cultural factors. -LEWA must ensure that the public is adequately notified. -Communication research techniques to explore all issues or problems undertaken in relation to tariff review. -Customers must respect other's opinions so an inclusive compromise may be reached. -Priorities of the customers on tariffs must be reconciled to get the preceding one. -Reliability and validity of the exercise depend on various stakeholders' perceptions being accommodated. -Data triangulation undertaken regarding the issue in ensuring electricity tariffs are truly reflective of customers' inputs.

Phase	Description	Proposed actions within an electricity tariff review setting
2	Collective design of participatory communication strategy	-The participatory communication strategy collectively designed by customers, highlighting communication requirements -Strategy charts out the most suitable operation communication activities relating to electricity tariff-review process. -The strategy should have a dialogic bias and the priorities be Specific, Measurable, Accurate, Realistic and Time bound (SMART). -Time constraints, resources, interest and skills of individuals and groups matched to customer inclusion in the tariff reviews. -The goal is to increase trust, cooperation and foster partnerships.
3	Collective implementation of identified communication activities	-Activities identified above are implemented. -A communication implementation action plan relating to the electricity review process must be prepared. -Professional insight and creativity must lead the communication activities and be aligned with the needs of the electricity customers -Emphasis should be on stakeholder cooperation and usage of new forms of media spaces in addition to traditional ones. -New forms of media should be used to facilitate the empowerment of the youth.

Phase	Description	Proposed actions within an electricity tariff review setting
4	Monitoring and evaluation	-Collective monitoring and evaluation carried out through the four stages of a communication program of electricity tariff review -Exit meetings on tariffs be held with stakeholders' representatives. - Electricity customers views inform the evaluation and monitoring of the impact -Impact of communication on stakeholders evidenced -Indicators of impact include quality of local debates, degree of information equity, collective self-efficacy, sense of ownership

Conclusions are delineated in the next section, in line with the study's findings.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study demonstrate that, despite LEWA embarking on communication aimed at inviting electricity customers to participate in electricity tariff-review processes, their participation has not been optimal. Electricity is an important driver of economic growth and development today. As a result, it is important that electricity customers participate in endeavours geared at expanding its access and affordability. Enhancing access to electricity can contribute to the elimination of "poverty and inequalities in health outcomes and education attainment" (Andrade-Pachecol *et al* 2019:1). As noted in Chapter 3, the SAPP market is growing and SADC member countries (of which Lesotho is one) must take advantage of the electricity tariffs to ensure that the disadvantaged are not left out. Participatory communication is helpful in realising such initiatives and has broad-based support. In this study surveyed electricity customers, the focus group and LEWA communication artefacts were the research subjects. The surveyed respondents have had a direct experience of the actual electricity tariff review hearings because they participated in them. In addition, documents from LEWA also demonstrate that customer education must empower electricity customers on electricity tariffs drivers. It has been established that LEWA does not assess the outcome of electricity tariff reviews in open platforms with the electricity customers. If that occurred, LEWA would assess the participants' satisfaction and feedback through quantitative indicators (such as records of expenses on electricity bills and their consumption). Qualitative assessment indicators (such as electricity customers' awareness regarding of use of energy in an efficient manner and change in knowledge on electricity matters) could be used. The evaluation techniques have to be agreed upon by electricity customers and be undertaken at individual, group and methodological levels (see Section 2.7.4 in Chapter 2). In brief, LEWA's minimal compliance with proposed guidelines for participatory communication can be ascribed to a lack of the following:

- Clear communication of LEC application tariff drivers in a language that participants understand before and during the electricity public consultation;
- Sustained education aimed at increasing conscientisation and reflection, to motivate electricity customers to fully embrace participation in electricity tariff reviews;
- Consultation and involvement of electricity customers in the search for effective communication interventions during an electricity tariff-review process;
- Timely delivery of LEC's application to electricity customers countrywide so they can make informed inputs and so promote their right to participate in development issue; and
- Written public consultation procedures on the planning and execution of the stakeholder engagement events. The availability of clear public consultation guidelines would ensure electricity customers knew their roles during meetings and contributed to building positive relationships.

Specifically, participants have maintained that the information which LEC presented in its tariff application was not reliable and was contradictory (2016 & 2071 tariff determinations). In the light of the foregoing, LEWA must improve electricity customers' knowledge during electricity tariff-review processes by exerting pressure on LEC to provide reliable data. The electricity customers' engagement events must involve incessant negotiation over issues, listening to each other, and fostering genuine dialogue among participants to ensure customers' interests are met. It is important for LEC to improve its service delivery performance so as to be efficient and avoid electricity losses. To address issues raised above, some recommendations have been outlined in the next section.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's finding some recommendations are made below.

- According to the study, respondents regard the LEWA communication as lacking a participatory slant. The organisation's management should therefore train and equip employees with essential skills, so they may embrace participatory communication in their approach. That will help ensure that the organisation's communication focus is more customer-centric. A new strategic plan that is customer-centric must be designed and implemented.
- LEWA should ensure that public consultations (hearings) are held in every district. In order to achieve this district-based communication forums must be capacitated to regularly sensitise public on tariffs. The forums must motivate electricity customers to participate in tariff review.
- The documents which are used during electricity tariff settings are written in a technical manner. Hence, LEWA must endeavour to simplify the documents by instructing LEC to prepare summaries them and prepare presentations in the Sesotho language using professional communicators. This will enable most electricity customers to understand the contents of the LEC tariff application.
- LEWA must produce more documents to supplement customer education on tariffs determination processes and motivate public participation
- The development of the electricity sector IRP must involve electricity customers who will make an input into LEC strategic planning, as that has a direct relationship with the tariffs charged to customers.
- To address electricity customers concern over the board committee's dominant role during proceedings, the time allocated for Committee questions must be significantly reduced.
- LEWA, LEC and the stakeholders must commit to a process of monitoring and evaluating the impact of tariff reviews every year to protect the interests of all stakeholders. The public hearing procedure must be collectively devised by all stakeholders and it should be peer-reviewed by other members of RERA to ensure it meets best practice (see Chapter 3; Section 3.4.1).

- Structural hindrances in the legislative and regulatory framework must be removed to enable more inclusive participation.

In the next section, the new knowledge obtained from the study is elucidated.

6.6 NEW KNOWLEDGE DERIVED FROM THE STUDY

In line with development communication thinking, communication between development actors must be participatory rather than linear. Implementing this through a participatory communication approach enables people to become important actors in their own development efforts, as opposed to being merely peripheral in decision-making processes. The study sought to explore the extent to which LEWA's communication endeavours during an electricity tariff-review process fit into the participatory communication practical guidelines. This study has demonstrated that, in the case of LEWA, there is much that still must be done to ensure that stakeholders' interests in regulatory processes such as electricity tariff review are articulated through a participatory communication lens. Although the findings can only be generalised to the research subjects the findings may be useful for other regulatory bodies (in the SADC region) in so far as the issue of public involvement in tariff reviews through participatory communication in regulatory processes is concerned.

In the context of the study, it has been demonstrated that engaging in mass electronic and print media broadcasts/messages does not inevitably lead to increased public participation in development issues. Poor participation can further be attributed to limited understanding of mass-media messages which are not dialogic in nature. The use of traditional communication forums (lipitso) and the use of local language in tariff presentations and written social artefacts can contribute to enhanced understanding and consequently participation, leading to joint ownership of tariff-reviews. While the role of culture has been somewhat not very pronounced, it may be seen that there is a need to encourage a reading culture especially amongst customers for better understanding of tariffs drivers.

In this study, practical guidelines for participatory communication during an electricity tariff review are proposed. Notwithstanding the fact that the guidelines were applied in respect of LEWA and its electricity customers, the study findings can be tested in other settings at other regulatory bodies. As argued, LEWA's compliance with the guidelines is inadequate. LEWA has not yet designed a communication strategy that could be helpful in enhancing participatory communication in the execution of its mandate. There should be clearly written guidelines for communication with electricity customers during the tariff-review process to ensure the widest possible participation. The guidelines should be informed by customer experiences that LEWA has had.. The role of the board, according to the findings, should be to facilitate deliberation by all stakeholders. Most stakeholders have indicated this in their submissions (LEWA tariff determination 2016).

It is suggested that, unless an all-inclusive process for developing Lesotho ESI's IRP is undertaken, low participation by electricity customers at the electricity tariff-review process could continue. Coupled with this development, LEC must enter into consumer-centric power sales agreements with generation companies that offer affordable wholesale tariffs in the SAPP market (see Section 3.4.2).

The study's limitations are outlined below.

6.7 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The following limitations of the study are acknowledged, as specified below:

- The study was conducted focusing on only one regulatory organisation and hence it is inappropriate to generalise its findings to other regulatory bodies and other participatory settings.
- Focus group members were from LEWA and that could possibly influence their responses.
- The respondents were domestic customers and the results obtained are therefore not valid for other customer groups, such as industry or general purpose (small businesses) categories.
- The respondents for the survey were purposively selected and they cannot represent the entire customer landscape. It is necessary to constitute a bigger and more representative sample, so that they could be generalised to the wider electricity stakeholder spectrum.
- There is a paucity of literature concerning electricity tariff-review processes, resulting in over-reliance on participatory communication literature.

6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study's results make imperative to make for recommendations for further research. Regulation of electricity services is undertaken in almost all of the countries in the SADC region. Therefore, it is important that other regulators consider undertaking further research on the extent to which participatory communication approaches can enhance stakeholders' participation in determining of electricity tariffs. As argued in Chapter 3, Section 3.4.1 most regulators in the region have to balance competing stakeholders interests. Therefore, a participatory communication strategy must be designed. A relationship of equal power is considered necessary in the quest for a successful participatory approach (Kloppers & Fourie 2018:90).

It is ethical to ensure people have information to be able to act on it and this means meaning LEWA must be innovative in enhancing stakeholders' interest and participation in tariff reviews by, for instance, exploring what other sectors are doing to bring about sustainable relationships. There are cases of successful participatory model in sectors such as tourism (Dyll-Myklebust 2012: 180-214). There must be enhanced cooperation between African regulators in enhancing electricity customers' participation in tariffs review, through information exchanges. A bigger study involving include government, investors, LEWA and LEC views on improving electricity customers involvement in electricity tariffs issues must be undertaken..

It is hence also important to conduct a similar study covering a bigger population in Lesotho. Further research is required to explore the role of participatory communication in other various regulatory functions, such as setting up of quality of services standards and customer complaints or dispute resolution. These topics are important, since they could provide a basis for improvement in promoting sustainable development initiatives in the regulated sectors in the region.

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ANNEXURE A: PUBLIC NOTICE ON LESOTHO ELECTRICITY COMPANY'S (LEC) APPLICATION

LESOTHO ELECTRICITY AND WATER AUTHORITY

Introduction

The Lesotho Electricity and Water Authority (LEWA) informs Electricity Supply Industry (ESI) stakeholders and the general public that, Lesotho Electricity Company (Pty) Ltd which holds a composite licence issued in terms of Section 50 of the Lesotho Electricity Authority Act no. 12 of 2002 (LEA Act), as amended, has filed an application for a review of electricity service tariffs for financial year 2016-17. This application is in line with Section 24 (3) of the LEA Act 2002, as amended.

The application and tariff drivers that LEC cites therein

LEC is requesting an approval for a revenue requirement of M819.5 million for the financial year 2016/17. The company is requesting a tariff increase of 25.4 percent (25.4%) on both energy and Maximum Demand (MD) charges.

Amongst the various drivers for the application that LEC has mentioned are electricity bulk purchases and operating expenditure for transmission and distribution businesses. As an example, LEC says that electricity bulk purchases from Eskom are expected to increase by, on average 8% percent in the coming years. In addition, the Company maintains that operating expenses have increased as a result of growth in the demand for electricity, and the need for: replacement of ageing network assets, enhanced reliability and compliance to performance standards.

Public access to the application

Copies of the application can be obtained from LEWA offices. Stakeholders who are in the districts may have access to copies of the application at the District Administrators' offices.

Invitation for public comments

In accordance with Section 24(6) of the Act, the Electricity Supply Industry stakeholders and general public are informed and further invited to make and forward their comments and inputs on the application for consideration before LEWA makes a final determination. Interested people who wish to present their views before the LEWA Board, at public consultation meetings, are requested to indicate so in writing, when submitting their comments. The deadline for receiving written comments is **Monday 07 March 2016 at 17:00.**

Public Hearing Sessions on the Application

The Authority will hold three (3) public hearing sessions on the application in the country in March and April 2016. Stakeholders and the general public are invited. The consultation sessions are scheduled to be as follows:

- On 18 March, 2016; at 09:00 a.m. – Orange River Hotel, Moyeni, Quthing;
- On 01 April, 2016; at 09:00 a.m. – Likileng Lodge, Butha-Buthe; and
- On 08 April, 2016; at 09:00 a.m. – Hotel Victoria, Maseru

Comments or enquiries may be sent to

The Manager

Economic Regulation Department	Email: TNtlama@lewa.org.ls
Lesotho Electricity and Water Authority	Tel: 22 312479
7th Floor Moposo House, Maseru	Fax: 22 315094
P/Bag A315 , MASERU	

ANNEXURE B: APPROVED LEC 2016 AND 2017 ENERGY TARIFFS

Customer Category	Industrial HV	Industrial LV	Commercial HV	Commercial LV	General Purpose	Domestic	Street Lighting
Approved Energy Charges Including *Customer and Electrification Levies (M/kWh)	0.2419	0.2612	0.2419	0.2612	1.5461	1.3767	0.8149

***Customer Levy=M0.0423/kWh; Electrification Levy for both Industrial HV/LV and Commercial HV/LV=M0.02/kWh; Electrification Levy for General Purpose, Domestic and Street Lighting= M0.035/kWh**

APPROVED LEC MAXIMUM DEMAND CHARGES (Effective from 01 May, 2016)

Customer Category	Industrial HV	Industrial LV	Commercial HV	Commercial LV
Approved Maximum Demand Charges (M/kVA)	253.0338	295.5498	253.0338	295.5498

APPROVED LEC ENERGY CHARGES 2017/18 (Effective from 10 April, 2017)

Customer Category	Industrial HV	Industrial LV	Commercial HV	Commercial LV	General Purpose	Domestic	Street Lighting
Approved Energy Charges Including *Customer and Electrification Levies (M/kWh)	0.2484	0.2684	0.2484	0.2684	1.5995	1.4240	0.8417

APPROVED LEC MAXIMUM DEMAND CHARGES (Effective from 10 April, 2017)

Customer Category	Industrial HV	Industrial LV	Commercial HV	Commercial LV
Approved Maximum Demand Charges (M/kVA)	262.2392	306.3019	262.2392	306.3019

ANNEXURE C: FOCUS GROUP MODERATOR'S GUIDE

I. INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

My name is Shao Khatala and I am the moderator for today.

I am a Master's student in Communication Science at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and this focus group forms part of my studies.

The purpose of this endeavour is to deliberate on the way Lesotho Electricity and Water Authority (LEWA) communicated with stakeholders during the electricity tariff-review process from 2016 to 2017 so as to assess if such communication was participatory.

Before we start, I want to clarify a couple of theoretical concepts. These are *participation*, *communication* and a derivative of both words which is *participatory communication*.

According to Pawar (2010:122) participation may be described as "the involvement and incorporation of users and citizens more generally in service planning and delivery, providing an opportunity to voice their concerns and contribute to policy formation". In terms of welfare services, it refers to notions in policy making that relate to empowerment and inclusive citizenship, whose goal is to enhance accountability amongst others (Pawar 2010:122).

Communication is defined as 'the exchange of ideas, facts and emotions, by two or more persons, with the use of words, letters and symbols based on the technical problem [situation] of how precisely the symbols convey the desired meaning, and the effectiveness of how the received meaning[s] affect conduct in the desired way' (Kalla, 2005:303). Participatory communication is described as one form of development communication that advocates for the involvement of a community in the preparation and execution of communication approaches to development issues, such as electricity tariff review. Through electricity tariff review ordinary people get involved in the planning for and execution of the development projects. By law, the electricity tariff review should allow space for the inputs from the public to be made and taken into consideration by LEWA.

The study seeks to understand how LEWA communicates with stakeholders prior, during and after the process of electricity tariff reviews. It also includes questions on possible areas for improvement.

I will be asking for your opinions and your experiences on the issue.

Ground rules

1. This session will last about one and a half hours.

2. Do I have your permission to record the focus group discussion? This is merely to ensure that your comments are well captured.

3. My assistant will also be taking notes.

4. I also request that you sign the consent forms.

5. There is no right or wrong answer in this discussion.

6. Be honest - I need to know what you really think.

7. The information obtained will be strictly confidential, your identity will be protected and the results will be used for study purposes ONLY.

8. Participation from all of you is needed so as to get the view of each one of you.

9. Please talk one at a time and in a clear voice, avoid side conversations. It is distracting to the group and I do not want to miss any of your comments.

10. Please turn off your cell phones.

11. Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

II. BACKGROUND (5 minutes)

1. Please take the first few minutes to get to know the person seated next to you.

2. Icebreaker

III. PRIOR PLANNING FOR COMMUNICATION (25 minutes)

1. What kind of initial research does LEWA undertake to get stakeholders' involvement in planning to identify key issues on electricity tariffs review?

2. What means of communication does LEWA use when investigating stakeholders' opinions on electricity tariffs review before the process of electricity tariffs review takes place?

3. What are the procedures that guide how the process is conducted? Is there a communication strategy that serves as a guidance?

4. What is the primary communication objective of the process to engage with electricity consumers? How can this objective empower the stakeholders on regulation on electricity prices review?

5. In your opinion, has LEWA used experiences from previous years to improve on communication tools used for facilitating participation in tariff reviews?

6. Can you identify as to how the documents that were presented to the public during electricity tariff review were made available to you?

7. When should stakeholders ideally get access to the electricity tariff documents? Why?

8. What were the reasons for the communication activities that LEWA followed during the electricity tariffs review process? Were they designed in collaboration with the stakeholders (Strategy followed)?

9. In what ways can LEWA ensure that customers exchange views during the electricity tariffs review? Why?

IV. PARTICIPATION IN ELECTRICITY PRICES CONSULTATIONS (25 minutes)

10. How did LEWA elicit responses from the public on the issues relating to electricity tariffs review during actual electricity prices tariffs?

11. Which communication activities are implemented by LEWA when communicating with customers during the actual tariffs review? (Probe what LEWA exactly does).

12. How do you see the role that the traditional media (newspapers, television and radio) play in LEWA's tariff-review processes to facilitate public participation in electricity prices consultations?

13. What is your opinion regarding the role of the new forms of media (social media, online newspapers and video games, amongst others) in LEWA's tariff-review processes to facilitate public participation in electricity prices consultations?

14. How can stakeholders be assisted to identify the issues that are most important to them during the electricity tariffs review public consultation period? How can the process be made more trustworthy?

15. Public consultations on electricity tariffs review are held annually during a period of three months. Do you believe that this timing is sufficient? Why? If not, why not?

V. PERCEPTIONS ON PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION (25 minutes)

16. Would you elaborate as to whom LEWA's stakeholders are in the electricity tariff determination process? Why?

17. Who else should also be involved in the process? Why?

18. How would you assess the impact of the communication that LEWA had with customers during the process of public consultation?

19. In your opinion did LEWA adequately take into consideration stakeholders' inputs during the tariffs review process?

20. Does LEWA, in conjunction with your stakeholders, ascertain whether the primary objectives of communicating on tariffs reviews were achieved? How?

21. How can LEWA ensure that continually communicate with stakeholders during all stages of the electricity tariffs review?

22. What more could be done by LEWA to make the public trust the outcome of the electricity tariffs review process?

VI. CLOSE/ DEBRIEFING (5 minutes)

Is there anything anyone of you would like to say before we wind up?

Thank you for your comments and time. This has been a valuable session. The information you provided will help me compete my master's degree studies as well. It will also help LEWA in its endeavours to embrace a participatory approach to communication with customers during electricity prices review. Additionally, it will prove important for national development.

Thank you very much once again.

ANNEXURE D: ONLINE SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

My name is Shao Khatala. I am a Master's student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). For my dissertation, I am working towards practical guideline for participatory communication in promoting public involvement in electricity tariffs review.

Since you are an electricity customer who ought to take part in electricity prices determination or review processes, I am appealing to you to contribute in this research study by completing the questionnaire via the link provided. The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. All information obtained from you will stay confidential. And, the data collected will offer useful information regarding a practical framework for participatory communication in promoting public involvement in electricity tariffs review. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any known risk.

Copies of the dissertation will be deposited with the University of South Africa and the Lesotho Electricity and Water Authority (LEWA). If you choose to participate in this online survey, please answer all questions honestly as possible, and submit the completed questionnaires on time – that is, not later than **20 October 2017**. Participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time.

Thank you for taking the time to support me in my educational endeavours. Completion and submission of the questionnaire will indicate your willingness to participate in this study. If you require additional information or have questions, please contact me at the number listed below.

Sincerely,

Shao Khatala

Cellphone No: 62002488 E-mail: sechaamakoko@gmail.com

ONLINE SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire is divided into nine sections as follows: Section A: Prior planning for communication, Section B: Invitation to participate in public consultations, Section C: Access to the electricity prices review documents, Section D: Frequency of the public consultations, Section E: Your participation in electricity prices review and Section F: Evaluation of the process. An open-ended section where you are allowed to describe your opinions in more detail is also included followed by a last section on your bibliographical information.

For each statement provided below, tick the option that best describes your opinion.

Strongly agree – 5	**Agree – 4**	**Neither agree or disagree – 3**	**Disagree – 2**	**Strongly disagree – 1**

SECTION A: PRIOR PLANNING FOR COMMUNICATION

1.	I became aware about the public consultations about tariff reviews on national media channels.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

2.	A week after LEWA received the application it conversed with me regarding my opinion on the need for an electricity tariffs review.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

3.	Privately owned media afforded me an opportunity to express my opinion to LEWA about electricity tariffs reviews.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

4.	LEWA communicates with me in a logical manner (strategy).								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

5.	LEWA messages in print media were clear enough so that I could comment on the proposed electricity tariff prices.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

6.	LEWA must preferably use new forms of media (for example, website, emails, social media), to reach out to me before the process of electricity tariffs review took place								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

SECTION B: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

7.	Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC) should inform me about the reasons for the proposed electricity price review application before submitting it to LEWA.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

8.	"Lipitso" (public gatherings) should be used to supplement raising awareness about electricity prices consultations.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

9.	LEWA should invite me personally to take part in the electricity tariffs review								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

10	I could speak freely to other stakeholders during tariffs review public consultations.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

SECTION C: ACCESS TO THE ELECTRICITY PRICES REVIEW DOCUMENTS

11.	I had access to the Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC) electricity tariffs review application documents submitted to LEWA.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

12.	During the actual public consultations events LEC presenters communicated the reasons for its application to me in a clear manner.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

13.	The contents of the LEC application were written in a technical language that I could understand.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

14.	I can make more inputs in electricity prices reviews if the LEC application documents are disseminated at least seven days in advance.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

SECTION D: FREQUENCY OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

15.	The consultations must take place in all 10 districts in the country, including mine.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

16.	The electricity prices review legislation must be changed to allow me more time to present my opinion on the electricity tariffs review.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree
17.	The consultation period for an electricity tariffs review event should preferably not occur annually.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

18.	The electricity tariffs review public consultations may be held anytime when so required.

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

SECTION E: COMMUNICATION DURING THE ELECTRICITY PRICES REVIEW

19.	I could give my inputs to LEWA during the actual public consultations meetings because I was well informed.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

20.	By exchanging opinions with others during public consultations I became more aware of how electricity price levels affect me as an individual.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

21.	I could exchange tariffs background information with other participants during the tariffs review process.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

SECTION F: EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS

22.	The outcome of the electricity prices review demonstrates that the LEWA took my expressed views into consideration.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

23.	After each tariff review I discussed the impact of approved prices on our daily lives with LEWA.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree
24.	The impact of the previous year's prices on review should inform LEWA's decisions for the next year.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree

25.	During the time between annual electricity price reviews LEWA endeavours to empower me on electricity review matter through training on electricity review matters.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree