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# Citizens' perceptions on social media and public value: Social media and public value

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# Citizens' Perceptions on Social Media and Public Value

By

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Law, Commerce and Management at the University of the Witwatersrand, in 25% fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Public and Development Management

## Abstract

In South Africa, there are a number of government institutions that have established social media presence. However social media technology is a relatively new phenomenon and not much is known about what citizens perceive to be valuable during social media interactions with government. This has resulted in government being unable to meet social media demands from citizens. This research is aimed at exploring citizens' perceptions of how Facebook can effectively be used by government, and to what extent social media can create public value. A public sector organization was used as a case study for this research and online semi structured interviews were conducted on Facebook with citizens who have visited the organisation and are social media users. Face to face interviews were also conducted with citizens who are not social media users to understand the reasons for non-use. The literature review revealed the benefits of social media use in various functions of government globally. Facebook is the preferred social media platform for all forms of communication for participating citizens and is mainly accessed through mobile technology. This is line with literature confirming Facebook as the leading social media platform globally and in South Africa.

The findings of the study revealed that effective social media implementation in government can support key four dimensions of public value – efficiency, transparency, accountability, citizen engagement. In terms of trust, social media can facilitate trust, however the entrenchment of trust is dependent upon government achieving public outcomes that improves the lives of people and not necessarily social media use alone. The findings further showed that an enabling environment should be created for successful social media implementation - comprising of a social media strategy, a capacitated operational environment with skills and expertise on social media and ongoing support from the highest structures in government. The key barriers to social media use were identified as English illiteracy, costs related to Internet connectivity, which marginalized some communities resulting in social exclusion. Recommendations were provided in terms of using this study as a model for social media implementation across all three spheres of government.

**Declaration**

I declare that this research report is my original work. It is submitted in 25% fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Masters of Management (in the field of Public and Development Management) to the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

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Palesa Mafihlo
March 2015

## Dedication

This research is dedicated to my parents**,** who have raised me to believe that nothing is impossible and who have instilled in me the love for learning and personal growth. The very thought of knowing that you believed in me, has made me reach greater heights in all that I do in life. To my late father in law, I will forever be grateful for all the support and love he provided me during this time.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Governments all over the world have recently embarked on a process of redesigning the way that the public service delivers services to citizens. There is a drive by public services to advance the overall performance of government institutions with the intention of creating a responsive public service and an enabling environment to support continuous advancement in the delivery of services. Fundamental to delivering quality services and easy access to information, there is a need for government to understand citizen's requirements and preferences and to ensure that value is derived from the services being rendered, thereby creating public value. Public value can be understood as the worth citizens attach to the outcomes of government strategies, as well as citizens' experiences of public services rendered by government (Moore, 1995).

An important dimension to public value is what the citizens perceive to be valuable to them, their needs and desires (Benington, 2009). This dimension focuses on the value that citizens derive through government deliberately endorsing democratic dialogue and participation (Stoker, 2006). Furthermore, underpinning public value is the realisation that citizens' preferences and inclinations are at the centre of public value and this means that in a democratic environment citizens have to be entitled to define what is valuable to them and clearly articulate what value they seek from public services (Benington, 2008; Kelly, Mulgan, & Muers, 2002).

To operationalize a framework in which citizens are able to articulate their needs - necessitates the establishment of platforms that facilitate interaction between government and citizens in pursuit of advancing the transformation agenda of public institutions. At the heart of public service transformation is the realisation that Information Communication Technology (ICT) has the potential to improve the performance of government in service delivery and enhance public service processes that enable government to interface with citizens. The use of technology to improve government processes, enhance accessibility of services, widening of government

services and eliminating distance and time between government and citizens is referred to as electronic government (e-Government); which is mostly implemented through the use of the internet (Schwester, 2009). At the core of e-Government is the establishment of new forms of collaboration between government and citizens.

In the last couple of years a phenomenon known as social media is penetrating the Internet and has revolutionised the way that the world collaborates, and has given rise to additional vehicles for communication between government and citizen. Social media refers to web based technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin, Instagram and Mixit that provide a platform for collaboration, interchanging of information, soliciting of new ideas and sharing of experiences by its users (Linders, 2012). Social media have altered the way many citizens around the world source information about community matters and current events nationally and globally. Furthermore, the proficiencies to enable interactive and group collaboration provide new and unique prospects for community leaders, government officials, and government institutions to inform, and be informed by the citizenry regarding community needs and challenges (Golbeck, Grimes, & Rogers, 2010).

**The digital citizen**

The strong emergence of social media is making government realise the existence of online social networks, comprised of citizens who may never meet face to face but have created supportive structures and a new social identity on the Internet that is based on shared interests and experiences between participants (Din & Haron, 2012). The prevalence of people who use the Internet regularly and optimally to participate in issues relating to society, government and politics resulted in Mossberger, Tolbert & McNeal (2008) devising a term referred to as the “Digital Citizen”. The fundamental characteristic of a digital citizen is an individual that has extensive skills, familiarity, and access to the Internet through various devices such as computers, mobile phones, and Internet based devices to interact with private and public organizations. The progression to becoming a digital citizen extends beyond simple Internet activity and proceeds to extensive Internet use, developing blogs, using social media, and participating in web based collaborative sites.

The interaction of digital citizens on the Internet is the cornerstone for the establishment of virtual communities. A virtual community may be understood as a collection of people who communicate on a shared interest online with the purpose of meeting a particular requirement, sharing information; providing an online community base support for social interaction (Preece, 2001). Such modern communities through the power of online human networks are important in shaping the way that government delivers its services to the citizens as they elicit new concepts, freely share experiences, provide critical feedback about government services and facilitate social learning between and amongst the online groups. These processes are key in empowering citizens and government to jointly create public value. Unlike traditional forms of broadcasting media such as television and newspapers, social media allows for a two-way dialogue that spans a wide range of individuals that are geographically widely distributed (Linders, 2012). Within this context, the collaborative nature of social media is prompting citizens to utilize social media to contribute to government plans, shape public goals and jointly produce services together with government. It further allows government to view citizens as active partners rather than passive customers who are waiting to consume state services (Johnston & Hansen, 2011; Mattson, 1986).

**Context of the study**

The social media phenomenon is powered by the exponential growth of Internet use and the use of mobile technology in South Africa. In 2014, it was recorded that 48.9% of South Africans had access to the Internet with 39.4% having Internet access at home (Broadband Commission, 2014). This indicated a significant improvement in Internet penetration; however, amidst the positive and escalating growth of the Internet, in reality, over half of the population remains disconnected to the Internet. In addressing this challenge, the National Development Plan (2011) recognises a need for a unified information infrastructure by 2030 that facilitates the formation of a connected information society that will drive economic growth and development, while ensuring social and economic inclusion. Furthermore, in 2013, the Broadband Policy - South Africa Connect, was gazetted as a commitment of the

South African government to provide technology access to all communities (Department of Communication, 2013).

In response to the increasing use of social media as a vehicle for community engagement, the South African government has embarked on ways to implement and adopt the use of social media across state departments. The Government Communication and Information System[1] (GCIS) has further established a Social Media Directorate which is responsible for overseeing all of government's online platforms including social media, mobile platforms and websites. This is further enforced by one of the GCIS' Key Performance Indicators reflected in the GCIS Annual Report 2012/13 being "*the efficient use of social media to complement the distribution of government information"* (GCIS, 2014). The GCIS is also in the process of developing a National Social Media Strategy as well as National Social Media Policy. It is envisaged that government departments and institutions will use the strategy and policy as a guideline for the implementation of social media within their respective institutions (GCIS, 2014).

**Thusong Service Centres**

Improved communication and better engagement between government and citizens has been in the South African public service delivery agenda for several years and pre-dates social media penetration in South Africa. This has traditionally been facilitated by the Thusong service centres which were established in 1999. The centres were formerly known as Multi-Purpose Community Centres and they provide 'one-stop service' where local, provincial and national government, as well as other regional service-providers, are clustered into a central location rendering services to citizens in an integrated approach tailored to the requirements of each community. The Thusong service centres are distributed across all provinces in South Africa and they support government in realising its goal of bringing its services closer to communities. The services that are offered at each centre are different, based on the requirements of the community that the centre serves. The centres provide

[1] The Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) which was officially launched in May 1998 has officially being replaced by the Department of Communication (DoC). The new DoC came into being in 25 May 2014 following a proclamation of the transfer of powers and functions to new Minister of Communication (GCIS, 2015)

permanent public services such as: social security, health, education, passports, identity documents, libraries and ICT services which are accessed in one integrated space. Other offerings include economic, community-based and private sector services, skills development, telecommunication and government communication and information access.

According to GCIS (2006), the Thusong service centres have positioned government to realise the goal of bridging the divide between government and citizens by establishing a platform for improved dialogue between citizens and government. The service centres are used as instruments to attain integrated service delivery between national, provincial and local government. The main purpose of establishing the Thusong Service centres was to place the information requirements of citizens at the forefront in the communication process (GCIS, 2011).

In 2011, the South African government introduced an alternative provision of the Thusong service centre in the form of a pilot centre located in a high need area within a retail and shopping centre environment (GCIS, 2006). This centre is located in Pimville, Soweto at the Maponya Mall and it is the first implementation of its kind in the country. The rationale for its establishment was to provide a central nucleus of services to citizens for access to a range of opportunities in a convenient location for citizens.

**The Facebook site for the Maponya Mall Thusong Service Centre**

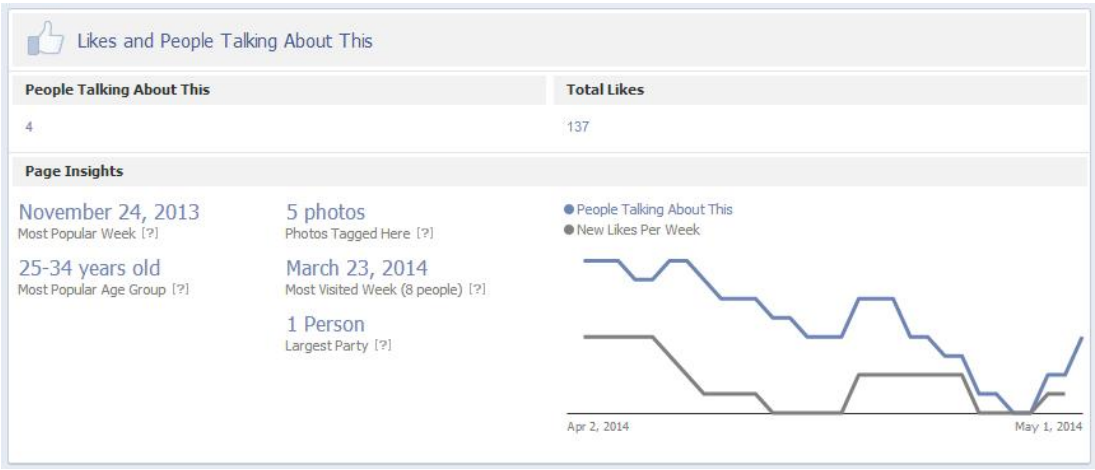
The concept of providing a convenient location for government and citizens to meet was extended when the centre's Facebook site was established on the 11th September 2011 (Facebook, 2014) following the official opening of the centre. During 2011 and 2012, the content of the Facebook page was mainly unidirectional involving the centre posting a range of community and government issues such as important government events, departmental specific information and general services rendered by the centre. The Facebook page also provided direct links to other government departments' Facebook pages.

In 2013, citizens started engaging the centre through posting comments that varied from citizens expressing their satisfaction with services received at the centre, to citizens using Facebook to advertise other community services. The majority of

postings were enquiries about the various services rendered at a centre and the procedure to be followed in attaining these services. As indicated in figure 1 below, at the time of compiling this report there were 137 citizens connected to the centre's Facebook page, 10% of whom had posted on the Facebook page since their initial connection. Only two recent users were "Talking about this" page - meaning that these users came back to the page after liking the page within a seven day period and performed activities such as comment, liking post or page wall, sharing a post and tagging photos (Facebook, 2014). At the time of conducting this research, the centre had not posted any new content since the start of 2013 and had not responded to or acknowledged any of the citizen's postings.

This user activity trend is relatively low, especially considering the latest social media statistics showing that more and more South African citizens are using Facebook to communicate about various issues on a daily basis. Although the user trends of a number of other government entities within the Gauteng area are also relatively low, their trends are still significantly higher than the centre's user activity trends. For example, the Gauteng Provincial Government during the same time had over 8,500 connections and just above 100 users talking about their page, as well as the City of Johannesburg with over 850 connections and 28 recent active users talking about their site.

**Figure 1: Maponya Mall Facebook page statistics (Facebook, 15 May 2014)**




To attain better understanding on the usage and maintenance of the centre's Facebook page, prior to undertaking the research an interview was held with the

Maponya Mall Thusong Service centre manager. The interview concluded that the centre has not been able to utilise the Facebook page optimally due to limited knowledge of how it should be used effectively and due to a lack of allocated resource to look into social media issues (personal communication, May 16, 2014). The centre wished to learn more about who was accessing their Facebook page, how the tool was being used, and what type of information and collaboration citizens perceived as beneficial on their Facebook page. Furthermore, the centre management wished to gain an understanding of how social media compares with other channels for communication as this would allow them to determine the extent to which resources could be invested in social media rather than other forms of communication.

The centre expressed an interest in learning how they could effectively utilise their Facebook page for broader engagement with communities and to learn about best practice for social media implementation across all spheres of government. The centre management further recognised that through their website they have in the past had opportunities for online one-way dissemination of information; however they take cognisance that if two-way interaction is to occur on their Facebook page, this will require time and management from their internal resources. At the time of conducting this research there were no resources assigned to managing their Facebook page. The centre manager further confirmed that the realisation of the collaborative power of social media has led to the recent deliberations by the centre's management team to revive their Facebook page. At the time of conducting this research, the centre management was exploring ways on how best to manage the centre's Facebook page with the view of catering for the needs of online communities and to maximally exploit the power of technology in facilitating communication between government and citizens (personal communication, May 16, 2014).

**Research problem**

Whilst there are a number of government institutions adopting social media tools, for the vast majority of government's institutions across the South Africa, these tools are fairly new and comparatively unexplored. The journey to adopting new tools and managing the associated changes in business processes is not easy for any

type of organization including the Maponya Mall Thusong service centre. The centre embraced the notion of social media by establishing a Facebook page for connecting with citizens. The centre's Facebook page has elicited posts from citizens, however there have been no responses or recent posts from the centre, which would indicate that social media is not being used effectively in the context of service delivery and optimal engagement of citizens. Key to the effective use of social media by government institutions is insight into citizen's needs and preferences of how government can optimally use social media to meet the requirements of citizens (Ide-Smith, 2010). It is important for government to know what type of social media information citizens perceive valuable for effective for facilitating service delivery and the level and depth of collaboration required by citizens. There are limited guidelines to provide government with insight into citizens' social media preferences and needs and ways in which social media can support the creation of public value. Moreover, there is generally limited research that explores the efficacy of social media usage by government from a citizens' perspective and within the context of Thusong service centres. Findings emanating from this research can be used as a model for other public institutions and be incorporated into e-Government policies and the national social media strategies.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this research is to explore perceptions of citizens in Soweto on how Facebook can effectively be used by government, for what purposes and in what ways, as well as to explore the extent to which the effective use of Facebook by government supports the creation of public value.

**Research Questions**

This research will attempt to answer two broad questions as outlined below:

How can Facebook effectively be used by government, for what purposes, and in what ways?

To what extent does the effective use of Facebook by government support the creation of public value?

## Significance of the study

The significance of this study is that it will elicit more knowledge about the fairly new phenomenon of social media in government. The study further adds new insight to the body of literature investigating the dynamics surrounding social media usage by government and the creation of public value especially within the context of the developing world. The study provides explicit knowledge about the nature of information and the extent of collaboration that citizens require on social media. Furthermore, the study provides new concepts and propositions and directly depicts the relationship between the use of social media and public value creation and issues pertaining to citizens' perceptions on this matter. The strategies that will be recommended provide a context for effective ways that Facebook can be utilized optimally by government for public value creation.

## Conclusion

The driving force in the provision of quality public services is the ability for government to deliver services that meet the demands and preferences of citizens (Ndou & Sebola, 2013). It is important that government understands the assortment of collaborative information technologies and social media delivery mechanisms such as Facebook and to engage and leverage the potential that these technologies offer to citizens. Social media technologies provide new and innovative ways for citizens to reach government, which is aligned to the mandate of the Thusong service centres which is to reach out to communities and provide services conveniently and at close proximity. The advent of social media has created an environment where citizens form strong and supportive human networks to collaborate with friends, families and the world regardless of space and time. Social media is revealing the importance of virtual communities and the possibilities available for government to exploit this platform for improving dialogue and collaboration with citizens.

This chapter set the stage for this research by providing the general background on social media and public value. It highlighted the context of the study, the research problem, research questions and provided details of the significance of the study and the research gaps it intends filling. Moving forward, the research report shall follow the structure outlined below:

*Chapter Two* is concerned with academic discourse and background literature related to the subject of social media in government and provides a discussion on the various ways social media is used and the relationship between social media and public value.

Chapter *Three* outlines the systematic approach and methods that the researcher adopted to undertake the research. It provides details for the rationale for the selection of the research strategy, research design and methods, and data analysis.

*Chapter Four* reports the research findings relating to research questions and the responses gathered from both the Facebook and face-to-face interview.

*Chapter Five* focuses on the interpretation of the findings highlighted in the previous chapter. The patterns and themes emerging from the analysis will be unpacked. This analysis will reveal the patterns and themes emerging pertaining to citizens' perceptions on what social media should be used for, how it should be used and link to public value creation.

Finally, *Chapter Six and Seven respectively* present the conclusions and their connections to the research purpose as well as making recommendations regarding strategies government can employ to effectively implement social media.

# Chapter 2

## Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature pertaining to social media and public value. The chapter explores the various dimensions of social media and public value respectively and also draws out the relationship between the two concepts. The literature provides a broad understanding of how governments internationally and locally are using social media. The literature review further unpacks themes, concepts and relationships between social media use in government and in particular Facebook and the creation of public value. The review briefly outlines concepts relating to Multi-Purpose Service centres (MPCCs) within the international and local perspective to broaden the understanding of the concept of Thusong Service centres. Due to social media being a relatively new notion, literature sourced in this respect was in the last five to six years; however literature pertaining to public value and MPPCs was beyond the ten year period in order to capture the different dynamics of the concepts over time.

The exploration of the key concepts of the research resulted in a conceptual framework to explore issues of how the use of social media in government can create public value. This conceptual framework endeavoured to bring coherence to key aspects of the research. The sourcing of the literature was limited to the University of the Witwatersrand databases, student library, Google Scholar, books and newspaper articles. For the extraction of articles, the following search strings were used: ‘social media in government’, ‘Facebook use in government ‘, ‘social media and public value’,’ social media and e-Government’, ‘social media and public goals’, e-Government and public value, citizens’ perception social media, multi-purpose community centres.

### Nature of the literature

Due to the interest surrounding the emergence of social media and its impact on the social, political, technological and economic aspects of life - there are numerous accredited scholastic journals on social media in government with contributions across various fields of Public Administration, Sociology, Information Studies, Business Administration and Informatics. However, it was noted that there was limited accredited journals and research coming from Africa including South Africa on issues on social media implementation in government. It is further observed that developing nations are

producing more literature on e-Government and not specifically on social media research as compared to developed nations. The substantial amount of academic research on social media implementation in government indicates that social media is a leading issue in e-Government and can be viewed as a product of the evolutionary cycle of e-Government (Linders, 2012; Magro, 2012; Worral, 2011). Moreover, scholars view social media as an advanced form of e-Government where the emphasis is not only on the use of technology to improve government processes but as a mechanism for better engagement between government and citizens.

There was substantial literature found that dealt with the use of technology to create public value. Bonina & Cordella (2008) stated that the notion of public value is progressively becoming the innovative driver in contemporary e-Government initiatives. There is a drive by governments to utilize ICT to enhance government process as a means of improving public value (Castelnovo & Simonetta, 2007). Authors such as Yu (2008) and Meynhardt (2009) further reiterate that the leading objective of the use of technology in government is to produce public value. These assertions indicate that creating public value through the use of technology indicates an increasingly urgent imperative for government to build technology platforms that are designed to meet citizens preferences in the delivery of public services (United Nations, 2003).

In pursuit of understanding the notion of public value, literature was reviewed from public value scholars such as Benington & Moore (2011); Kelly, Mulgan, & Muers, (2002); Moore (1995), Stoker (2006). This literature indicates that public value is created through an efficient government that strives for internal continuous improvement by endorsing citizen's engagement in various aspects on government and aiming for improved outcomes that support trust between government and citizens. These themes and concepts about public value provide the basis for formulating the relationship between social media and public value, which acknowledges that citizens are no longer perceived as passive beneficiaries of government services but are regarded as key stakeholders that shape the way government delivers its services (Linders, 2012).

Literature on social media is further exploring new concepts such as virtual communities and co-production that government needs to contend with in terms of

involving citizens in the creation and delivery of public services. Notwithstanding the acknowledged positive benefits of social media, there is literature that was found to have an element of doubt about the implementation of social media in government. Landsbergen (2010) commented about this scepticism about government readiness to harness the implementation of social media:

> Social media supports the increased reliance on human networks, the need for rapid interactive communications, the need to blur what is private and public, and the need for engaging multimedia. Whether government can use social media will depend upon how well government can see, understand, and attend to these needs. Social media is about fast, interactive communications. How will bureaucracies adapt to the increased pressures for timely responses? A very different question is how social media can provide us a way to do things in way that we have not done before? (Landsbergen, 2010,p1).

There is also a point of view from some authors that government still faces a variety of technological and administrative challenges such as privacy and accuracy issues when it comes to social media adoptions (Bertot, Jaeger, & Hansen, 2012; Bryer & Zavattaro, 2011; Dadashzadeh, 2010; Landsbergen, 2010). There is also uncertainty whether the utilisation of social media by government employees necessitates the creation of state records that should be archived in order to comply with application legislation (Bertot, Jaeger, & Hansen, 2012).

Amidst such scepticism from certain spheres, in general the body of literature found on the implementation of social media in government is indicative of the consensus formed amongst various scholars to acknowledge that social media is a powerful and innovative tool that is transforming the way that government and citizens engage and has put citizens at the centre of government planning and policy development (Bertot, Jaeger & Hansen, 2011, Meijer, Grimmelikhuhuijsen & Brandsma, 2011; Linders, 2012; Unsworth & Townes, 2012).

**Thusong Service Centres**

The literature pertaining to Multi-purpose Community Centres (MPCCs) in relation to the creation of public value through the use of social media was also reviewed. No searches revealed any form of literature that combined the three elements together. However substantial literature on MPPCs or “One-Stop-Service

Centres" demonstrated a clear distinction between MPCCs found in South Africa and the ones established in other countries.

In countries such as Canada, Denmark, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, MPCCs are referred to as "tele-centres" or "Multi- Community Access ICT centres or Multi-Purpose Centres" as they are some African countries such as Rwanda, Ghana and Tanzania (Latchem & Walker, 2001). Internationally, telecentres or "Multi-Community Access ICT access centres" are contemporary ICT hubs that provide communities with a central location for accessing technology such as Internet, telephony and fax facilities. The centres further provide communities with trainers to support users in using technology (Darkwa, 2000; Rose, 2005). Centres in the United Kingdom offer community based learning, life skills and social recreation (Foster, 2009).

Although some MPPCs in South Africa do provide communities with access to Internet and ICT tools, this is not their primary function.

In South Africa Thusong Service Centres are government institutions that bring services of functional government departments into one central hub to provide communities with a convenient way of accessing government services and information in an integrated manner. The centres are physical centres where communities and government can meet, dialogue and exchange information at a local level (Government Communication and Information Systems, 2006).

The key findings of the literature were that MPCCs provide government with means of providing communities with access to technology. In the era of government using social media for collaboration, citizens' access to the Internet is vital to ensure that communities are informed and have other alternative channels for reaching government.

**International social media usage in government**

The explosion of the social media phenomenon is attracting global interest, which has resulted in emerging research from various countries. Amongst the statistics released on social media usage per county the United States remains the leading country in terms of social media usage (Bokhari, 2014; Statistical Portal, 2014).

The drive for social media implementation in the United States research fraternity follows the release of “Open Government” memorandum in 2008 (Obama, 2009) which outlined three pillars of open government*: “*participation, transparency, and collaboration*”*. This mandate advocates the usage of social media as a way to engage communities, and some government institutions have begun implementing this endorsement and engaging citizens on critical state issues through social media (Unsworth & Townes, 2011).

Other countries are beginning to develop strategies and guidelines for social media use in government. The Canadian government has developed guidelines for the use of social media, outlining the benefits, constraints and risks associated with the use of social media in government (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2011). These guidelines are targeted at both government officials and citizens who use social media. Likewise, according to the Queensland Government (2010), the Australian government has developed guidelines for officials responsible for developing online citizen engagement initiatives for comprehending legislative constraints and having a requirement checklist prior to implementation.

Social media is not only penetrating the public service globally, but has infiltrated the political sphere as well. Politicians globally increasingly depend on social media to engage the public and the electorate and to further promote political discourse. President-Elect Obama during his election campaign in 2008 effectively utilised social media as a foremost campaign strategy (Linders, 2012), This campaign went beyond the creation of a social networking site and created vigour through participation, a shared interest amongst supporters in real time, and provided them a reachable way to demonstrate their support for change. The power of social media in the political sphere was further demonstrated by young citizens in Spain in 2011, where they used social media to protest against the increase of youth unemployment - such real time and rapid collaboration influenced the outcome of the elections resulting in the ruling socialist party encountering a resounding electoral defeat (Chebib, & Sohail, 2011; Shirky, 2011).

On the African continent, the adoption of social media in the political domain is increasing. The now President of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, similarly to the then

US president-elect, used social media for his election campaign eliciting many connections on his Facebook page and also opting to announce his victory via his Facebook page (Ogunlesi, 2013). In the same way, Paul Kagame, the Rwandan president is an active user on Twitter and encourages citizens to engage and deliberate on state issues and the aftermath of the genocide (Atagana, 2011). Furthermore, the South African president, Jacob Zuma has in the last few years, taken the use of social media in government to another level, by encouraging citizens to pose questions and comments ahead of state of the nation address for shedding light on community needs and concerns with the view of encouraging citizens to influence public policy (Mail & Guardian, 2012).

**Facebook as the leading social media platform**

This research focuses on Facebook as a social media tool to facilitate the creation of public value. Facebook was established in 2004, by a Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg and his team and it was initially designed to support a college network at Harvard University. It expanded to include high school students in 2005, corporate networks in 2006, and eventually anybody who wished to join (Statistics Portal, 2015). Facebook, Inc., incorporated in July, 2004 and it is run as a social networking website organisation. The Facebook social networking website is accessed via an internet connection including mobile technology and enables users to create a member profile. Facebook simulates real-world interactions where people can meet, collaborate, search and find people with same interest and maintain relationships. At the time of conducting this research, Facebook is the leading social media platform with 1.35 billion monthly active users recorded worldwide in the third quarter of 2014. Google+ comes second at 540 million monthly active users and in third place is Twitter with 255 million monthly active users (Facebook, 2014; Statistics Portal, 2015). Users can further emphasise their interactions through the uploading of rich content such as video, audio, documents, microbologs, photos that enhance conversation through visual stimuli. The power of Facebook is in its ability to allow users to invite more connections, extend list of connections to other users and be instrumental in the expansion of the online human network (Heidemann, Klier & Probst ,2012). In terms of Facebook, value for government is

that it acts as a supplementary channel for government communication outside of traditional media and provides new ways of reaching users and targeting particular audiences and groups (Steenkamp and Hyde-Clarke, 2012).

**South African landscape**

At the time of writing this report, social media statistics show that on the African continent, there are 50 million Facebook users with Egypt leading with 13 million active users followed by South Africa which ranks 32nd in the world. Facebook is the leading social media platform in South Africa, with 9.4 million active users recorded in 2014 escalating from 6.8 million active users in 2013 - it is followed by Twitter with 5.5 million users (Goldstuck, 2014).

Although penetration of fixed lines in South Africa remains low due to limited telecommunication infrastructure being available throughout the country, people are exploiting the availability of mobile broadband infrastructure making mobile phones the mostly used device for accessing Internet (Broadband Commission, 2014). Approximately 87 % of these active users access Facebook via their mobiles phones (Goldstuck, 2014). Future projections of Internet growth predict that should the Internet growth rate be maintained, two thirds of the population could be online by 2016 (de Lanerolle, 2012) which could see a further increase in social media usage.

With South Africa having 11 official languages, the lack of English literacy is a significant barrier to Internet usage for most South Africans which inevitably become a hindrance for social media use adoption (de Lanerolle, 2012). The flexibility of Facebook allowing language translation could mitigate this challenge in future. The Facebook, Inc has partnerships with translations communities consisting of volunteer translators assisting to make Facebook available in new languages through the use of Facebook Translations app (Facebook, 2015). Afrikaans was added as a language on Facebook in 2009 (Mail & Guardian, 2009)

In summary, the preceding discussion is discusses the substantial literature available that relates to the creation of public value through e-Government initiatives including the use social media. It shows that although the use of social media is relatively new in government, most public services globally are exploiting the benefits

that are offered by social media and are utilizing them to transform the way government that government and citizens engage.

**Facebook use and benefits**

Although Facebook was primarily used for keeping in touch with friends and family it is now increasingly being used for a variety of ways, which may benefit both government and citizens. The literature surrounding the use of Facebook seeks to investigate its capabilities of providing interactive and collaborative platform for dialogue amongst a variety of users. There is emerging research that supports the notion of Facebook being an appropriate social media tool for political engagement and public participation (Halpern & Gibbs, 2013 ;Steenkamp & Hyde-Clarke, 2012; Vesnic-Alujevic, 2012). There is further research pertaining to the use Facebook and other platforms in local government to enhance citizen engagement and information dissemination (Ide-Smith, 2010; Mossberger & Crawford, 2013). Literature was also reviewed that reported that social media in municipalities can foster corporate transparency (Bonsón, Torres, Royo & Flores, 2012). Social media was also investigated in terms of the different social media strategies that can be adopted by police departments (Meijer & Thaens, 2013).

The literature review revealed that higher education institutions are exploring Facebook in the academic setting; seeking to understand how Facebook collaboration can boost the study experience, student motivation, teaching and learning by providing student support and e-mentoring through collaboration and interaction through the Facebook platform (Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010; Dabner, 2011; Junco, 2011; Kabilan,; Grossecka, Branb & Tiruc, 2011). In South Africa, the findings of a study conducted at the University of Cape Town confirmed that Facebook has the potential to support online social networking for learning and teaching (Bosch, 2009). Furthermore, there is research that explores the use of Facebook in non-profit organisations to facilitate transparency, openness and two way communications with beneficiaries of services (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas (2009). In addition there has been noticeable research about Facebook and other social media platforms and how these tools are influencing and transforming the Arab world and culture

(Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011; Kavanaugh, 2012; Mourtada, & Salem 2012; Velev & Zlateva, 2010).

Instant and fast collaboration associated with Facebook is fostering research on the capabilities of this platform to facilitate interactive broadcast and alerts during natural disaster management such as flooding and earthquakes (Dabner, 2011; Velev & Zlateva, 2012). The social interactions, relationships and shared values inherent in Facebook are further persuading researchers in the mental health sphere to explore its effects on human wellbeing, self-esteem and in managing anxiety and stress disorders (Ben-Ezra, 2012, Rosen, Carrier & Cheever, 2013).

**Public Value: Themes and concepts**

There are numerous definitions of public value that have emerged as part of the process of public sector reform (Benington & Moore, 2011). Notwithstanding numerous definitions of public value, the concept remains elusive and multi-dimensional (Willimas & Shearer, 2011). Appraisals and development of public value theory are captured across multi-disciplinary literature related to public management and administration, political science and philosophy. In developing a framework for the analysis of the literature, a range of a literature was reviewed, including; Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010; Benington & Moore. (2011); Kearns (2004); Meynhardt (2009); Moore (1995); O'Flynn (2007); Stoker (2006);

The notion of public value provides a framework to assist public institutions connect what they believe to be valuable and request an injection of public resources while enhancing ways of understanding what the public values and how public institutions can connect with these values (Moore, 1995). This aligns to the work of Benington (2009) who stated that there are two dimensions to public value. The first dimension is what the public perceives to be valuable and secondly what adds value to the public. The former dimension relates to a shift away from producer-led towards consumer-led models of government where citizens are involved in the attainment of public goals and creation of public services. The latter dimension is not only focused on individual interests but on wider public interest and trans-generational and for longer-term public goals (Benington, 2009).

Public value forms part of the broader discourse of public sector reform (Benington & Moore, 2011). Public value incorporates issues such as cultivating a culture of efficiency and stimulating innovation in the government service delivery, improving relationships between government, citizens, other stakeholders and the establishment trust, and providing a legitimate environment for government and citizens to interact (Kearns, 2004; Meynhardt, 2009). In the age of complex and dynamic demands from citizens, public value has emerged as an alternative to traditional public administration and new public management philosophies (Benington & Moore, 2011; Meynhardt, 2009). For instance, traditional public administration is of the view that challenges faced by government are not complex and therefore the state is capable of being the key provider and producer of public services. The stance of new public management on the other hand, is that the market due to its efficiency should lead in the provision of public services and the state should standby and provide a supplementary safety net (Moore, 2005). This is contrary to the notion that in the public value paradigm, government's role is much more than a regulator, a safety net for society or provider of services but is a strategic creator of public value (Benington & Moore, 2011).

**An enabling environment for public value creation**

An enabling environment is necessary for the creation of public value. The public value framework in the form of the strategic triangle, initially developed by Moore (1995) has been influential in instilling a sense of appreciation for various dimensions necessary for creating an environment for public value in public institutions. Moore (2005) introduced the concept of the strategic triangle which denotes the alignment of three diverse but inter-related processes in the form of the legitimacy and support, and operating capacity and public value outcomes. In essence the strategic triangle suggests that, to create public value, government strategies and initiatives must fulfil three requirements: firstly the creation of recognisable valuable outcomes should be paramount; secondly the strategies should assemble adequate authorisation and political support to be sustainable and produce the desired results; and thirdly the strategies should be administratively achievable with necessary skills, funding, staffing and technology (Moore, 2005). In

successfully implementing innovation and technology such as social media in government, it is important that public service managers recognise and adopt the dimensions as outlined in Moore's strategic triangle. Public managers are seen as active role players in assisting government to achieve its public goals through modernisation of government through technology that is geared for changing government and citizens' interactions with the view of enhancing public outcomes (Benington & Moore, 2011).

Citizen preference matters in the creation of public value. In a democratic environment citizens are entitled to define what is valuable to them (Benington, 2006; Kelly, Mulgan, & Muers, 2002). The inclinations and preferences of citizens are a key driver in the creation of public value. In general, effective communication between government and citizens is a critical element in developing trust between government and citizens and yielding outcomes that will have a positive impact in terms of meeting citizens' demand and improving their conditions of living (Kelly, Mulgan & Muers, 2002). Trust is correlated to the degree to which citizens feel that an e-Government service such as social media improves their knowledge of government services; provide them with the ability to contribute to the delivery of public service and to influence government policies (Grimsley & Meehan, 2007).

Another dimension of public value is to view it as a process that evolves through public engagement and dialogue between government and citizens (Stoker, 2006). Using this perspective, public value provides a space in within which government, citizens and other stakeholders can begin to engage on contested values and interests within a democratic space. It further creates an environment where citizens can be provided with an opportunity for co-creation and influence the design of public service thereby producing public services that are aligned to their needs and preferences (Benington & Moore, 2011).

In as much as public value emanates from government's provision of public services, legislative framework and other government's initiatives (Kelly, Mulgan, & Muers, 2002), the public value paradigm shift advocates the predominance of networked governance (Benington & Moore, 2001; Stoker, 2006) - wherein continuous improvement of government services and creation of public value is

reliant upon the state, the market and civil society working together towards achieving public goals.

**Networked Governance**

This section discusses issues of networks and networked governance and their importance in establishing an enabling environment for the creation public value. At the core of social media is the existence of social networks which is comprised of individuals that connect online to establish a network structure that facilitates information sharing, common values and the power to perpetuate continuous links of human networks (Heidemann, Klier & Probst, 2012). In the context of social media, it is important to distinguish between social networks and social networking since both concepts are interrelated when applied to the social media, but are also fundamentally different when applied to networked governance. Social networking involves the act of social interaction and public dialogue, whereas social networks refer to groups that establish objectives that will supersede those of individual network members (Parker, 2007). Networks have the capability to assist government solve complex problems that cut across government, society and communities. Networks non-hierarchical structure allows them to function in a rapidly changing and diverse environment with multi-cultural actors involved (Benington, 2009; Parker, 2007).

Networks have become central to issues of governance. However, it is important to note that not all networks that involve links between various actors can be recognized as governance structure that can assist government to solve its challenges and in the process create public value (Parker, 2007). Therefore, because social networks involve information sharing and establishment of online relationships, they do not necessarily constitute networked governance unless they are underpinned by the ability to exercise decision making, directing and changing behaviours in pursuit for governance (Parker, 2007). Governance is the authority within a particular arrangement that generates order and control with the purpose of determining processes required for decision making and managing actions that are generated by multiple actors (Mkandawire, 2007; Stoker, 2006). Governance is also about providing a domain through which new methods, systems, structures and processes are explored for supporting continuous information in the delivery of

government services (Grindle, 2007, Stoker, 2006). In conclusion it is therefore necessary that government in the pursuit of exploiting the benefits of social media, establish necessary governance structures that will sustainably support the goal of effective public engagement and subsequently create public value.

**Creating public value through the use social media**

There is extensive literature that deals with the use of technology to create public value. Bonina & Cordella (2008) found that the notion public value is progressively becoming the innovation driver in the contemporary e-government initiative. There is a drive by government to utilize ICT to enhance government process as a means of improving public value (Castelnovo & Simonetta, 2007). Authors such as Yu (2008) and Meynhardt (2009) further reiterate that the leading objective of the use of technology in government is to produce public value. Social media create an opportunity for government to explore the use the use of collaborative technology to reach citizenry. These assertions indicate that creating public value through the use of technology is a government imperative. The emphasis is that citizens articulate their preferences and opinions, then government adopts technology tools to increase its capability to deliver based on the needs of citizens, and ultimately public value is created (United Nations, 2003). The following section will outline in detail the key themes associated with public value – herein referred to as the "Kinds of public value" and the inherent connections to the use of social media use by government.

## Kinds of public value

### Efficiency

Public value provides a means to further assess the efficiency of public institutions (Kelly, Mulgan and Muers, 2002; Moore, 1995). The use of social media in government offers numerous opportunities for governments to improve its efficiency through using automated collaborative tools to timeously engage and respond to citizens demands (Landsbergen, 2010). With the speedy growth of e-government and collaborative technology, adopting the notion of public value for evaluating the performance of e-government from the perspective of citizens is not only applicable but is very essential (Karunasena & Deng, 2012). Therefore the paramount objective

of public innovations such as social media initiatives is to create value for citizens (Meynhardt, 2009). For technology based initiatives to create public value in government, public organisations should operate efficiently (Moore, 1995). However, there is debate amongst scholars regarding the application of efficiency in the public value paradigm. Efficiency is associated with private organisations where the primary goal is to pursue activities that will generate profit - the notion of efficiency is inappropriate for the public service since public institutions have numerous objectives to fulfil other than pursuing profit (Grandy, 2008, Stoker, 2006). In contrast, another view is that government creates value by establishing an efficient operating environment for meeting citizens' demands (Moore, 1995).

Efficiency denotes the way in which the functions and operations of public organisations produce more benefits compared with costs incurred (Millard, Warren, Leitner, & Shahin, 2006). The objective of using technology such as social media in government is to increase efficiency and provide convenient avenues for citizens to reach government (Lindgren, 2012). Efficiency, transparency, and a responsive government yields vital kinds of public value (Jorgensen & Bozeman, 2007; Kernaghan, 2003) that citizens expect to receive from government. The responsiveness of public organizations refers to the degree to which a public organization speedily meets the requirements of citizen (Jorgensen & Bozeman, 2007). In e-government initiatives, the responsiveness is determined through the citizens' perceptions about government’s response to their enquiries made through e-government access channels, the ability to engage and trace the delivery of services and government outcomes, and through the degree to which government adheres to turnaround times. e-Government initiatives such as social media are used to improve the efficiency of public organizations by minimizing processing costs, establishing strategic connections between and among government institutions and between government and citizens , and creating empowerment (Heeks, 2008). In the drive to pursue efficiency and responsiveness, it is important for government to ensure the quality of information delivered during engagement with citizens, its accuracy, timeliness and relevance and level of detail (Klischewski & Scholl, 2006)

In conclusion, the preceding discussion on efficiency has demonstrated that developing better ICT infrastructure, promoting the use of social media to share public information and engage the public with the aim of being responsive and transparent will determine the efficiency of government (Karunasena & Deng, 2012). Leveraging on the eradication of time and distance provided by technology will further generate greater savings. Furthermore, when citizens value the improved efficiency of government operations through the use of social media this will create value in terms of the taxes they pay. In the foregoing discussion, it was evident that public value is a new paradigm that is geared towards transforming government's operations and that social media can be used as a mechanism to channel this process. Government efficiency was represented as a vital element in creating public value; and transparency was distinguishably noted to underpin efficiency. The following section will discuss in detail the notion of public engagement and its link to social media and the creation of public value.

**Public engagement**

Public engagement is a practice of participation, and a way of involving citizens in the processes of government. Public engagement is at the core of public value where the belief is that there should be deliberation and on-going dialogue between government and the public they serve (Coats & Passmore, 2008) The creation of public value goes beyond marketing the services that government institutions render, or a practise of providing the public with what they desire, however, it is a process of involving the public in decision making on the basis that citizens have the capacity to engage and understand the dilemmas faced by both politicians and public managers.

Social media provides government with innovative ways to facilitate engagement between government and citizens. By its own nature, social media is collaborative and participatory. It provides a platform for citizens to form human networks by connecting and forming communities of interests, sharing information, achieving common goals and ultimately engaging government (Bertot, Jaeger and Hansen (2011); Bryer (2011); Landsbergen ,2010). The various forms of public engagements can be clustered as information broadcasting, collaboration,

participation, consultation and deliberation (Steward, 2009). Government can adopt these variations to draw citizens to participate in civic issues through social media. The transfer on information, which is a one-way broadcasting of information is the foundation of other forms of engagement. This involves government informing, inspiring and educating the public about pertinent government issues and making information more accessible to citizens. The one-way transfer of information is instrumental in eliciting other forms of engagements. Citizen's participation and deliberation over public service issues is dependent upon citizens being informed about various initiatives and changes unfolding within government.

The second form of engagement is collaboration which involves government establishing partnerships and alliances with citizens to accomplish jointly defined public goals that entrench policy changes that are informed by citizen's inputs and critical feedback (Steward, 2009). At the core of social media consultation is information exchange that is intended to elicit a response rather than just transfer information. Consultation is not about government disseminating information but about it is two-way consultation process between government and citizens where government actively listens to citizen's view, suggestions and insights. Therefore, consultation inevitably leads to participation where citizens contribute to the policy making processes of government allowing public managers to identify the public goals that the public genuinely value and to engage in an on-going process of listening, discussing and responding to the public interests and preferences. Deliberation describes the use of processes for taking into consideration citizen preferences in service delivery; policymaking and government related matters and involved robust discussions and negotiation between government and citizens.

Social media is reforming governments' performance, communication channels, information exchanges and decision making patterns in government. One of the emerging strategies for engaging citizens is through citizen sourcing[2]. This is a practice of government attaining required services, ideas, or expertise by soliciting contributions from citizens and allowing government to consult citizen, while citizens

[2] Citizen sourcing originates from the term crowdsourcing and the term "citizen" is used instead of "crowd" to highlight its governmental application within a civic context ( Nam, 2011).

participate and deliberate on government issues. Social media can be used for public feedback, service evaluation, request for service information and Community outreach and collaboration about issues such as emergencies, traffic, crime and so on (Demchak & Friis, 2000; Karunasena & Deng, 2012; Landsbergen , 2010).

Social networks and associated relationships underpin Information exchange and are reflective of dynamic affiliations between the public service and communities (Haron & Din, 2012). Social media provides a platform for establishment of such networks and when used effectively supports the establishment of sustainable relationships between government and citizens (Heidemann, Klier, Probst, 2013; Haron & Din, 2012). Encapsulated in the all forms of engagements mentioned above is the deliberation process that provisions for the advancement of citizen preferences**,** in which the citizen's views and opinions are incorporated into the policy development process (Steward, 2009). Public engagement and participation is important for facilitating dialogue between government and citizens. However, it is important that government not only pursue dialogue with citizens but promote the involvement of citizens in the co-production of public services (Bovaird, 2009).

Co-production allows for the joint design of services by government and citizens which provides an opportunity for government to view citizens as partners rather than passive customers who are waiting to consume state services (Johnston & Hansen, 2011; Mattson, 1986;). Scholars suggest that this is a way of reaching a variety of skills and viewpoints in the community and this establishes a relationship with the possibility of higher quality results and citizen satisfaction (Yeatman, 1998).

Joint design and production of public services, require citizens to contribute their knowledge, time and effort to combined outcomes and shared responsibilities In recent times co-production is viewed as contributing to the grand scheme of public goals as compared to older times when it was used as a means of citizens mitigating the inefficiency of government (Horne and Shirley, 2009; Linders, 2012;).

The preceding discussion illustrates how social media provides a couple of benefits for promoting citizens engagement. These are achieved through cooperative action, sharing information, co-production, making decisions at a broad groups scale and manage group dynamics more efficiently due time and space restrictions being

absent. Public engagement through social media can yield noticeable benefits to both government and citizens by ensuring that the diverse viewpoints of those involved are heard and understood. At its best, the process of public engagement generates trust and fosters greater organizational transparency and accountability. The following sections will outline literature pertaining transparency and trust.

**Transparency**

Transparency through easy access to government information is now regarded as vital to informed decision-making across government, public engagement, trust in the public service and curbing of corruption, (Armstrong, 2011; McDermott, 2010). Transparency underpins accountability and fulfils the three objectives: The first being to provide citizens and key role players is a glimpse of how government functions and how it develops processes for holding elected government officials and public institutions accountable for the decisions they take (Cunningham & Harris 2001; Johnston & Romzek, 1999; Stoker, 2006;). Secondly, it provides a channel for deliberation between policy-makers and citizens before decisions are implemented; and thirdly fosters accountability and provides the public with a platform to monitor and evaluate the performance of government officials as they deliver public services, and for government to be answerable for its performance (Armstrong, 2011; Coglianese, 2009; Cunningham Johnston & Romzek, 1999; Harris McDermott, 2010)

Social media tools can be used by government to publish public policy information as well as budget and expenditure information online for the purpose of public consultation and as a means demonstrating accountability (Jorgensen & Bozeman, 2007).They can facilitate the publication of tenders online by public institutions for increasing transparency, allow citizens to lodge grievances online, and view online organizational charts and contact information of public officials to increase transparency (Karunasena & Deng, 2012).

The foregoing discussion revealed that the transparency of public institution is a good indicator of public institutions complying with the citizen's demands and creating public value (Jorgensen & Bozeman, 2007). Scholars attest that social media facilitates more transparency - through government information being

delivered openly, on time to citizens and therefore empowering citizens to participate in the government decision making process. This also enhances government accountability as it prompts government to be more responsive to demands of citizens and create structures that create governance (Shim & Eom, 2008).

**Citizens' Trust**

The three sources of public value for citizens are services, outcomes and trust (Kelly, Mulgan & Muers, 2002). The latter has been mentioned as a significant and vital component for socio-economic interactions and cooperative behaviour (McKnight & Chervany, 2001). The body of literature looking at citizen's trust in government identifies empirical root causes for distrust and non-confidence in government to be: wastefulness, poor outcomes and social exclusion especially in policy development (Miller & Borrelli 1991; Orren, 1997). Citizens trust in government decreases with an increased perception by citizens that government is not responsive to their needs (Nye, Zelikow & King, 1997). Trust in government promotes at the minimum, compliance by citizens such as tax payments and at the very best, vigorous cooperation and even co-production between government, citizens and key stakeholders as discussed in the preceding section. It legitimises issues such as government spending and channelling of funds and increased social capital due to high levels of trust in society being maintained (Grimsley & Meehan, 2007).

Trust in government can be divided into two broad categories **"***relationship-based trust*" and **"***institutional-based trust"* (Papadakis, 1999). It is fuelled by citizens' perception of a government that is capable, trustworthy and is citizen-centric (Schoorman, Mayer & Davis, 1995). Relationship trust is generated by continuous engagement and collaboration between government and citizens that results in government being open and accountable for services delivered and value that is created in that process. The use of social media provides a platform to establish trust, since it is easier for people to bestow their trust in public servants they engage with on social media rather than abstract government structures. Contrary to government websites, social media provides citizen access to people working in government, people who have an identity, a reputation and provide an obligation of

what government can provide for communities (Din & Haron, 2012; Landsbergen, 2010). The more citizens trust the public servants they interact with on social media, the more the likelihood of trusting government institutions that these people work for (McKnight & Chervany, 2001).

It is important to note, however that in certain instances, the unfamiliarity of social media functionality by citizens as compared to traditional government process may pose as a hindrance to establishing trust (Alsaghier, Ford, Nguyen, & Hexel, 2011). It is therefore important that government empower citizens with the necessary infrastructure and support necessary to utilize social media meaningfully. The use of social media reinforces network communication and provides government an opportunity to enhance communication with multiple networks and this is important for the establishment of trust and subsequently public value.

The second category for trust which is *"institutional trust"* which draws on the premise that institutional measure such as legislation, security standards and structures are necessary to support the use social media in government. "Institutional trust" can be enhanced through the establishment of legislative measures such as developing and enforcing cyber legislation and encryptions standards. Furthermore, Bertot, Jaeger & Hansen (2012) stated that as much as social media has gained momentum in government institutions, government has not fully crafted legislative frameworks that deal with issues of security, accuracy and privacy for social media usage. Challenges of security and privacy of citizens' information make it possible for trust in government to be undermined. If these risks are managed proactively, then social media may effectively increase trust, both through enhancing the quality of services and the perceived capability of government (Kearns, 2004). Therefore, trust generated through institution-based structures provides citizens with an assurance that positive outcomes are possible (Cullier & Piotrowski, 2009; Quinn, 2003; Shuler, Jaeger, & Bertot, 2010).

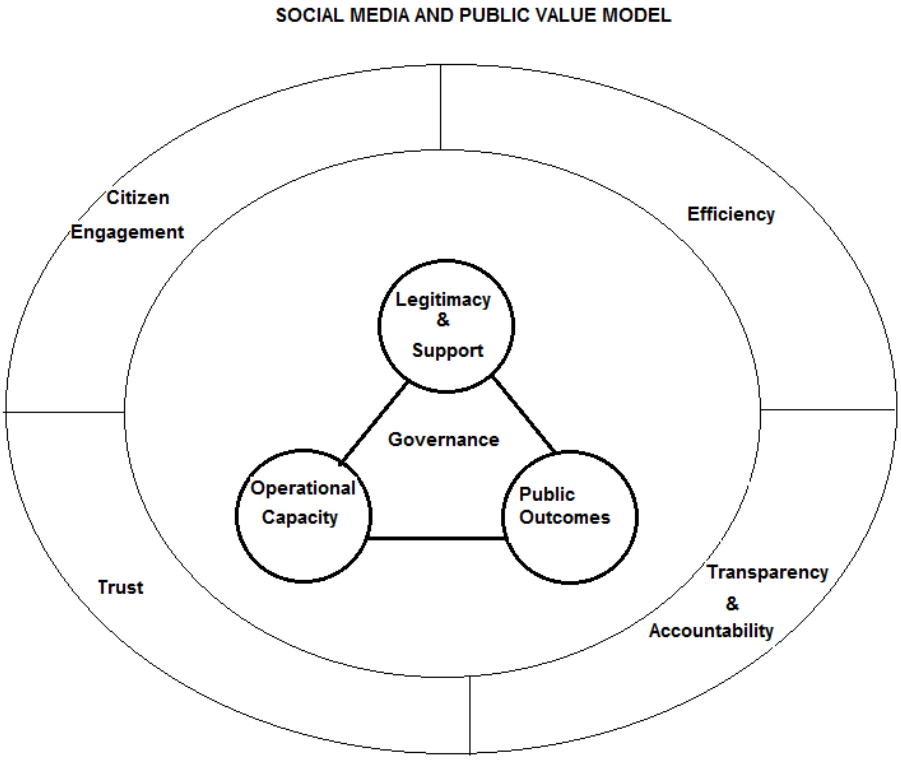
The preceding discussion is indicative that the establishment of trust between citizen and government is the cornerstone of public value. Social media platforms provide an opportunity for government and citizens to establish trusting online

relationship that nurture collaboration, public participation and transparency and thereby creating public value.

**The Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual model depicted below seeks to collate all aspects drawn from the literature review into a schematic outline of how concepts and themes on social media and public value are interrelated. It depicts the core as an enabling environment for public value creation through social media. The core is based on the strategic triangle by (Moore, 1995) representing defined outcomes for social media, adequate and authorized support from key influential stakeholders and adequate operational capacity to carry our social media implementation. The outer layer represents the various kinds of public value which are produced through the use of social media in government.

**Figure 2: Social media and public value conceptual framework**




*Note: Adapted from the 'Strategic Triangle' (Moore, 1995)*

## Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to deliberate on concepts, themes and trends in literature pertaining to social media and public value. With the focus of this research being on Facebook, statistical information revealed that Facebook is the leading social media platform in the world and in South Africa and that its exponential growth is attributed to the use mobile phones. The literature reviewed indicated that social media including Facebook is being implemented in the field of education, policing, health, local government and disaster management to support amongst other things information dissemination, participation, transparency and networking.

The review proceeded to probe the concepts and themes of public value and social media respective and also by linking the two concepts. An investigation into the themes of public value resulted in the development of conceptual model for social media and public value that is based on the strategic triangle (Moore, 1995) to assert that for social media to create public value in government, three interrelated forces should be in place, defined outcomes for social media use, legitimacy and support from the highest structure and a capacitated environment to carry out the implementation within good governance being adopted throughout the process.

The literature further revealed that social media creates a window of opportunity for government to explore the use of technology with the intention of supporting public goals. Through the review of the literature, different kinds of public value were identified namely, efficiency, citizen engagement, trust, transparency and accountability and social media was unveiled as a vehicle that government can adopt to support these dimensions of public value.

The literature review provided sufficient evidence to indicate that social media can be a platform for facilitating the creation of public value. On the basis of the themes identified and the conceptual model for social media and public, the following propositions will be used as a basis to explore citizen's perceptions on social media and public value.

Proposition 1: An enabling environment is key to public value creation through social media.

Proposition 1: Social media is a channel for supporting government's efficiency

Proposition 2: Social media is a channel for supporting citizen engagement

Proposition 3: Social media is a channel for supporting transparency and accountability

Proposition 4: Social media is a channel for establishing trust between citizens and government.

# Chapter 3

# Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the systematic approaches and methods that underpin the research. It provides details and the rationale for the selection of the research strategy, research design and methods. The latter part of the section deals with research methods, sampling, data analysis and ethical considerations for the research. The critical review of the literature in the preceding section has informed the structure of the methodology as outlined below.

## Research strategy and paradigm

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) explain that Qualitative Research is usually used to describe and understand phenomena while quantitative research is used to provide answers to questions about relationships among measured variables. Qualitative researchers are inclined to finding social meaning people attribute to their experiences and situations (Bryman, 2012).

Against this backdrop, this study was exploratory in nature with the intent of understanding the new phenomenon of social media within the context of public value. The study required that the citizens' perception on social media and public value be examined with the researcher interacting with participants and inductively extracting meaning from the data collected, generating new concepts, drawing from existing theory that adds insight to the concepts (Bryman, 2012). For these reasons a qualitative research strategy was adopted.

This study was concerned with the understanding of social media and public value phenomena through the meanings citizens attach to these concepts; this led the researcher to an *interpretive epistemological approach*. The meanings and perceptions derived from this approach were constructed within a social setting and led the researcher to examine the intricacy of views rather than a narrowing meaning into categories (Creswell, 2012).

The researcher assumed an inquisitive and open-ended way of engaging participants and creating an environment for dialogue between the researcher and participants and allowed participants to elaborate on a subject for the generation of rich narrative themes from the citizens perspective (Bryman, 2012).

**Research Design**

One of the principal objectives of any research is to determine the selection of research design. This study adopted a case study research design with an element of a cross sectional design (Bryman, 2012) The case study research design is concerned with elucidating the distinctiveness of the case by intensely observing the features of a distinct unit such as an individual, a group or a community, with the purpose of analysing a contemporary phenomenon in relation to that unit of study (Cohen, 1989; Bryman, 2012). The case study research design was chosen because it allowed the researcher to investigate the social media phenomena and public value within its real-life context with boundaries set (Yin, 2003). The set boundaries were achieved firstly by targeting participants who have received a public service through the Maponya Mall Thusong service centre; secondly by sourcing participants who were active Facebook users; thirdly through the analysis of centre's Facebook page to set the tone for the study and lastly conducting interviews on the Facebook social media platform for citizens who were social media users.

The elements of a cross sectional design were noticeable because this study examined and identified patterns of association between two variables namely the use of social media and the creation of public value without determining cause-and-effect between the two variables. The study was further concerned with generating statements that apply irrespective of time and place (Bryman, 2012). The information gathered on social media and public value could be used within any government context regardless of space and time.

A secondary approach adopted was online observation of participants Facebook accounts. The reason for using this technique was to broaden the researchers understanding of the culture, characteristic, values and attitudes of the Facebook participants (Merriam, 2002)

**Sampling**

This section describes the manner in which the collection of data was undertaken in terms of the target population, sample and the sampling method. Samples are chosen from populations and samples are subsets of populations (Neuman, 2009). A population is the total number of individuals who have certain

characteristics (Neuman, 2009). The target population for this research was Soweto citizens who have interacted with government at any given time through the Thusong service centre in Maponya Mall, Soweto. This is one of the centres formerly known as Multi-Purpose Community Centre and is identified as the most appropriate location to source the participants for this study because the centre comprise of various government institutions clustered into a central location rendering services to citizens in a “one-stop service” approach in line with the requirements of each community.

The researcher required the flexibility to select only participants who could provide the most appropriate information to achieve the objectives of the research. In this case the main participants are regular Facebook users who have knowledge of social media platforms and had interacted with government at one point in time. Therefore a non-probability, purposive sampling method was used to achieve this objective. Purposive sampling does not seek participants randomly but the researcher samples with the objectives of the study in mind (Bryman, 2012). The sample for the proposed study was citizens, both male and female with age ranging from 18 years to 55 years of age. To avoid sampling bias in the selection process of citizens and to obtain broader perspective of issues being reviewed, it was important that a secondary sample be sourced and be inclusive of a citizens who have never used Facebook or any other social media platforms.

**Approach for sourcing online participants**

The initial planned approach for sourcing participants was through the publishing of a notification on the centre’s Facebook page requesting interested citizens to participate in the study. However, the centre’s management prohibited the use of their Facebook page for this purpose but consented to the researcher using the Facebook page to identify potential participants and contacting them through other means outside of the centre’s Facebook page. To comply with this agreement, the researcher noted the names listed in the centre’s Facebook page and used Facebook’s private messaging function to send one to one messages to 15 prospective participants requesting participation and explaining the purpose of the research. Facebook does allow for people who are not connected as friends to use private messaging functionality. Prior to sending the private messages, using the

Facebook search functionality, all timelines for prospective participants were scrutinized to ascertain if they met the criteria for participating in the study and it was established that none of the people had any privacy setting enforced on their Facebook accounts, therefore allowing public access and viewing of their timelines.

Five participants responded to the call for participation. Due to the low response from users using this approach, the researcher resorted to the final approach of sourcing participants through existing Facebook pages and groups that mainly focus on the township of Soweto. The aim was to identify a place where Soweto citizens are meeting online and engaging on community issues. Using the Facebook search functionality within the researcher's own Facebook account, a keyword "Soweto" was typed and the search yielded a list of Soweto based Facebook pages and groups. An invitation requesting participation was posted on two of the community based Facebook pages and the remainder of the 10 online participants were sourced. Once participants were sourced, the next step was to set up an online environment for conducting interviews

**Approach for sourcing non-social media participants**

The second group of participants were 5 walk-in clients sourced through the centre and not through Facebook. The researcher was looking for citizens who had not utilized social media platforms in the past. Citizens waiting on queues were approached at the Thusong service centre and formally requested to participate in the study. Only citizens who met the required criteria as specified in the study were recruited and invited for an interview and they consented to participate in the study. The centre provided full consent for sourcing of participants waiting on queues.

**Preparing a secure and private online environment for interviews**

Since the key participants of this study were sourced and interviewed through Facebook, it was therefore pertinent that the researcher acquire extensive knowledge pertaining to the terms and conditions of the use of Facebook to ensure full compliance to this social media site for the duration of study. The Statement of Rights and Responsibilities for Facebook which govern all relationships and interactions on this site were thoroughly scrutinized through the help section of the Facebook website. The information therein, contained details concerning sharing of content,

account setups and protecting other users' right as well as privacy issues (Facebook, 2014). Information pertaining to security and privacy during the online interviews was of extreme importance to this research to ensure that ethical standards are upheld throughout the process.

The initial intention was for the researcher to create a new Facebook account that focused specifically on conducting online interviews for this research as a means of ensuring privacy and confidentiality at all times. The researcher would have to use her personal information to create the new account and subsequently invite sourced participants to partake in the study. However, due to the Facebook rule of forbidding the creation of more than one personal account this option was abandoned (Facebook, 2015). The next alternative method explored by the researcher was the creation of a Facebook page specifically for conducting interviews for this study. Facebook pages are public profiles specifically created for organisations, causes, brands and celebrities for branding, sharing stories and connecting with people (Facebook, 2015). Facebook pages are created from an existing personal account by an official representative of an organisation as per Facebook rules. The second alternative was not followed through since the use of Facebook for this study was mainly for conducting online interviews with selected participants and not for sharing content in the public domain as performed by established organizations.

The final approach explored and subsequently adopted was to conduct interviews using private messaging functionality where a conversation is held with only one person at any given time. This feature permitted only the person to whom a private message was sent to read the message and view the sender's Facebook wall associated with that particular private message. During the interview sessions, private messaging features and tools that were used are Facebook Chat web feature and the Facebook Messenger application. The former is a built in web browser service accessed when logged in the Facebook website and the latter is a software application for instant messaging service which provides text and voice communication for collaborating on mobile devices and the main website and is fully integrated with the Facebook site (Facebook 2015). Since the Facebook Messenger allows for the user to be online at all times and to receive instant

message notification, it was therefore installed on the researcher's mobile devices to ensure that collaboration with the participants was received instantaneously.

In as much as the private messaging features for Facebook provided some assurance on the privacy of the online interviews, it was important that privacy settings of the Facebook account be stringently managed. The following processes were followed in achieving this:

- All Facebook friends not participating in the study were blocked from viewing content in researchers' timeline and starting a conversation.
- The privacy settings were further configured in such a way that only research participants could see the researcher's timeline.
- Search engines were further blocked from accessing the researcher's timelines.
- Previous personal messages on the researcher's timeline were hidden from being viewed by participants to also provide some privacy for the researcher.
- Security and privacy settings were enforced on the site to ensure that only authorised users could gain access to the site.

**Data collection methods**

For data collection, this study used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source of data is first hand data from the original source (Neuman, 2009) and for this research it was acquired through semi-structured interviews encompassing questions that were developed in general form in an interview guide that prompted researcher's memory during the interview sessions (Bryman, 2012). The reason for selecting this method was that the aim of the research was to collect comparable and detailed qualitative data. This method supported this notion through the informal interview style that allowed participants the freedom to express their opinions in their own terms and the researcher to vary the sequence of questions and probe participants (Neuman, 2009).

Furthermore, the research gathered secondary data in the form of journals, books, websites and newspaper articles that focused social media use by government, e-Government and public value creation and this information was mostly used as part of the literature review section.

Mixed modes of administering the semi-structured interviews were used respectively for the citizens who are social media users and non-social media users respectively. For citizens who were social media users, a web-based research method conducted on Facebook was used whereas for walk-in citizens who were not social media users, face-to face interviews were conducted. For citizens that were social media users, a web-based research method was adopted and interviews were collected through the Internet (Bryman, 2012) using Facebook as instruments for collecting the dialogue between the researcher and respondent.

The web-based method was appropriate for this study on two accounts. Firstly, it authenticated that these group of citizens have prior experience on interacting on the Facebook platform. Secondly, it allowed the researcher to exploit the collaborative power of the existing social media platform that these citizens were using to collaborate and overcame the challenge of distance and time (Burton & Glodsmith, 2002).

The absence of visual cues via a web-based research method was believed to cause the loss of contextual and nonverbal data and to weaken the probing and interpretation process during an interview. Nevertheless, the web based research method allowed participants to feel at ease and be able to express themselves fully on the questions posed (Opdenakker, 2006). To compensate for the absence of visual cues, online participants were encouraged to use *emoticons* such as “smiley or sad face” which are textual descriptions of a participant’s emotions or facial expression that are typed in using keyboard icons at the time of responding to online questions. It was noted that, during the online interviews, none of the participants used *emoticons,* leading the researcher to rely mostly on the tone of the responses to gauge the participant state of mind and emotions. The online questions were asked one question at a time to allow further probing and clarification where necessary.

The rate at which the responses were received varied. Most of the participants allocated a particular time slot in the day to complete the online interview which took approximately an hour to complete. On the other hand, other participants preferred an unstructured form of being interviewed, where responses were received throughout the day when participants found the time. The main challenge about the

latter approach was that at certain instances, the researcher would receive responses at the same time from more than one participant while still engaging and probing other participants. This caused time delays in terms of completing the interviews with the average time of completion being 48 hours.

For the five, non-social media users, 30-45 minute interview sessions were convened. The same approach was used when interviewing a representative at GCIS to gather responses based on the findings of the study, as well for interviews conducted with the Thusong service centre Manager. The researcher used an interview guide to facilitate the interview process. The interview sessions were recorded and citizens were informed of this process and consent requested prior to the interview. The researcher also made a few field notes to avoid distractions during the process, noting mostly impressions pertaining to the interaction and not necessarily verbatim related to responses. All participants were advised that they could withdraw from the research at any time.

**Comparisons of online interviews versus face to face interview**

According to Bryman (2012), there is limited research providing evidence that the different modes of administering the interviews will have any significant impact on the research findings. This holds true for this study, in that the different modes of administering the interviews did not have any significant impact on the findings of the study. However the ambience and experience during the interview sessions was not the same. Each mode of administering the interview had both advantages and disadvantages as explained below.

Face to face interviews are regarded as synchronous communication in time and place. Instant messaging tools such as Facebook Messenger are regarded as synchronous communication in time, but asynchronous communication in place (Opdenakker, 2006). The following sections outlined some of the researcher's experiences with each mode of interviewing.

The experience with Face to face interviews

- Social cues, such the participant's voice, tone, body language provided the interviewer additional information that could be incorporated to the responses or that could be used further probe the participants.

- With synchronous communication answers were more spontaneous, without an extended reflection with no noticeable time delays between questions and answers, However, this required the researcher to concentrate on the questions to follow and the responses as they come. Wengraf (2001:194 ) had named this " double attention" which means that

> … you must be both listening to the informant's responses to understand what he or she is trying to get at and, at the same time, you must be bearing in mind your needs to ensure that all your questions are liable to get answered within the fixed time at the level of depth and detail that you need.

- The researcher had the opportunity to create a comfortable ambience before the start of the interview ensuring that the participant is comfortable and ready to commence the interview.
- Face to face interviews were not convenient in terms of time and travelling costs. Logistical arrangements were also cumbersome, with a few participants postponing the interview appointment or arriving late therefore causing a deviation to the original interview plan.
- Transcribing a tape recording was time consuming, especially where some of the participants responded in their native languages and translation to English was required during transcription. Bryman (2001) suggests that one hour of tape recording can take anything between five to six hours which is approximately what the researcher experienced with face-to face interviews.

**The experience with online interviews**

- The logistical arrangements for the online interviews were convenient and saved the researcher time and money for travelling. However due to the asynchronous communication of time at certain instances reminders had to be sent to participants to request responses to avoid further delays.
- No transcription and note taking is required since all responses are recorded online as they are being received from participants.
- The respondents had time to reflect on the answers, especially on the technical aspects on social media where their expressions were loaded with real life examples applicable to their social setting. It was also clear that some

respondents had sourced more information prior to responding to give their answers more context and content to their responses. Bampton and Bampton & Cowton (2002), suggest that asynchronous communication provides respondents the opportunity to source information which might be required to answer, even though the researcher may not know the origin of the information.

- As compared to face to face interviews, online responses were bolder and expressive; at certain times some interviewees provided socially undesirable answers and this added to the context and richness of the data collected.
- During the initial stages of the interview, some participants responded briefly to questions and the researcher had to probe and prompt them to elaborate. However as the interview progressed more comprehensive responses were received.

**Data Analysis**

The various data analysis techniques that were used in the research section are presented in this section, namely issues of transcription, reflective journaling, coding and thematic analysis.

**Analysis Techniques**

One advantages of using web-research tools such as Facebook where responses are typed, was the elimination of transcription which involves translating a recorded interview into written format (Bryman, 2012). For the analysis of data collected during face to face, interviews, transcripts were generated. Thereafter, to ensure that reflections about the interview were still fresh in the researchers mind, the researcher expeditiously reviewed the field notes and developed first impressions of the interaction with more focus. Considerations of the conduct of the interview and other relevant variables were also noted (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). Major thoughts, ideas and concepts, raised by respondents were further noted. The researcher was fundamentally looking for themes and concepts as outlined in the conceptual framework in the literature section. The coding technique was used for the analysis of data, with the aim of enforcing order in the data by systematically organising raw data into concepts and themes, developing concept definitions and finally assessing and contrasting relationships among concepts (Neuman, 2009).

This process involved classification of responses into categories in relation to various questions asked during the interview. Responses were then coded according to the developed response categories as guided by the established conceptual framework. The subsequent step was to group together response categories dealing with common themes and analysis and interpretation of the data unfolded. The researcher adopted various tools that assisted in organising the data such as mind maps, colour coding of themes and flow charts (Bryaman, 2012).

**Ethical Considerations**

At all stages of the research, ethical issues were not overlooked as they have a detrimental impact on the integrity of the research and the participants involved (Bryman, 2012). To ensure that there were no transgressions in terms of ethical issues, consent was sought from the Thusong service as a vehicle for sourcing participants. All participants consented to participate in the research and there were no covert undertakings at any stage of the research so as to allow participants to make a personal decision to participate. Although most of the online participants were not concerned about issues of anonymity and confidentiality, during the interview sessions the researcher did assure the participants that the process would maintain and uphold confidentiality at all times. Furthermore, participants were informed that the results would be made available on request. Since the Facebook platform may be considered as a public space that poses challenges in terms of anonymity and confidentiality of posted responses, stringent security settings were enforced on the Facebook environment where interviews took place. This was to ensure that the Facebook site is secure and accessed only by participants that have been invited to participate in the study and furthermore restrictions were made on the site to ensure that the site is not searchable by unauthorized users.

**Validity and Reliability**

Reliability and validity are techniques of proving and communicating the rigour of the research techniques and the trustworthiness of research findings (Roberts & Priest & Traynor 2006). Reliability refers to the degree to which the research findings can be replicated and the same findings realized. Since this study is a qualitative research, the notion of reliability is challenging to implement since human behaviour

is dynamic and there may be many possible interpretation to social phenomenon making it difficult for one particular study to be replication entirely (Neuman, 2009). Therefore the study did not focus on whether the results of another study would yield the same results as this study, but rather on whether the results yielded from this study are consistent with the data collected. To establish reliability, the researcher employed the technique called “peer-examination” which entailed the researcher requesting her supervisor to examine whether the developing results are consistent with the data that is collected (Merriam, 2002).

Internal validity ensures that the findings of research are corresponding to reality (Neuman, 2009). To strengthen internal validity for this study, triangulation was used by which the researcher confirmed findings by using other sources of data such as journals, books, and observation on the use of social media and public value creation. In terms of external validity, generalisation is often disputed in qualitative research on the basis that concrete generalisability requires data on large populations with a sample that is statistically representative of the entire population (Falk & Guenther, 2006) and that social phenomena are too context-specific to allow generalizability (Wainwright, 1997). However, for this case study in particular, the findings could be used as a model or guideline for social media implementation in public institutions and adapted to suite respective environments. To strengthen the external validity of this research, the technique of “thick description” was implemented to provide comprehensive and elaborate descriptive information of the use of social media and the creation of public value. This will afford other researchers to ascertain how closely the research they are undertaking matches the findings of this research (Bryman, 2012).

# Chapter 4

## Data Presentation

The purpose of this chapter is to present data collected from using interview sessions and online observations. The focus is to outline the key themes that emerged across respondents. This chapter further presents data collected from two groups of participants - 15 participants who were interviewed online through Facebook and five participants who were not Facebook users and were interviewed using face to face interaction. The focus was to explore citizens' perceptions on what they value about social media and what adds value with the use of social media by government.

As indicated in the preceding chapter, some forms of online observations were conducted on participants Facebook accounts. Therefore, the initial part of this chapter presents data compiled from observing online behaviours and characteristics of Facebook participants, and interviewing participants on the findings of these observations.

### Participants' biographic details

The initial part of the interview sessions involved gathering biographic details of all participants such as age, gender, employment status and occupation. For Facebook participants some of these details were discovered while assessing their Facebook information as part of the online observation process and the information was verified during the interview process.

**Table 1: Biographic details of Facebook participants**

| Participant | Gender | Age | Employment Status | Education Level | Facebook Access | Occupation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Female | 55 | Retired | Tertiary education | More than once a day | Retired teacher |
| 2 | Female | 33 | Employed | Grade 12 | More than once a day | Administrator |
| 3 | Female | 25 | Self employed | Tertiary education | More than once a day | IT Specialist |
| 4 | Male | 34 | Unemployed | Secondary Education | More than once a | Job-seeker |

| Participant | Gender | Age | Employment Status | Education Level | Facebook Access | Occupation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | week | |
| 5 | Male | 28 | Employed | Secondary Education | More than once a day | HR Administrator & Community Activist |
| 6 | Female | 20 | Student | Secondary Education | More than once a week | Accounting Student |
| 7 | Male | 40 | Employed | Tertiary education | More than once a day | Engineer |
| 8 | Female | 50 | Unemployed | Secondary Education | More than once a day | Job-seeker |
| 9 | Female | 23 | Employed | Tertiary education | More than once a day | IT intern |
| 10 | Female | 38 | Employed | Secondary Education | Once a day | Personal Assistant |
| 11 | Female | 42 | Employed | Secondary Education | More than once a day | Social Worker |
| 12 | Female | 18 | Student | Secondary Education | More than once a day | Grade 12 learner |
| 13 | Male | 55 | Self employed | Secondary Education | More than once a week | Business owner |
| 14 | Male | 44 | Employed | Tertiary education | More than once a week | Accountant |
| 15 | Female | 28 | Unemployed | Secondary Education | Once a day | Job-seeker |

All participants were regular Facebook users and had visisted the Thusong service centre to access a service from government. However, only five were connected to the centre's Facebook page and three more were connected to other government Facebook pages. Nine females and six males were interviewed, their age ranging from 18 to 55. Seven of the participants were employed, three were

unemployed, 1 was retired, two were self-employed and two partipants were students. All participants had some form of secondary education and five had tertiary education and hold various professional occupations. All participants indicated that Facebook was their prefered social media platform with nine participants connecting to Facebook more than once a day, two connecting once a day and four connecting more than once a week.

**Table 2: Biographic details of non- social media participants**

| Participant | Gender | Age | Employment Status | Education Level | Internet Access | Occupation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Female | 42 | Unemployed | Primary Education | No | Job-seeker |
| 2 | Male | 40 | Employed | Secondary Education | Yes | Procurement Officer |
| 3 | Male | 45 | Employed | Tertiary Education | Yes | Financial Manager |
| 4 | Male | 38 | Unemployed | Primary Education | No | Job-seeker |
| 5 | Female | 32 | Unemployed | Secondary Education | No | Personal Assistant |

All five non-social media user participants had not used or registered on social media sites in the past. However, two of the participants were regular Internet users, using it for a variety of activities and accessing it via their mobile phones. The age of participants ranged from 32 to 42, two with secondary education, one with tertiary educations and two with primary education.

The following section presents data collected from Facebook users followed by a summary of results from non-Facebook users.

**Results from the online observation process**

The online observation process unfolded in two phases. The first phase involved a thorough analysis of the Facebook page of the Maponya Mall Thusong Service Centre as a way of gaining an understanding of activities happening on the site and giving context to the study's problem statement. The summary of the findings

is found in Chapter 1. The second phase involved an analysis of the individual Facebook accounts of individuals participating in the study.

**Participant's Facebook activities**

The online observation of participants' Facebook pages revealed that citizens use Facebook in varied ways for various motives. Most of the participants used Facebook for networking with friends and acquaintances on a regular basis and for receiving news feeds from groups and Facebook pages they are connected to. The following quotes illustrate participant's motives for using Facebook:

> it's easy to reach my family and friends who are close and near (Participant 4, male, age 34)

> ..feedback is educative as its given in different forms-responsive, suggestive & clarity is immediate (Participant 1, female, age 55)

> to be kept informed with the latest information worldwide…to minimize the cost of communication…communication though the Internet is cheaper these days (Participant 2,female, age 33)

Participants were fully engaged in Facebook activities, with the user with the least connections having seven friends[3] connected and the user with maximum connection having above 700 connections with friends at the time of conducting this research. Users were also connected to a number of Facebook pages of organisations locally and internationally.

The other trend observed was that all participants were connected to at least one Facebook group. Such groups provide a secure and private space for small groups of people to communicate about shared interest and values (Facebook, 2014). These groups varied from women groups, community groups, political groups and faith-based groups. Participants explained that Facebook groups allowed them to share information, be inspired and to learn from others as they participate and deliberate over important issues of life as the following quotes suggest:

> ..Sharing ideas in private groups such as a group named 'Women Emancipate yourself' motivates me and inspires me as I'm a daily user of social networks. (Participant 9, female age 23)

[3] Individuals who have mutually agreed to be Facebook friends, allowing you to view information on their profile, follow each other's postings, post on each other's wall.

> Yes the group is for the political party I belong to. This is where I participate in political debates and also represent the interest of my communities… (Participant 5, male, age 37)

Mobile phone was the preferred and mostly used mode of accessing social media sites for all participants. Nine of participants did however indicate that on a few occasions they accessed social media through their work or home computers. The majority of participants, indicated that they accessed their Facebook account at least once a day to either view new information posted by friends, accept new connection, initiate new connections, like postings, read up newsfeeds or write up comments.

All participants indicated that over and above being connected on Facebook they are also connected to other social media sites such as Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, Tumbler, and instant messaging tools. However, Facebook remained the preferred social media site for most participants as it provided a user-friendly interface for easy collaboration and sharing functionality.

> …its been years being a user of Facebook, the more Facebook upgrades the better the add-ons and more interesting icons, I get to learn quickly since it is user friendly and I can quickly adjust to its changes (Participant 12, female, age 18)

The majority of participants further indicated that their level of skill on using Facebook is fairly good and two participants expressed their skills as above average. One participant describes herself as an “expert user.

> I am an experienced social media user across all platforms, I also have my own blog I created on Tumbler.. (Participant 6, female, age 20)

None of the participants expressed any concern with privacy issues on the Facebook site as they stated that they were fully aware of the privacy settings available to them. In conclusion, the observation made from assessing Facebook activities of participants exhibits a fast paced culture of collaboration and information exchange that is underpinned by fast and growing networks and connections.

**Perceptions about the Thusong Service centre Facebook page**

Notwithstanding that all participants have visited the Maponya Mall Thusong Service centre physically to receive a service from one of the government departments, only five users were connected to the Maponya Mall Thusong Service

Centre. Through the online observations it was established that across participants' Facebook accounts there were fewer connections to government institutions. Those connected to the centre's Facebook page explained the various reasons for connecting to the page:

> …government information is very important to me as a community activist and leader and I connected to the Thusong centre's Facebook page wanting to have easy and fast access to community information and to keep me well informed about government in general (Participant 5, male, age 37).

> The reason I connected to their Facebook page was that I thought I should congratulate them on the good service they had provided when I visited the centre and I also wanted to invite members of my family and friend to like their Facebook page (Participant 3, female, age 25).

> well, I had a question about the status of my ID application and it was more convenient for me to just post and receive an answer online unlike having to travel again to the centre or waste time waiting for a call to be answered (Participant 12, female, age 18).

Participants who were not connected to the centre's Facebook page indicated that they were not aware that the centre had a Facebook page and attributed this to a lack of effective awareness and marketing of the media by the centre. Participants who were not connected to any social media site of government institutions shared the same sentiments. As the online interviews continued, participants who were not connected to the centre's Facebook page accepted the invitation to either view the site or connect to the site. The general view from participants was that the information in the centre's Facebook page was out-dated and citizens' questions had not been responded to. Two of the five participants who were connected to the centre's page, noticed that during the first year of the Facebook page, the centre was efficient in publishing community and government information, therefore keeping the communities informed, but this was not kept consistent. Most of the participants, expressed the concern that most of the historic posts on the Facebook page seem to be coming from citizens and there was no indication of government initiating a dialogue with citizens.

> I was very disappointed when the Thusong centre never came back to answer my question about my ID application and after analyzing the

> page I saw that none of the question asked by the people recently were answered… (Participant 12, male, age 18).

> The community information that was posted initially when the page was opened used to be very informative but for many months, the page is not publishing any new information and there is no content inviting participation from citizens (Participant 5, male, age 37).

A number of participants elaborated on the Thusong centres as a one stop centres for citizens to receive government services. The findings reveal that citizens expect the centre's Facebook page to provide information not only pertaining to services provided at the centre but broad information relating to government in general.

> For me the centre is a 'one-stop' government service where I can get a government service centrally and locally as well, so I expect that their Facebook page should also be a one stop shop representing government as a whole (Participant 5, male, age 37).

> I know that not all government departments are at the centre but as a citizen I think the centre should be able to provide me with information about any government service or at least direct me to the correct channel. So their Facebook page should cover all government related services, they should have links to other government Facebook pages and websites (Participant 3, male, age 37).

> The centre is a representation of the entire government to me even though it may be locally based within my community...so what I expect to see on their Facebook page is both community based information and newsfeed about everything happening in government and communities around the country (Participant 14, male, age 44).

### Citizens' perceptions of social media and public value

This section presents the main findings of the study in terms of citizens' perceptions on social media and the creation of public value. In the literature review, public value was unpacked and presented in a conceptual framework that outlined the kinds of public values which were identified as efficiency, transparency, public engagement, networked governance and trust. This conceptual framework was further presented as proposition statements that were used as a basis to formulate interview questions and to develop the interview guide. The proposition statements are outlined below based on the different kinds of public value as outlined in Chapter two:

Proposition 1: An enabling environment is key for public value creation through social media.

Proposition 1: Social media is a channel for supporting government's efficiency

Proposition 2: Social media is a channel for supporting citizen engagement

Proposition 3: Social media is a channel for supporting transparency and accountability

Proposition 4: Social media is a channel for establishing trust between citizens and government.

The presentation of the findings and the identification of themes will therefore be grouped as per propositions listed above.

**Proposition 1: An enabling environment is key for public value creation through social media.**

This proposition is based on the strategic triangle of public value developed by Moore (1995) which identifies three key interrelated processes that creates an enabling environment for public value creation; namely, public value aims, authorizing environment and operational capacity. The aim of this proposition was therefore to determine citizens' views on what key processes and systems are necessary to institute an enabling environment for social media use to create public value. The responses are grouped according to the three pillars of the strategic triangle for public value.

**Defining Public value aims**

An overwhelming number of respondents indicated that the main determining factor for successful social media use is for government to develop a national social media strategy that will define the strategic objectives and public outcomes that are to be achieved by using social media to reach citizens and achieve other public goals. The other notion articulated by participants was that the strategy should incorporate activities for creating an enabling operational environment within government departments to ensure effective use of social media. It was noted that 10 participants elaborated on what a social media strategy should incorporate as outlined in the direct quotations below:

> …government can never fully exploit the opportunities that are presented by social media sites such as Facebook until such time they draw up a plan, strategy or roadmap of some sort to clearly state the objectives and outcomes social media should fulfil especially for the benefit of citizens and this can be known by consulting citizens on what they want to see on social media (Participant 2, female, age 25) .

> Social media is so powerful media and a social media strategy and policies should be developed with strategic objectives of how social media can be used to achieve public goal, whether they go for Facebook, twitter or both and government can even say how it can be used to support the implementation of National Development Plan.. I'm confident of the power of social media can facilitate the solving of most societal issues we have today (Participant 5, male, age 28).

> …social media should never be implemented without a purpose of how it should be used to start government and citizens talking. These objectives should be clear and consider the views of citizens, for eg...to use Facebook as a deliberation tool or mass collaboration tool and involve communities in decision making, to develop an informed society, to encourage citizens to provide suggestions on service delivery issues.. (Participant 14, male, age 44).

**Operational Capacity**

Other participants indicated that a social media strategy should clearly outline internal operational capacity that should be put in place to achieve effective use of social media as outline below:

> I think they also need to plan around their model of responding to citizens, will it be managed centrally by an administrator who collects responses from relevant people internally, or will it be decentralized for various departments to respond. ..I think this will be very useful especially with the Thusong service centre where they are struggling with responses (Participant 7, male, age 40).

> …the capacity required gathering, analysing, interpreting and respond to citizens posts should be clearly understood and the roles and responsibilities of internal employees and also the cost involved in getting extra support from specialist companies (Participant 14, male, age 44).

> ...also remember that they will also have to invest in third party tools that analyses big data from Facebook to provide them with ability to do trend analysis, impact analysis and so on. These tools come at a cost and require skilled and trained resources (Participant 3, female, age 25).

> The proper implementation of Facebook requires government to have enough capacity and resources such as skilled and trained people who will

> administer the sites, the budget to run the site or consider outsourcing and partnering with external service providers (Participant 14, male, age 44).

**The Authorising Environment**

The responses from six participants indicated that for social media to yield positive results there should be a clear mandate from elected politicians and highest structures in government on the importance of using social media to engage citizens.

This mandate is to be driven through formal strategies, policies and legislation cascaded down to all manager s within government institutions.

> …social media should be driven from the highest structures in political circles and government. There should be an order or directive from the ruling party or the president himself that a social media strategy or policy be in place that will guide implementation at organizational level (Participant 1, female, age 55).

> there must be a strong effort and support from all the ministers from all department based on a one social media policy that managers on the ground can stick to... (Participant 4, male, age 38).

> The social media idea should be marketed at the very highest level in government by ministers and executives (Participant 15, female, age 28).

Five participants indicated that social media use by government is most likely to flourish in an environment where government partners with other key stakeholders such as the private sector, citizens already on social media sites and other groups. The perceptions from two of the citizens are captured below:

> A bit of specialist intervention may be required from private digital agencies to formulate a solid social media strategy and implementation plans. With time, skill transfers can then take place so that capacity moves in house into government departments (Participant 2, female, age 25).

> Private sector companies are really taking the opportunity that social media provides by using Facebook to build their brands and communicate with customers on a continuous basis. There is so much that government can learn from the private sector and I think partnering and learning from these companies would be a great idea (Participant 14, male, age 44).

> Citizens are way ahead of government in terms of using social media and would do a good job telling government what they need to see from government Facebook pages, so it's not such a bad idea for government to partner with citizens and ask for suggestion in how best to use social media (Participant 10, female, age 38).

**Governance**

Within the context of an enabling environment one participant raised the importance of establishing good governance for value to be derived from social media implementation in government.

> I think it all boils down to what we call "good governance" without which social media initiative will dismally fail and by this I mean there should be structures/committees that that facilitate proper coordination, decision making, stakeholder involvement, departments about the roll out of social media and the roll out should be strictly monitored to ensure social media is well implemented (Participant 14, male, age 44).

Participant 3 who is a user experience specialist specializing in user interface design for mobile applications, social media and websites stated the following in terms of electronic governance (e-Governance).

> …for me a good environment that supports public value creation is where technology itself is used to bring governance where all people involved in social media roll out can easily participate irrespective of distance and time and make proper decisions. I think this is called e-governance. It's easy to do this with technology because everything done on it is transparent, it is quick and decision can be made faster in terms of social media implementation (Participant 3, female, age 25).

**Conclusions for Proposition 1: An enabling environment is key for public value creation through social media**

The responses from participants show clear consensus from citizens that a social media strategy is key to value being created through the use of social media by government. The strategy should provide a roadmap of how best social media can be implemented by government. Citizens further stated that the development of such a strategy should consider the views of citizens and possible partnerships with the private sector to draw from their existing expertise on the optimal use of social media. Respondents further indicated that an enabling environment should have operational capacity such as funding, trained resources and properly articulated roles and responsibilities. Finally, participants indicated that social media implementation in government should be driven from the highest structures of authorities to ensure success and sustainability.

**Proposition 2: Social media as a channel for supporting government's efficiency**

This proposition aimed to determine citizen's views on whether social media can provide government with a platform for supporting continuous improvement of government processes and on whether social media can be used to save cost, time and effort of government meeting citizen's demands. This is in terms of the extent to which time, effort and cost can be managed optimally by government and in the process generates more benefits for citizens.

The general perception of participants was that social media is a suitable tool that government can use to facilitate the efficiency of its processes. The common theme identified from the responses of participants was that social media could provide government with an opportunity to explore new ways of improving its responsiveness to citizen's demands. Furthermore, the overall perception from participants was that the efficiency of government is demonstrated by the ability of government to provide platforms that make it convenient and cost effective for citizens to access information and the capability of government to respond speedily to citizens queries. Citizens indicated that mobile phone was the most convenient mechanism of accessing social media. In general citizen's responses indicated that social media provides government with a suitable platform to conveniently deliver information to citizens and allow citizens to provide feedback and in turn improve the responsiveness of government.

> For me the efficiency of government is all about government taking advantage of new and upcoming technology such as Facebook, to quickly reach and respond to citizens' demands via my cellphone. Sites like Facebook provide a way of improving government processes and making processes faster, transparent and accessible, and involving citizens in critical government issues by inviting them to participate on government social media sites (Participant 14, male, age 44).

The issue of real time information was further expanded on by six of the participants emphasizing that the efficiency of government is about government responses being received within the agreed service levels. It was noted that because all interactions on Facebook are recorded online, participants viewed this functionality as a mechanism that could be used to trace and measure the turnaround times for government actions and responses.

> Government departments can improve their efficiency by developing 'turn-around' times for Facebook communication. Since all posting on Facebook are traceable, citizens will be able to monitor if government does respond to them as stipulated in the service levels. On the other hand government can use the service level to further improve on their responsiveness and for analysing trends that are coming through for future improvement of service delivery (Participant 14, male, age 36).

Fourteen citizens linked the convenience of social media to the fact it saves time and cost of travelling to a government department. Cost savings in this case is not necessarily associated with cutting of internal government costs but is more focused on cost savings for citizens. Nine of the participants further feel that the use of social media which is collaborative in nature facilitates government's efficiency through dialogue between citizens and government, contrary to government websites which use only a "push strategy" for disseminating information and do not facilitate interactive retrieval of information and that social media surpasses traditional media and government websites since the information received is in real time. The following response articulates these matters:

> Social media can be an easy and convenient way for me and government to communicate, it will save me time and money since I can access social media anywhere from my phone, I don't have to be travelling to find a government departments or searching endlessly for information on government websites which are not interactive and probably won't provide me with the immediate answers I need (Participants 4, male, age 34).

> Using Facebook is very cheap when using my cellphone, buying data bundles comes at a low costs due to the type of contract I'm using… (Participant 6, female, age 20).

In contrast to the above notion, two participants were adamant that for government to be efficient in the delivery of information, the focus of government should not only be on social media as the main channel of delivering information to citizens and encouraging dialogues, but on alternative channels that are complimentary that should be made available for citizens to have a wide range to choose from that form a digital ecosystem. Participant 3, a as user experience specialist stated the following:

> The social media method may look like a duplication of government websites if government uses to broadcast information. However it's important that government provides me with alternative channels of accessing information depending on my needs at any given point, to offer various options of accessing information and not to restrict me". It's

> called ubiquitous interaction. If functionality already exists somewhere, then other channels should complement that. It's about having a comprehensive and complimentary digital ecosystem, where all digital media support s each other. Can be websites, mobi sites, ussd, social media, apps, etc. They all need to complement each other (Participant 3, female, age 25).

In general, all participants emphasized that for social media to be used as a channel to facilitate government's efficiency, government social media sites should be optimally managed to ensure that the sites are continually being kept up to date with community based information, acknowledgement of citizen's responses and queries and information that will encourage citizens to provide feedback to government Two citizens also highlighted that efficiency is related government regulating the social media content posted on sites to minimize abuse from malicious sources. A typical response is as follows:

> …but for me to see government as efficient, it is important that information is kept up to date, is relevant to communities and all content published is reviewed to ensure to avoid misuse of the social media sites (Participant 5, male, age 37).

**Conclusion for Proposition 2: Social media as a channel for supporting government's efficiency**

The responses received from citizens show social media to have the capability to support continuous improvement and in turn yield greater benefits for the citizenry. The main determinant of efficiency as outlined by the responses is that social media facilitates the processes behind a responsive government that is not restricted by space and time and is able to reach citizens in ways that is preferred by them, specifically the use of mobile technology. From the citizens perspective the use of social media was shown to be a convenient way for government and citizens to communicate while saving time, cost and effort. The measure of efficiency was further articulated as the ability of government to provide relevant and quality information at all times. Lastly respondents expressed the view that the transparent nature of social media platforms was significant in ensuring traceability of transactions and for citizens to continually measure government's performance on agreed deliverables.

**Proposition 3: Social media as a channel for supporting citizen engagement**

As it was not known what the citizen's perceptions were regarding the notion of social media being a channel for supporting citizens' engagement. The assessment of this proposition was based on the five categories of public engagement as derived from the literature review. These categories are: information broadcast, collaboration, consultation participation and deliberation.

Out of all the propositions that were deliberated upon with participants in this study, proposition 3 yielded the most comprehensive details, as respondents were highly elaborate in their responses. Their responses were detailed in that they provided examples in terms of ways government can utilize social media for public engagement as outlined in table 3 below. The responses will be outlined for each category of public engagement.

**Information Broadcast**

Inasmuch as the perception of all participants is that social media tools are mostly used for two way communication between government and citizens, there was a clear indication from the responses that there is still a fundamental need for government to use Facebook as a tool for one way broadcasting of information with the aim of keeping the public informed and educated about the happenings in government and for alerting the public of critical information that they need to respond to as demonstrated by the response below:

> …Facebook is an interactive social media site for two way communication, but I think it is also a facility that government agencies like the Thusong service centre can use inform the public about service delivery problem and for me as a citizen to suggest other alternatives to government (Participant 1, female, age 55).

> I need government to give me information about the opportunities out there available for me as a young person like jobs, bursaries etc (Participant 9, female, age 23).

> …by knowing what is happening in government issues, I will be able to engage government on some of the community challenges that are out there and suggest ways of solving them (Participant 5, male, age 28).

The quotations below further show that information disseminated by government on social media sites may also have a positive influence in terms of how citizens perceive government and keep citizens inspired and motivated.

> It would be good to also receive information related to what government is doing on a daily basis via Facebook. This will keep me informed about government activities and good service delivery reports will keep me positive and motivated about what government" offers (Participant 7, male, age 40).

> …for instance, I would really like to see positive testimonials from citizens published on social media. This will encourage me as a citizens to see the good work government does for the people (Participant 3, female, age 25).

Eight participants further emphasized that social media is an appropriate tool for disseminating such information as compared to the traditional media since it allows two way information communication by directly feeding content into their Facebook accounts for immediate access and participation by citizens who are connected with a government institution on a social media site. Although most participants indicated their preference of receiving information through social media over traditional media, four participants indicated that there should be a possible integration of government websites with social medial sites for information currently contained in websites to be available through Facebook site for easy access and engagement.

> I like to get information from Facebook, with TV and newspapers the information is one way coming to me, I cannot put up a comment, with websites, there is no automatic newsfeed through my mobile, I have to first access the website. Maybe a great idea is to have newsfeeds from website into Facebook (Participant 12, female, age 18).

> Some of the information on government websites is also informative but not easily accessible. It would be nice to have access to this information via Facebook…to have some sort of a link. For example. when information is updated on a website it automatically feeds immediately into my Facebook account (Participant 2, female, age 33).

All participants elaborated extensively on the type of information that they need government to broadcast on Facebook and for what reasons, and the responses are categorized and summarized below:

**Table 3: Type of information for one way broadcasting on Facebook**

| Categories of Information Broadcast | Types of Information | Purpose |
|---|---|---|
| **Community based information** | -Government Calendar of events (election dates, venues for gatherings)<br>-Reminders for renewals of state document<br>-Important Date-Tax Returns<br>-Electronic forms for download<br>-Traffic Management issues (on-the go road accident alerts)<br>-Crime and Community Safety (crime hotspots and government interventions | To keep communities informed about pertinent events<br>Communities can participate in and important dates to ensure compliance to regulations. |
| **Marketing Information** | -Notifications about new services<br>-Advertising of government services<br>-Customer testimonials on improved services, government jobs | Informing and educating citizens about government service offering and opportunities. |
| **Automatic e-services** | -Status updates of services applied for such as ( ID, driver's license)<br>-Regular Automatic updates of service applied for | Integration of online services (integration between government websites and Facebook) for providing ubiquitous connectivity to citizens. |
| **Service Delivery Information** | -Notification for Service Interruptions<br>-Progress Reports on highly published service delivery issues. | Communicate problems, solutions and alternatives |
| **Natural Disaster Management Alerts** | -Flooding, wild fires, drought, earthquakes, health hazards and epidemics | Provide support for Health and Community Safety issues |
| **Statistical Information** | Employment, poverty and crime statistics | Keeping the citizens informed about challenges faced by the country. |
| **Employment Information** | -Links to employment databases and websites | Support community and economic development |

| Categories of Information Broadcast | Types of Information | Purpose |
|---|---|---|
| | -Notification about new government project for prospective employment. -Programmes to address Youth unemployment | |

**Collaboration**

The next theme identified within the context of public engagement was that of social media facilitating collaboration between government and citizens. The notion of social media providing mass collaboration was articulated by eight participants. The emphasis was that social media sites such as Facebook are designed to reach citizens in large numbers across culture, location, age and race providing government with legitimate and broad feedback to work from. Specific terminology used by participants to articulate the theme of collaboration included words such: 'mass collaboration', 'partnership', 'joint effort', 'collective effort and action', and 'two-way exchange of information'. Six of participants highlighted the relationship between social media being a channel for mass collaboration and in turn facilitating collective action and improved public service delivery. They indicated that social media provides a platform for a large group of people from different backgrounds to combine their skills, knowledge and expertise in a coordinated effort with the aim of contributing to societal and government challenges.

The following extracts illustrate the responses encompassing the mass collaboration theme as applied within various contexts:

> …social media can be used as a tool for mass collaboration and engaging the masses and getting a wide range of feedback from citizens from various backgrounds, race, age about challenges faced by communities. The more citizens government connects to, the bigger and creative the ideas and the more citizens feel involved (Participant 1, female, age 55).

> this technology can be used for reaching the masses across the country and communities can mobilise themselves online and as a collective approach and tell government to change policies and how to improve on service delivery matters (Participant 5, male, age 25).

> …this technology is good when it comes to connecting to many citizens and in the process of us communicating with government we can also learn

> what other communities are doing to work with government and make people's lives better through improved government services (Participant 11, female, age 42).

Five participants emphasized the concepts of collective action through partnerships between government and citizens to shape public service delivery based on citizen's views expressed on social media. Respondents perceived this online partnership as a convenient avenue for reaching government where they are treated as equal partners and are allowed to contribute their views freely in the shaping of public services. Furthermore, the perception from participants is that because social media is not restrictive it breaks down the complex hierarchical and authoritative structures that is a barrier to efficient collaboration.

> …the power of social media is that it will allows us citizens to freely share our views with government and be their partners, it also has the potential to break the barriers associated with accessing government and its complicated structures and protocols (Participant 5, male, age 28).

> I believe sites such as Facebook are the best platforms for government and citizens to work together to develop policies, make decision and improve service delivery without having to go through formal government structures that are at times not so easy to understand (Participant 1, female, age 55).

> …collaborating with government about important service delivery issues on Facebook, will make me feel like government's partner where I freely and confidently contribute my opinions and government considers them…you see online we are all equal..and all our view matters (Participant 2, female, age 33).

The next theme identified throughout the responses by most participants is that social media the collaborative nature of social media allows various viewpoints and expertise to be filtered through the platform and inevitably allow citizens to be co-partners in the design of public services. Some of the responses are outlined below:

> There are many citizens with professional expertise and experience and these people can give government valuable inputs through Facebook that can go into improving the services that department's offer (Participant 3, male, age 25).

> as a community activist I work very much closely with member of the community in Soweto and I know that my experience and knowledge

> can help government in introduce other services that communities are in need of and to my contribution influence the policies to be pro the poor and unemployed (Participant 5, male, age 28).

### Consultation, Participation and Deliberation

The literature review depicts a close relationship between consultation and participation. It infers that consultation leads to citizen's participation, which then yields deliberation and debate. During the assessment of the responses, a strong link between the three themes was identified and therefore responses pertaining to the themes were grouped together. The responses analysed show that all participants perceive the Facebook platform to be an effective space for government to consult citizens on a broad scale on pertinent issues that require input from the public. The fundamental idea from all respondents is that social media as a public tool is an appropriate channel to voice their views and provide feedback to government, to be listened to and for government to consult them as part of the decision making process and to further spark debate on policy related matters.

> I would like to participate in government related matters by communicating my views on Facebook based on the progress and shortcomings of what is happening in and around the country, and also have an opportunity to add suggestions, opinions and have my say on all important issues that will be "maybe" daily posted. I guess that this will give the government an idea how "I" as a citizen feel about my country (Participant 3, female, age 33).

> Government can use Facebook to publish questionnaire and surveys for me to evaluate their services and gather feedback from citizens. They can use these suggestions to improve their processes and turnaround times (Participant 5, male, age 37).

Nine participants echoed the view that government should exploit the opportunities presented by Facebook to consult with citizens specifically on proposed policies, bills and strategies prior to implementation. The perception from these respondents is that there is growing number of online communities that prefer to engage government using social media sites such as Facebook due to their convenience and easy accessibility. The role of government is therefore to ensure that consultation and deliberation is inclusive of all citizens including online communities. Such inclusivity will ensure that all citizens participate in the decision-making processes of government and to articulate their preferences and

requirements that should be considered and possibly incorporated into policies and strategies prior to implementation of new policies.

> Notices of discussions on proposed policy are normally advertised on specific prints media which community members have no easy access to as opposed to social media like Facebook. As a result few people are consulted to pass the law or policies that will apply to society in general. These laws and policies are commonly in contrary to social values e.g. Children's Act: allowing children to terminate pregnancies without consultation parents now government is bound to organize a review on this law because of the public outcry that is also carried out social media (Participant 11, female, age 42).

> South Africa is a democratic country and public participation and consultation in the policy making process of government should be a democratic right of every citizen…Facebook is a public platform and is great for achieving this and government should find ways of using it better (Participant 5, male, age 37).

Two participants further expressed the view that such elaborate and deliberate consultation using mass collaboration on Facebook will reduce conflicts and disagreements that follow with policy implementations that have minimal consultation and public participation:

> I'm sure that if government was to use Facebook better to consult citizens and allow them to say their view on service delivery matters, the number of service delivery protest would be reduced (Participant 12, female, age 18).

Four participants expressed the theme of Facebook groups as a mechanism to support debates and robust deliberation between citizens and governments. Respondents viewed Facebook groups as a suitable platform where groups of citizens can connect with government and deliberate issues of common interest in a focused environment:

> For instance, government departments can create Facebook groups to tackle specific challenges facing society such as youth unemployment and poverty. They can invite ordinary citizens, community leaders and even policy experts to join the online groups and start the debates and make resolutions online that should be implemented and monitored (Participant 5, male, age 37).

One participant further elaborated that Facebook groups can be appropriate for peer-to peer learning where citizens can learn from each other through group deliberations.

> I think the debates and information sharing that happens within Facebook groups can help citizens to learn from each other and even see how other communities are working with government to solve service delivery issues (Participant 9, female, age 23).

There were a variety of responses pertaining to information citizens wish to be consulted on; feedback citizens wish to provide to government and issues that they need participate in using social media. The table below summarises this information.

**Table 4: Type of information for consultation, participation and deliberation on Facebook**

| Information Category | Information Type | Purpose |
|---|---|---|
| **Consultation** | -Proposed bills, strategies and policies<br>-Tariff hikes<br>-Infrastructure development and impact on communities (eg. e-tolls)<br>-New community projects | To ensure that communities are informed and consulted on aspects of public service delivery that have an significant impact on lives of citizens for the sake of eliciting participation and debated |
| **Public Feedback to initiate citizen participation** | -Service Delivery Complaints<br>-Service Delivery Accolades<br>-Service delivery suggestions<br>-Follow ups on service request<br>-Request for service information | To allow citizens to contribute their views, opinions and preferences and elicit response from government on status of services. |
| **Service Evaluation** | -Service evaluation through questionnaires, opinion polls and votes | Citizens evaluate quality of public services and provide suggestions |
| **Participation Deliberation** | Public Debates on: -<br>Community and service delivery matters<br>-Public debate on | For supporting debates and continuous deliberation |

| Information Category | Information Type | Purpose |
|---|---|---|
| | Proposed policies, bills and strategies | |

**Conclusion for Proposition 3: Social media as a channel for supporting citizen engagement**

In summary, the responses outlined above show that social media could support all forms of engagement, namely: information broadcast, collaboration, consultation, participation and deliberation. Although respondents perceive social media as a powerful tool for a two way exchange of information between government and citizens, information broadcast is perceived as an important and foundational aspect of citizen engagement since it keeps communities educated and informed about the happenings of governments and has the ability to elicit citizens' participation and deliberation immediately as content is fed directly into their mobile phone. Respondents indicated that this is contrary to traditional media that supports one way communication. The sub-theme of collaboration elicited responses that indicated that social media facilitates exponential innovation since ideas that are sourced through mass collaboration allowing a wide range of citizens from different backgrounds to provide ideas and views to government. Furthermore, respondents perceived social media to be an appropriate platform for government and citizens to form partnerships to collectively work towards defined public goals. Finally, respondents perceived social media as a suitable platform for government to consult citizens on matters that have an impact on them such as proposed bills and policies allowing them to participate in the decision making of government and to deliberate on public service related matters.

**Proposition 4: Social media as a channel for supporting transparency**

All participants perceived Facebook to be a relevant medium that government could utilize to foster greater transparency of their internal processes and decision-making processes. Most participants explained that since social media sites are in the public domain they foster government's visibility, transparency and deliberation. They explained that the collaborative and interactive nature of social media allows

government to be transparent by providing the public with a glimpse of how government operates and how decision-making processes unfold. Government continuously keeping the public informed, encouraging online participation and being responsive to public online contributions underpins all of this.

The following quotation illustrates this notion:

> Facebook is perfect for improving transparency, especially if the settings are public and open for everyone to see. So for me, transparency through Facebook is about making government processes open such as publishing tenders online, making new proposed legislation visible through my Facebook account. There should be enough information published so that at any given time, I can know exactly what is happening and I can participate when decisions need to be taken (Participant 13, male, age 55).

> ... inviting me to evaluate their services online , asking me for suggestions and consulting with me on Facebook on important issues affecting citizens and encouraging citizens to complain about poor service delivery on Facebook .all this leads to a transparent and honest government (Participant 2, female, age 33).

Seven of the participants further explained that when government facilitates transparency through social media this will subsequently lead to accountability.

> …I do believe Facebook can open communication channels that will lead to transparency and of course accountability….for instance Facebook postings of public expenditure reports and decisions made at cabinet level..this will make government processes more open and accessible to citizens (Participant 14, male, age 44).

> … a government that is transparent is the one that goes all out to reach and communicate with citizens using various channels especially those accessible channels like Facebook because this is where citizens are lately. This would mean they are being transparent and also accountable to the public by displaying their information in the open, inviting us to participate in government matters (Participant, female 42, age 42).

> For instance the process of prior communication about schedules of load shading or water cuts is a perfect example of transparency and accountability. If this information is out in the open, government should provide answers to why this is happening, how long will it take to be resolved via Facebook feeds (Participant 1, female, age 55).

Four participants further perceived Facebook as an appropriate platform for monitoring and evaluating the performance of government officials as they deliver public services and for government to be answerable for its performance. The

emphasis from two of the participants was that all Facebook correspondence is in written format and have traceable dates and times for citizens to make follow ups. Participants explained that Facebook would allow them record their queries electronically, track progress and delays and hold government accountable for any breach on agreed service levels and poor performance. One participant indicated that government can further use social media to analyse citizens' complaints and improve on services.

> With social media in place, a transparent platform will be created as citizens can start lodging their queries online, make follow ups especially if nothing is being done about maybe a query that has been logged in a certain time frame. Government will have to provide feedback on Facebook and be accountable to citizens for reasons why turnaround times were not met. I like that everything is recorded in date and time for follow ups… (Participant 5, male, age 42).

> …on Facebook I'll be able to trace the time and date I lodged a complaint and I can make follow ups on the issues and because the all information is openly recorded, as citizens we can see when government is delaying on complaints and we can demand answers (Participant 11, female, age 42).

> …government departments can use Facebook to analyze grievances from citizens as a way of monitoring their performance and seeing how they can shorten the time it takes to delivery good services to communities and improve on service delivery (Participant 2, female, age 33).

Furthermore six participants viewed the use of social media as an appropriate platform for citizens to expose and deliberate over issues related to corruption, and for government to take action and report back to citizens on how the resolutions of these matters unfold. The emphasis was that government should enforce stringent controls on their social media to avoid malicious use by citizens and government officials:

> I think Facebook is a great system for government to use to improve on their transparency and especially to fight corruption. It can be a great platform for the public and government officials' to come out in the open, online and discuss how corruption is going to be removed and track how government is dealing with corruption cases (Participant 11, female, age, 42).

> …government should look into using Facebook for whistle blowing and allowing citizens to report corrupt government activities and for government to report on how these corrupt activities are being tackled. But such an online facility should be strictly controlled to avoid victimization of citizens who report corrupt activities (Participant 5, male, age 28).

All participants further elaborated about the type of information government should broadcast on social media to facilitate transparency and accountability of government. The responses are summarized below:

**Table 5:Type of information for fostering transparency and accountability**

| Information Category | Information Type | Purpose |
|---|---|---|
| **Transparency** | -Decisions made at cabinet level<br>-Publication of tenders<br>-Online invitations for public debates<br>-Requests for comments on proposed policies<br>-Reports of combating Corruption | To facilitate the establishment of an open government |
| **Accountability** | -Budget and expenditure reports<br>-Citizen's Complaints Facility<br>-Notifications on service interruptions | To facilitate the establishment of an accountable government |
| **Performance Monitoring** | Status of agreed public service deliverables | To facilitate government's accountability |

## Conclusion for proposition 4: Social media as a channel for supporting transparency

An overwhelming number of respondents perceived social media to be in the public domain and should be used by government to channel public service related matters through this platform to facilitate openness and transparency. A number of participants further explained that such openness by government can lead to citizens holding government accountable since public service information would be openly published and easily accessed by citizens. Other participants further viewed the traceability of published information on social media to have the capability of supporting citizens in monitoring and evaluating the performance of government

officials as they work towards delivering public services further facilitating accountability. Lastly a number of respondents perceived social media's transparency as a vehicle through which corruption could be exposed and acted upon.

**Proposition 5: Social media as a channel for entrenching trust between citizens and government**

The literature review suggested that at its best, the process of public engagement through social media perpetuates transparency and accountability (Lewis, 1997) which in turn fosters greater trust between government and citizens. This section seeks to provide a synopsis of citizens' perceptions on social media as a channel for entrenching trust between citizens and government.

The responses received from participants varied with respect to this proposition and three categories of responses were identified. The first category of responses from six participants indicated that their current level of trust in government is low due to government not being responsive to their demands, poor service delivery and inefficient communication processes from government. However, these participants perceived social media as a channel that government could use for entrenching trust between citizens and government and for greater transparency and accountability. The view of these participants was that social media supports sustained, open relationships where entities involved rely on continued partnership and two way communication for achieving a common goal, and facilitated responsiveness and trust. Social media further brings government closer to communities:

> …my level of trust in government is very low because of the time they take to respond in any form of citizens disputes, the follow ups and the final agreements in whatever that they agree upon. From the ministers down to the ward councilors. But I see social media as good tool for increase my trust in government cause is can be used by government to improve on the time it take to respond to us as citizens and making two way communication easy and government processes open for all to monitor and to make government more accountable to what they promise (Participant 2, female, age 33).

Another participant elaborated on the issue of trust of entrenched through the use of Facebook:

> Right now there are a lot of things that reduces my trust in government. For example- you have poor service delivery, corruption, poor communication, poverty and unemployment and so on…but I do believe that Facebook can bring government closer to communities if they are going to be transparent on Facebook to let me know how they plan to solve some of the issues and always keep communities updated at least my level of trust can go up (Participant 44, male, age 34).

A similar response is seen below:

> I'll trust government if I can easily reach any department via Facebook unlike not knowing how to get hold of government but it's important that they respond quickly and are open about internal processes.(Participant 6, female, age 20").

The second category of responses from nine participants perceived the establishment of trust between government and citizens to be dependent upon a variety of factors that work together to produce desired public outcomes and not only the effective use of social media:

> I think trust needs to be addressed in a broader spectrum. I don't think social media alone is sufficient to make citizens trust government. I also think real trust can start happening once most communities see improvement in the service delivery, unemployment rate and promises made being fulfilled (Participant 3, female, 25).

> Social media sites like Facebook are open and I think they can make government to be more transparent if used properly…but the issue of trust is not an easy one. For me, I'll start trusting government once I see service delivery improving on the ground, poverty and unemployment decreasing… (Participant 13, male, age 55).

> What happened to the roll out the National Development Plan for reducing poverty and unemployment especially youth unemployment .. I think they come up with good plans but 0% action.. Facebook is a great way of openly deliberating over such matters but I until such time I see improvement in living conditions of communities my trust will remain low." (Participant 14, male, age 44).

The last category was articulated by one participant that believed that citizens' mistrust in technology may compromise social media being adopted as a channel for

entrenching trust between citizens and government. His perceptions are captured below:

> …I think most citizens don't use technology and social media because they don't trust it.by this I mean, they are afraid that their privacy will be compromised, I know of others who can't transact on online banking because they are afraid of security issues… so I think mistrust can also be on technology and not the government behind it so I think more training on social media has to be conducted by government (Participant 13, male, age 44).

It is interesting to note that the view shared above resonates with views shared by non-social media users as it will be outlined in the sections that follow.

**Conclusion on proposition 5: Social media as a channel for entrenching trust between citizens and government**

This proposition yielded varying responses from participants. The largest group of participants indicated that the effective use social media alone would not bring about the establishment of trust between citizens and governments. However, the entrenchment of trust is dependent upon the achievement of tangible outcomes that improve the life of citizens such as reduction of unemployment and poverty. The second view from respondents was that social media when used effectively would inevitably restore their low and wavering trust in government by establishing an open two way communication channel that could allow government to be responsive and to partner with citizens in the delivery of services. Lastly, mistrust of technology by citizens may hinder the entrenchment of social media as a channel for facilitating trust between government and citizens.

**Responses of non-social media users**

Respondents that were not using any form of social media were interviewed to ascertain the reason for non-use. Two of the participants indicated that their main reason for not using social media to communicate with government is that they did not have the means for Internet connectivity and any form of knowledge, experience or training in using the technology including Internet enabled mobile phones. The participants further said that they could not afford Internet connectivity due to being unemployed there wasn't much left to spend on extras such as Internet connectivity.

> You see right now I am unemployed and I don't have money to spend on new phone and Internet. I need to be careful and spend money of food and things for school for my children (Participant 1, female, age 42).

One of the participants said that due to being semi-literate and having poor proficiency in English, she would be uncomfortable participating in social media platforms but wished that her children could have connectivity and exposure for learning purposes.

> My English is not too good especially when I write because I never completed my studying. It will be difficult for me to write English but I can do best in Zulu.. But it would be nice for my children to know how to use it and have the Internet (Participant 4, male, age 34).

Both participants did however mention they were aware that a number of community members were using social media to communicate but had not heard of many community members that were using social media to communicate with government.

The remaining three participants who were regular Internet users but were not using social media sites, reported that their main reasons for not using social media was the fear of their privacy being compromised as they perceived themselves to be very private individuals. They all indicated that they were not aware that social media sites have privacy settings that are used to control access of users' accounts.

> I'm a very private person and I think social media is for those people who are very social and are not uncomfortable with the world tracing their activities and reading their thought (Participant 2, male, age 40).

Two participants stated that they preferred visiting government departments and engaging in face-face communication with government officials stating such communication was most conducive as it demonstrated non-verbal cues that were important in enriching the communication and revealing hidden communication clues.

> I prefer face-to face communication. It allows me to see if a government official is not telling me all that I need to know and I can probe the official or make further enquiries elsewhere if the facial expression is contrary to what I am told. Social media has limitation in this regard (Participant 2, male, age, 45).

"One participant who was a regular Internet user indicated that one of the other reason she is not using social media to engage with government is her prior

unfulfilling experience with government electronic services such as out-dated information on websites and email response not being responded to."

> I've used electronic government services before, the websites are not regularly updated with fresh and relevant information for citizens. If I used email to ensure about something, I also don't receive a response. So I really don't think there will be a difference with social media (Participant 5, female, age 32).

In conclusion, the responses indicate two groups of citizens who did not utilize social media platforms. The first group was not utilizing social media due to being unemployed and economically inactive and finding the cost of Internet connectivity unaffordable. A respondent within this group indicated the use of English as the main barrier to the use of social media and a lack of formal training on social media platforms. The second group of respondents were active Internet users, but due to the fear of their privacy being compromised, they opted not to utilize social media and one of the participants further preferred face-to-face communication which enhances communication via visual cues.

**Barriers to citizens' social media use as perceived by social media users**

Notwithstanding that the majority of participants perceived Facebook as a tool for facilitating citizen engagement, close to half of the participants elaborated on the perceived barriers to citizen engagement. Participants felt that effective citizen's engagement should be inclusive and involve citizens across language, age, and geographic location, and income. Their perception was that the current South African climate makes it difficult for social media to be accessed by all citizens and thereby limiting citizen engagement. The major barriers identified by citizens were Internet connectivity not being accessible to all community members, especially those that are unemployment and find the cost of purchasing data unaffordable. In a country such as South Africa with 11 official languages, participants identified the use of mainly English in government's electronic media including social media as a barrier that excludes non English speaking communities.

> I think engaging with government on social media is a good idea for someone like me who has access to it but the challenge is that disadvantage communities,, people who don't **have access to networks** via usual devices and older generation and those that can't read and write will be unable to participate (Participant 5, male, age 28).

> The thing is that Facebook is not for everyone, we still have people that have not used the computer, or a smart phone or just connectivity to the Internet. Some people will even need general training on the Internet (participant 4, male, age 34).

> ..the only challenge that government may face when using social media to engage citizens in South Africa is the issue of language. As far as I know, sites like Facebook only use mostly English and in South Africa we have 11 official languages… (Participant 4, male, age 34).

It is interesting to note that the responses received from social media users resonated with some of the responses that were gathered from non-social media users as outlined in the preceding section.

**Response from the South African government on the finding of the study**

A synopsis of the findings of this study was presented to the GCIS which is responsible for amongst others guiding and directing the social media agenda in government. It was discovered that the GCIS had in the financial year 2012/13 established a unit known as Directorate: Social Media that is responsible for providing strategies for driving government websites, online platforms and mobile technology in government. An interview was conducted with a representative from the Social Media Directorate with the aim of soliciting a response that would represent the view of government on issues of social media and government:

> As the GCIS we are in the process of finalizing a draft social media strategy and reviewing the existing social media policy. The development of the strategy is one of the Key Performance Indicators and is linked to the actual government outcomes in our plans and we plan to incorporate it into Communication Plans of departments. The strategy is very citizen-centric and we hope to create a transparent platform for government and citizens to start talking about pertinent societal issues. We are planning to have the strategy finalized by the end of 2014, and government department will be in a position to adapt the implementation of the strategy to the respective mandates of the Departments (GCIS Representative).

From the findings presented, the Director: Social Media was in agreement with the perception from citizens that the use of social media has the potential to create public value. He perceived the various dimensions of public value as unpacked in the propositions to be in line with the citizen-centric approach that the proposed national social media strategy is adopting:

> As earlier mentioned, the social media strategy we are developing is highly citizen centric yes it is very much aligned with all the public value dimension you have mentioned so in essence as shown by the findings social media has a great potential of creating public and the core of this being optimal public engagement (GCIS Representative).

The GCIS representative further elaborated with respect to an enabling environment fundamental to effective social media use in government:

> An enabling environment is pivotal for successful social media implementation. I'm pleased to report we've made significant progress with regard to getting support from Ministers who are now quite eager to collaborate and response to citizens on social media platfroms especially twitter. For instance we've extended this to texting platforms in particular Whatsapp where we arrange LIVE chats between Ministers and citizens. …In terms of the resources…yes we definitely need to invest resources into social media, a minimum budget to get things going and for department to expand current roles of certain official to be fully dedicated to managing and maintaining social media site…we don't have to create new positions for this, but a webmaster can also fulfill this role. Lastly I believe that there is a lot to be learned from the private sector and as government partnerships in the area of technology are important from social media to building the infrastructure for it (GCIS Representative).

The GCIS representative was intrigued by the finding that Facebook was the most preferred social media platform amongst participants since the perception from government was that Twitter is best suited for citizen engagement. He indicated, however that government was willing to adjust their approach to cater for citizens' preferences for engaging on Facebook while striking a balance between government approach and citizens preferences:

> Our aim is to target all popular social media sites, but we've noticed that the most engagement that we get as government is on Twitter and I believe the reason is that Twitter is not so personal as Facebook as it allows citizens to engage government at arm's length and be free with expressing their views whereas with Facebook citizens maintain very close relationship with family and friends and I think citizens need just a bit of distance between government and my own personal space. For instance the presidency twitter account is very popular…based on these findings we are to re-look citizens preferences for Facebook for as long as we can get a balance between what citizens want and what government can offer (GCIS Representative).

The GCIS representative further highlighted what he perceived to be the challenges when it comes to social media implementation in government:

> The majority of South Africans still do not have access to the Internet and social media, , for me this is more than a 'digital divide but is more of data divide. The reason I'm saying this is that the cost of phone with Internet connectivity has gone down but the cost is high when buying data for connectivity, this is a challenge especially for poor communities where unemployment is on the rise. In addition to think to this, the rise in social media is forcing government to catch up with the aggressive digital era and to optimize the backend system to be in tune with electronic media platforms and to this all about an efficient e-Government where there's seamless integration of system to optimally deliver information to citizens. (GCIS Representative).

In terms of government addressing the current challenge of accessibility to the Internet in pursuit of creating an enabling environment for public value creation, the following was outlined;

> As I have mentioned earlier. These challenges require government to work with a number of stakeholders to successfully roll-out the social media strategy. We need to work with the private sector to ensure free basic access of Internet and improved broadband for all areas around the country. At present there are government project for the roll out of Wi-Fi technology in specific areas. We also need to work with universities and academia in terms of emerging research worldwide on social media implementation in government and I believe that as government we need to understand the social media requirements of citizens and have a balance between what citizens want and what government can provide. (GCIS Representative).

## Summary of results

Looking at the main participants of this study, it is identified that more females than males participated in the study. Most of the participants using social media had some form of secondary education and five were professionals with a tertiary qualification and most were either employed or self-employed. All participants indicated that Facebook was their preferred choice of social media and the main source of access being mobile phone. The majority of participants were highly active on Facebook, accessing it more than once a day. Participants used social media mostly for connecting with friends and family, and accessing and sharing information with groups. Eight of the participants were connected to Facebook pages of government institutions; five of participants were connected to the Thusong centre's Facebook page. For non-social media users, three out five participants were unemployed; the two participants who were employed were using the Internet but

were not social media users. Those connected to the centre's Facebook page indicated that government was not responsive to them on the site and content was out-dated and not properly maintained.

The main results of the study show that citizens felt that to create an enabling environment for social media implementation, a social media strategy should be developed and citizens views should be incorporated into the plan; in addition they indicated that partnerships with other stakeholders such as the private sector was imperative. Furthermore, the views of citizens were that government institutions should be capacitated with funding and resources to ensure successful implementation. Lastly, the importance of having support from authorities was also an input to an enabling environment. Generally, the data received from participants indicate a positive perception for social media supporting efficiency, citizen engagement, transparency and accountability. Respondents were explicit with respect to the type of information they wished to see on social media for the dimensions of public value. For trust different views were received. A few participants were optimistic in terms of effective use of social media creating trust between citizens and government. However, the majority of participants indicated that trust is realised when government produces tangible outcomes that improve the lives of citizens. Mistrust in technology was further identified as the barrier that impeded trust between government and citizens.

Barriers to social media adoption were mainly the cost of connecting to the Internet and English Language illiteracy and these barriers were identified by both social media users and non-social media users.

# Chapter 5

## Interpretation and analysis of data

The preceding chapter provided a presentation of the data obtained from interviewing the study respondents as well as the response received from government with respect to the findings of this study. This chapter analyses, discusses and interprets the significance of the results including the similarities and differences shared by participants and government. This chapter also seeks to ascertain the importance of the data collected, why it is important and what can be learned from it. For a comprehensive analysis of the results this chapter interprets results based on the themes that were identified in Chapter 2 and the structure format of Chapter 4. The feedback from the interviews will be analysed and juxtaposed with the propositions inherent within the themes from the literature review.

### Analysis of Participants' biographic details

This section of biographic details of participants' Facebook activities is important in providing some statistical information that reveals the nature and characteristics of Facebook users. The analysis of social media users and activities is very significant to government especially when they are attempting to decide where to best allocate time and resources for social media and understanding the content that citizens are engaged with in order for government to be relevant to interactions unfolding on the site (Adler, 2014).

The invitation to participate in this study attracted participants across the gender lines and across a range of age groups. The majority of participants were between ages 26 and 45, only three participants were above the age of 50 and three participants were below the age of 25. These findings are in line with recent research that shows that in South Africa youth are highly active on social media, and that Facebook penetration declines through the age groups (Goldstuck, 2014). Facebook has 58% penetration among under-25s, 45% among those aged 26-45, and 25% among the over-45s (Goldstuck, 2014). Trends show a significant number of researches emerging on the impact of Facebook on youth in the field of education and psychology (Hew, 2011; Whitehill, Brockman, Moreno, 2012). Therefore these

findings present an opportunity to government to explore ways of empowering the youth through social media.

In terms social media users, nine females participated in this study and six males. Research statistics indicate that worldwide more females than males use social media platforms, with more women using Facebook as compared to men (Pew Research Centre, 2014). This is important in the context of South Africa where gender-related challenges persist. According to Statistics South Africa (2013) women are still subjected to far higher unemployment, far lower financial standing and higher levels of illiteracy. Of further significance is that women are regarded as the conventional caretakers of children, and they would likely have a more prominent role than men in advocating for the rights of children and families. The increase in women participation in social media platforms provides an opportunity for women to engage government and other stakeholders and influence gender parity and children's rights policies through the use of social media platforms (Salem & Mourtada, 2011; Apleni, 2012).

There was a noticeable link to the use of social media and the employment status of participants. The majority of social media participants were employed, with only three participants being unemployed. It is further noted that out of the five non-Facebook users three were also unemployed. One of the barriers to using social media as articulated by the both groups of participants is the challenge of Internet access affordability, which indicates that the challenge of unemployment and poverty is a direct barrier for equal access and opportunities for citizens and clearly providing evidence of the causes of the digital divide that still exists in the South African.

The National Development Plan (2011) has acknowledged the digital divide as one the challenges facing South Africa. To mitigate this challenge, in the National Development Plan 2013 vision, government plans for the development of seamless technology infrastructure that will be universally accessible across the country at a cost and quality that meet the needs of citizens and other stakeholders and as a means to use technology to facilitate social inclusion which In public value norms, implies public participation (National Development Plan, 2011)

**Participants' Facebook activities**

The following is a synopsis of the interpretation of results based on observations conducted on participants Facebook accounts and data gathered during the online interviews:

Whilst Facebook was the preferred and most often used social media site for online collaboration for all participants in this study, the response from the government through the GCIS showed a perception that Twitter is more suitable for citizen engagement as it is perceived as less personal and allows citizens to express themselves freely as compared to personal friendship-based networks found in Facebook. Based on these findings, government has indicated that they will relook into the use of Facebook as a platform for citizen engagement and adjust their focus accordingly.

The findings of this study are in alignment to statistics which confirm that Facebook as a platform is the most used social media site in South Africa and across the world (Facebook, 2015; Goldstuck, 2014). The ease of use of the Facebook platform makes it simple for participants to optimally utilize its various features. Facebook features including groups, pages, newsfeeds, messaging, event, privacy and security features amongst others contributes to Facebook being the preferred social media network (Bicen and Cavus, 2009). Amidst the proliferation of Facebook usage in South it was surprising to learn that only a minority of participants were connected to the centre's Facebook site or any other government Facebook page; this is due to participants being oblivious of the existence of such sites.

The inability of the South African government to attract citizens to social media sites is contrary to the impression expressed by Husin & Hanisch, (2011), that social media has been recognized as an important information source by many governments around the world that provides them with the ability to acquire and distribute information and engage citizenry. All participants accessed Facebook through their mobile phones and this is in line with research which shows that the majority of Facebook users access the site via mobile phones (Broadband Commission, 2014; Goldstuck, 2014). All participants accessed Facebook at least than once a day either to access information or engage in two-way communication.

The regularity with which users access their Facebook pages provides government with a window of opportunity to reach citizens where they frequently spend time by continually providing up to date information and encouraging citizen participation. A few of the participants on this study had connected to government via Facebook sites for accessing information, posting questions and comments.

**Analysis of perceptions about the Thusong Service Centre Facebook page**

The Thusong Service Centre in Maponya mall is a one-stop central place for a range of services provided by government through the departments of Labour, Home Affairs, National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), Department of Labour Transport and Finance (GCIS, 2013). Notwithstanding that not all government departments or functions are represented at this particular centre, the overall finding from this study is that participants perceive the centre as a representation of government in its entirety. This in line with the mandate of the Thusong Service centres of government bringing all the spheres of government close to the communities through these centres (GCIS, 2006),

The participants expect the centre's Facebook page to present and publish information related to government services as a whole and not limited to the services offered at the centre and also have links to other government social media sites

Although participants were very active on Facebook in their daily lives, connection and interaction with government institutions including the Maponya Mall Thusong Service Centre were limited. An Australian study found that there is generally limited contact between government and citizens on social media, with citizens using social media to communicate with family and friends and share information on entertainment (Howard, 2013). A general view from citizens was that the centre's Facebook page was not maintained with up to date information, and the centre was not responsive to citizens' posts and content was limited to information broadcast with no bidirectional communication between government and citizens. Howard (2013) argues that the vital traits in the use of social media in government are ensuring timeliness in responding to citizens, and accuracy of information, which has the propensity to strengthen the relationship between government and citizens.

**Citizens' perception on social media and creation of public value**

This section presents the analysis and interpretations of the main findings of the study in terms of citizens' perceptions on social media and the creation of public value. The structure of the analysis and interpretation conforms to the proposition statements as derived from the conceptual framework as initially depicted in Chapter 2. The analysis and interpretation will be unpacked based on the derived proposition statements as outlined in the preceding chapters. The South African government through the newly established Social media Directorate within the GCIS was provided an opportunity to respond to the findings of this study, as will be noted in the following discussion. The general perception from government is that amidst the challenge of the digital divide, the use of social media by government provides an avenue for public value creation for government and citizens. This study in particular also provides insight into the social media requirements of citizens in order to strike a balance between what citizens want and what government can offer.

**Proposition 1: An enabling environment is key to public value creation through social media**

As indicated in Chapter 2, this proposition affirms that public value creation through the use of social media is dependent upon the establishment of an enabling environment in the public sphere that harnesses three interrelated processes in the form of public outcomes, the authorizing environment and operational capacity (Moore, 1995). The responses from participants were fairly in line with the notion of the strategic triangle.

The general view from citizens was that there is a need for the development of a national social media strategy or social media policy, which should guide the identification of a range of objectives that are to be attained by the use of social media by government. With a number of social media platforms to choose from technology choices should be made by government regarding which social media platform to leverage in reaching the citizens. In terms of the Operational Capacity, participants indicated that effective social media implementation requires a set of organizational tasks to build operational capacity and a set of organizational arrangements in the form of tasks and responsibilities for social media management

as well as resources and skills to support implementation. These perceptions are aligned to the augments of Mergel (2012) and Picazo-Vela, Gutierrez-Martinez & Luna-Reyes (2012), with regard to the importance of government in having a social media strategy that ensures the use of various social media platforms across government institutions is aligned with the respective organization mandates. The strategy should be supported by related skills and resources to ensure effective roll-out. Mergel (2012) further adds that a social media strategy is not only essential to realize the benefits it provides but to also manage the risks associated with its use.

These findings endorse the response received from the South African government through GCIS that they are in the process of developing a national social media strategy that is citizen-centric and is linked to government outcomes, thereby supporting the creation of public value.

With respect to the authorising environment, participants felt that the drive and support for social media in government institution should lie within the highest political and public structures such as ministers and be cascaded down to an operational level to ensure the sustainability of optimal management of social media programs. Participants also felt that an authoring environment for social media implementation should constitute partnerships between government, citizens, the private sector and other stakeholders to ensure maximum participation. This is in line with public value literature from authors such as Moore (1995); Stoker (2006) which notes that the creation of public value is underpinned by participation of various stakeholders who bring forth broad insight when resolving public service challenges. Government through GCIS also confirmed that there is a general support from the Ministers in terms of them personally using social media to engage citizens; however these engagements have not been applied on Facebook. They further confirmed the importance of partnerships with the private sector and academia in terms of learning trends and new implementations of social media. A good example of an effective authorizing environment approach is the US government which has adopted this approach by releasing an “Open Government” memorandum (Obama, 2009) which was endorsed throughout government institutions and it outlined three pillars of open

government: openness, participation, and partnerships with citizens that are driven by the implementation of technology and social media in government institutions.

**Governance**

One of the components of an enabling environment that was introduced in the literature review was the concept of networked governance. Within the context of social media this describes the capability of online relationships to be underpinned by the ability to exercise decision making, directing and changing behaviours in pursuit for governance (Parker, 2007). It is interesting to note that the notion of governance as an input to an enabling environment for public value creation did emerge. However the participants explained it in the context of good governance and electronic governance (e-Governance) as opposed to networked governance. Networked governance in the context of this study is more inward looking in terms of enforcement of governance within the network structures and online relationships existing on social media. Whereas the findings of this study extend governance beyond online relationships themselves by suggesting that good governance should be applied across all structures of government involved in the implementation of social media and practised by stakeholders involved.

Adding to this, one participant added that technology itself should be used to bring about governance in the delivery of public services since technology such as social media facilitates transparency, participation, responsiveness and ultimately decision-making and these are key components of governance. This is aligned to suggestions about electronic Governance (e-Governance), which states that the reason for implementing e-Governance is to improve good governance. The pillars of good governance are transparency, inclusion, participation and accountability and technology has the inherent capabilities to support good governance (Palvia & Sharma, 2007).

Therefore these findings provide a unique dimension of viewing governance in the context of social media. They indicate that governance should not only be enforced within the social networks themselves but should be applied to all structures, processes and stakeholders involved in the implementation of social

media and the inherent benefits of technology should be leveraged to bring about good governance.

**Proposition 2: Social media as a channel for supporting government efficiency**

The efficiency of public organizations is a key indication of public value through e-government which is the way in which the functions and operations of public organisations are improved and produce more benefits as compared with costs incurred (Karunasena & Deng, 2012; Millard, Warren, Leitner, & Shahin, 2006).

The response from participants support this view in that all participants agree that there are greater benefits to be derived from the use of social media by government. Participants elaborated on the specific derived benefits by explaining that the optimal use social media allow government to share and deliver information conveniently, speedily and timeously, making government more responsive and meeting citizen's needs. This is in line with existing literature that supports the same notion (Jorgensen & Bozeman, 2007; Landsbergen, 2014; Lindgren, 2012). From the responses received it is clear that the benefits related to convenience, speed, and timelines created by social media are also mainly related to accessibility of this platform through the use of mobile technology. It should further be noted that results outlined in Chapter four indicate that participants mostly access Facebook using their mobile phone.

OECD (2011) indicates that mobile technology is being used to support government globally for more efficient business processes, to facilitate real-time communication and quick data access for citizens while lessening time and space restrictions. Mobile technologies provide access to public information and services in areas where infrastructure required for Internet or wired phone service is not possible thereby reducing the "digital divide". This inevitable connection between social media and mobile technology is of significance in facilitating the existence of responsive government and connected societies.

The second part noted in the definition of efficiency is the reduction of cost while delivering greater benefits for the public. This definition is mainly inward looking in terms of reducing internal government cost for rendering services. However, responses received from participants show that the measure of efficiency for citizens

is more outward looking ensuring that citizens incur minimal costs while engaging with government.

Participants were adamant that using social media through the use of mobile phone is cost effective since the cost of connecting to the Internet has reduced drastically based on the package options inherent in their mobile phone and this eradicate travelling costs to a government facility. OECD (2011) supports this view by stating that the inexpensive, ready-for-use mobile devices and reduced costs of broadband are eradicating existing barriers related to costs and empowering citizens to connect to governments.

In this context, the efficiency of a public organization is determined by developing better ICT infrastructure, re-designing public functions, sharing public information, empowering public sector staff (European Commission, 2006), and cutting excess staff. Since public organizations run on taxpayers' money, citizens value the improved efficiency of public organizations through e-government, which results in savings (Gauld, Gray & McComb, 2009).

**Proposition 3: Social media as a channel for supporting citizen engagement**

As indicated in the previous chapter, this proposition yielded the most detailed and elaborates responses as compared to others and this could be an indication of the hunger citizens have to engage with government. The analysis and interpretation of results will follow the same structure as explained in the previous chapter by interpreting citizen engagement in terms of the three categories namely: Information Broadcast, Collaboration and lastly consultation, participation and deliberation.

In general all participants agreed that social media supports the different types of engagements listed above. Inasmuch as during the initial part of the interview sessions most participants had attributed the power of social media to being an interactive two-way collaboration platform, all indicated that information broadcasting is still significant for keeping citizens informed and educated about government related matters. The different categories of engagement are aligned to the social media approaches recommended by Mergel (2012), which outline the four different approaches for implementing social media. The first type of strategy is a ‘push strategy’ which is mainly Information broadcast in which social media are primarily

used to transmit existing web content and there is no two way interaction. In this approach, social media are used to disseminate government information. The second type of approach is a 'pull strategy' where a government institution uses social media to draw users to the social media platform and to encourage citizens to provide new information. In this way government agencies are gradually trying to pull information in from citizens through social media channels while there is limited levels of interaction since the organization hardly respond to these comments (Mergel, 2012). A third approach is the 'networking strategy' - with this approach the use of social media tools is highly interactive with a lot of back and forth between a government institution and diverse communities.' A final tactic is one in which government services are conducted through social media applications: social media is then used for actual transactions between organization and citizens. Mergel (2012) concludes however, that this fourth strategy is 'rarely observable' at this moment.

**Information Broadcast**

Various responses were received in terms of the significance of information broadcast by government and various perspectives were raised. Participants indicated that the fundamental aim of information broadcast is to keep the public informed about the challenges and available opportunities in government, amongst other things. This view is shared by Albert and Passmore (2008) who stated that information broadcast is essential for providing the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions within the public service. In chapter 4 (table 2), the categories and type of information that participants perceived as important for broadcasting are grouped into General Community based information, marketing information, automated responses service delivery information, natural disaster alerts, statistical information, Employment opportunities. This is consistent with research conducted by (Demchak & Friis, 2000; Karunasena & Deng, 2012) that outlines pertinent information that is broadcasted on e-government websites.

It was interesting to note that almost all of the information participants wanted to be broadcasted on social media could also be disseminated through government websites and other forms of traditional media such as newspapers and television.

On further enquiry, participants indicated that they were fully aware of this however they indicated that the only shortcoming with traditional media is the fact it supports unidirectional communication, and does not allow the reader to immediately engage, share and comment on the content published. Nekatibebe (2012) shared the same views and stated that due to this fact, traditional media have been challenged by new media, which is changing the participation habits of the audiences by allowing published content to reach the reader wherever they are in a fast and interactive manner and providing an opportunity for readers to interact with the content. In contrast, Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden (2011) argue that there is a need for organisations to consider both social media and traditional media as part of an ecosystem that is integrated, whereby all elements work in synergy toward a common objective to bring citizens experiences to the forefront whilst recognizing that traditional media entails a trade-off between reach and citizen engagement, while social media enables broad use of all formats and platforms. These perspectives are aligned to the findings from two participants who mentioned the concept of a digital ecosystem where all governments' electronic system can work in synergy to provide a ubiquitous experience for the citizens making information easily accessible.

**Collaboration**

The public value literature is categorical about public value being created through collaboration amongst different stakeholders who collectively debate common and contesting issues for achieving a common objective (Moore, 2005). The emphasis from the responses received is that social media is giving rise to a new form of collaboration, namely mass collaboration which is derived from masses of online communities that are self-organizing, creating a new sense of creativity, ingenuity and innovation which the public sphere could tap into for improved service delivery, a view supported by Ghazawneh (2008). The notion of mass collaboration through new technologies such as social provides an interesting and new concept, which can be further be explored within the context of public value.

Respondents expressed the view that the main benefit of mass collaboration is that the more citizens and stakeholders government collaborates with, the better the

innovative ideas and the faster resolutions to problems can be achieved and this view is shared by Archer (2009). The perception from respondents is that mass collaboration through social media allows government to establish partnerships with large groups of people online who may never have had an existing relationship before to collectively work together to achieve a common goal. This is of significance in the context of public value because citizens will no longer be viewed as passive recipients of public services but as partners who have an opportunity of defining what is valuable to them and have an opportunity to influence the design of public services. This conforms to literature by Benington, 2006, Kelly, Mulgan & Muers, 2002).

Most respondents perceived social media to be a more convenient and direct way of reaching government compared to the traditional and more structured ways of getting citizens voices heard. Respondents indicated partnerships established through social media have the potential to break down the bureaucratic and hierarchal structure and allow citizens to work jointly with government to design public services and improve on service delivery. This view is shared by Zaffar & Ghazawneh (2012) who state that if collaboration is restricted by authority or power, it has a detrimental impact on building trust and firming relationships.

**Consultation, Participation and Deliberation**

Public value theory has developed in the context of where consulting, participation, engaging citizens or giving a “voice” to the citizens and the consumers of public services has recently become almost a ubiquitous terminology in policy making (Albert & Passmore, 2008). The responses from participants are aligned to the notion expressed above. An interesting view from most respondents is that they prefer to be consulted and engaged online rather than through traditional ways of consultation associated with a physical space, such as community forums, street communities, *imbizos* among others. This viewpoint opens up a new perspective in public value discourse in terms of what virtual communities consider to be valuable and what adds value to these communities in terms of consultation, participation a deliberation. The public value discourse is underpinned by the notion of social inclusion that underpins the process of maximum citizen engagement. The

heterogeneity of virtual communities poses a variety of opportunities for government to tap into their expertise and the possibility of diverse innovative ideas that are generated by such communities (Preece, 2001). On the other hand, government has to grapple the dynamism of virtual communities associated with fast interactive affiliations that are not bound by time and space and are striving for openness, accessibility and cost effectiveness.

A few of the respondents viewed citizen consultation through social media as a means of dispute resolution that may lead to fewer service delivery protests. This view is aligned to Fishkin (2011) who emphasised that consulting citizens can assist in the dispute resolution process because it can entreat some level of democracy and subsequently be perceived as a legitimate solution accepted by stakeholders involved. Furthermore, respondent believe that social media integrates a diverse sector of the population, and consultation among problem stakeholders who disagree on viewpoints can be facilitated to establish a shared definition of the problem and objectives to be attained. Such consultations between the various stakeholders online can involve intense discussion, negotiation and deliberation and this view is shared by Charalabidis & Loukis (2012).

Respondents further agreed that social media being a tool that is embedded in citizens life can easily be adopted as a catalyst for day to day deliberation between government and citizens and this is aligned to the assertions of Gibbs & Halpern (2013).

**Proposition 4: Social media as a channel for supporting transparency**

Throughout literature transparency is considered as a core public value dimension over which the other dimensions anchor. The proliferation of social media is providing opportunities to further use Web 2.0 technologies as a catalyst to establish transparency. The various responses from all citizens show that social media is perceived as having inherent functionality to support transparency in government activities. Participants suggested that social media is an open platform that is broadly accessible to the public, allowing quick dissemination, sharing of information, and the ability to monitor, trace and track public information and resources and this view is supported by Dawes & Helbig (2010).

A number of participants further view social media as a tool for fighting corruption by exposing it on social media where there is an audit trail for creating an avenue for tracking and monitoring the outcome of reported corrupt activities. This notion is aligned assertions by Neupane, Soar, Vaidya, Aryal (2014) & Shirky, C. (2011), who further stated that one of the objectives of a social media strategy should be to expose corruption. This is of significance since the existence of corruption in government undermines values upheld by citizens that of an honest, open and trustworthy government. Furthermore corruption erodes trust in public institutions and leadership (Spector, 2005). Participants further mentioned that the traceability and audit trail functionality provided by social media tools allow for citizens to track the responsiveness of government and for government to create an opportunity to review its performance based on citizen's comments and improve on the delivery of public services. The same view is shared by Armstrong (2010) and McDermott (2010) who argue that transparency endorses accountability by providing the public with a platform to monitor and evaluate the performance of government officials as they deliver public services and for government to be answerable to its electorate.

It was interesting to note that most of the respondents indicated that the transparent nature of social media platforms has the propensity to lead to accountability where citizens have an opportunity to view the processes that unfold behind the scenes, and for government officials to be openly answerable to citizens for the activities they perform. This is aligned to the suggestions by Stoker (2006) who stated that transparency in government provides citizens a glimpse of how government functions and how it develops processes for holding elected government officials and public institutions accountable for the decisions they take. The responses provided by participants in terms of the type of information that should be published on social media by as indicated in table 5 is indicative that transparency can further be facilitated by government providing a channel for deliberation between policy-makers and citizens before decisions are implemented and this is aligned to affirmation by (Armstrong, 2010, Jorgensen & Bozeman, 2007; McDermott, 2010).

**Proposition 5: Social media is a channel for entrenching trust between citizens and government**

Marriott (2013) stated that research in public management and e-Government has endeavoured to reveal the relationship between citizens' use of e-Government and citizen trust in government, and their findings have been mixed. As such responses received for this proposition are diverse and provides a broad dimension for exploring different perspective on social media services and establishment of trust between government and citizens. The first group of participants felt that social media when used effectively will inevitably restore their low and wavering trust in government by establishing a transparent two-way communication channel that brings communities closer to government and allows government to be responsive and to partner with citizens in the delivery of services. This resonated with the view that technology empowered transformation in government has the ability to increase citizens' trust, (Bannister & Collony, 2011); secondly it aligns with the view that transparency and interactivity between government and citizens is generally regarded by many as the key to establishing trust in government (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2014) and lastly it echoes the view that one other way to uphold trust is through the strengthening of political legitimacy by bringing communities closer to their governments and their governments to them (Blind, 2007) and social media is providing an convenient way of bridging the gap between citizenry and government.

Contrary to the perception of citizens outlined above, the second group which is the largest group of participants indicated that the effective use of social media alone will not bring upon the establishment of trust between governments. However, the entrenchment of trust is dependent upon the achievement of tangible public outcomes driven by implemented plans to improve the life of citizens such as reduction of unemployment, poverty, responsible public spending and eradication of corruption. In line with the latter perceptions from respondents, there is substantial research that focuses on the role of service delivery in enhancing citizen trust and confidence in the context of performance management in government (Heintzman & Marson, 2005). Furthermore to support the view of public outcomes underpinning

trust, Cheema, (2005) maintained that the following factors determine an increase or a decline in trust in government as outlined the five categories below:

- Implemented public plans and effective public administration
- Devoted political leadership
- Economic growth and opportunities presented to citizenry
- Provision and delivery of public services such as water and sanitation, health service, and education, because these services have a direct impact on the lives of citizens.
- Improved governance and public administration.

The last view from one participant was that mistrust of technology by citizens may hinder the entrenchment of social media as a channel for facilitating trust between government and citizens. This view is shared by a number of researchers in e-Government who believe that trust in technology is vital in fast tracking the adoption of e-Government solutions. Scholars argue that trust underpins sharing of information on government electronic platforms, and mistrust due to apprehensions regarding inadequate security and privacy precautions can lead to a lack of confidence in applications of e-Government that might present risks, for instance through unwarranted access to sensitive personal information or vulnerability to online fraud or identity theft (Alsaghier, Ford, Nguyen, & Hexel, 2009; Eynon, 2007).

**Barriers to social media use**

In as much as all categories of social media users perceive the platform as a way of creating public value, the respondents still identified barriers to social media use which were strikingly similar to the perceived barriers identified by users who do not have Internet connectivity and therefore social media access categories. English literacy and lack of Internet access for unemployed citizens who can't afford the cost of purchasing data for Internet connectivity of associated was raised as one of the barriers identified. These assertions resonate with de Lanerolle (2012) who maintained that approximately a third of Internet non-users in South Africa indicated they cannot easily read and write English which they perceive to be the most used language on social media sites. For such citizens, even if exposure through social

media reveals their lack of familiarity of the Internet, their English language illiteracy may prove to be a challenging barrier unless more content is published with several languages online. The proliferation of Facebook worldwide has seen Facebook being available on more than 70 language translations and the company further provides a Facebook translation app assisting users to translate their own local language through joining the Facebook Translation Community (Facebook, 2014). In South Africa, the Afrikaans version of Facebook was launched in 2009 (Mail & Guardian, 2009), however with 11 official language in South Africa there is still a need to cover translations for all these language to accommodate all citizens.

For non-social media users, cost of Internet connectivity was highlighted as one of the barriers to use. Lanerolle (2012) in his study further indicates that six out of ten non-users cite expense as a reason for not using the Internet. After years without significant reductions in data costs in South Africa, the limited reduction in price in the last few years may have been important drivers of the escalated utilisation since 2008. But without additional cost reductions, growth may not be maintained. Even if the number of users continues to rise, cost has a significant impact on how often people use the Internet. The National Development Plan (2011) has acknowledged the digital divide as one the challenges facing South Africa. To mitigate this challenge, in the National Development Plan 2013 vision, government plans for the development seamless technology infrastructure that will be universally accessible across the country at a cost and quality that meet the needs of citizens and other stakeholders and as a means to use technology to facilitate social inclusion which In public value norms, implies public participation.

## Conclusion

The purpose of the propositions was to unpack the notions of social media as a creator of public value by determining how Facebook can effectively be used by government, for what purposes, and in what ways, and by ascertaining the extent to which the use of Facebook by government could support the creation of public value. The findings provide clear evidence that public value can be derived through the effective use of Facebook in government. The findings further indicate that citizens

are skilled in using Facebook and eloquent and vocal regarding their requirements on how government should use Facebook to meet their needs.

The results from online observations indicate a highly intense and rapid culture of information exchange where information is mainly delivered via the participant's mobile phone. Participants engage in various topics and are technically competent in using the platform. The overall perception from all participants is that an enabling environment is key for the creation of public value through social media. This could be attained by the development of social media strategy, driven and supported by the highest authority in government and with adequate resources is necessary for the successful implementation of social media by government. Furthermore, respondents view social media as supporting the different dimensions of public value as outlined by the proposition statements. However, the entrenchment of trust through effective social media use yielded a variety of responses from participants with the emphasis from most participants being achieved public goals and better lives for communities as underpinning the establishment of trust. Lastly, there was a common perception between social media users and participants not using the platform that social inclusion may be compromised due to the digital divide that has not being fully bridged and issues of unemployment making Internet access unaffordable and English illiteracy further deepening the divide. The South African government through the GCIS, has embraced the findings of study and they are in agreement with the perception that the effective implementation of social media in government has the potential to create public value.

# Chapter 6

## Recommendations

This chapter summarizes final recommendations for creating public value through social media implementation in government. The findings emanating from this study can be adopted as a model for implementing social media in the public service environment and therefore providing the basis to investigate the consistency of the findings. For this case study in particular, the findings of the study could be applied to other Thusong service centres as they are configured in a similar way across the country, and are a representation of government at local, provincial and national level rendering services to communities.

In terms of this specific case, it is apparent that citizens are able to articulate their requirements for the type of social media interactions they require from government as well as a preference for the Facebook social media platform. However, it is disconcerting to note that government's focus and preference is on Twitter over other social media platforms as this is not fully aligned to the requirements of citizens as shown in this research. Current statistics show that Facebook is the most used and growing social media site globally and in South Africa, and government should be explore the reasons behind the exponential expansion of Facebook as compared to other platforms and to exploit the opportunities of using Facebook to reach the masses and transform and broaden public engagement. During the course of this research, government indicated that citizen's preferences of the Facebook platform could be considered as part of the development of the social media strategy while striking a balance between governments approach and preferences of citizens.

## Final Recommendations

In light of the citizens perception on social media and public value gathered in this study and the response from the South African government, these recommendations are geared at providing actionable guidelines to direct the efforts of successfully implementing social media across the three spheres of government in

a coordinated and integrated manner and with the aim of creating public value for citizens. These recommendations emphasize the importance of defining roles and responsibilities for each sphere of government.

At **National level** the GCIS is responsible for facilitating communication directly with the public on behalf of national, provincial and local government to ensure coherent and integrated communication with citizens as directed by the national communication plan. It is recommended that as the custodian and overseer of the national social media strategy, GCIS' key focus should be to ensure that social media is marked as one of the key communication tool for interacting with citizens across all spheres of government.

GCIS should ensure that it identifies critical stakeholders such government, citizens, civil society and the private sector to partake in the process of developing a national social media strategy. The social media strategy should not be finalized and approved without robust consultation with key stakeholders. Ongoing review and amendments of the social media strategy and polices should be deliberated with key stakeholders as well.

**A Social media strategy** is the first building block for attaining the benefits inherent is social media use and it is recommended that a the strategy should incorporate the following dimensions:

- Objectives and public outcomes it aims to achieve;
- Necessary skills, expertise, training and resources required to build organizational capacity at appropriate levels within government to optimally manage social media;
- Type of social media to be used;
- Define performance indicators to measure the success of implementation
- The type of information to be published and activities to engage citizens;

Government's implementation of social media should be stringently monitored to ensure that social media use is incorporated in government processes throughout government including Cabinet, Legislature and all government departments.

Once the national social media strategy and polices are approved, all government institutions within the three spheres of government should develop

integrated social media implementation plans which are tailored to the function of each government entity but should be inter-related and interdependent to ensure that social media is delivered in an integrated manner to citizenry.

**Use of social media in national, provincial and local government**

For **National government** departments, social media use can be used to facilitate discussion on administration and implementation of laws or policies at national level. The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) jointly work with the GCIS should develop and review the social media policies and frameworks at national and provincial level. The National Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation can offer direction and strategic support to the GCIS by monitoring and evaluating overall progress towards achieving government social media implementation across all spheres of government.

**For Provincial government** social media can be used to facilitate discussions dealing with direct provincial service delivery matters and can also offer ways for inter-provincial collaboration for peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing opportunities between and amongst provinces. Departments with both a National and Provincial department should ensure that their social media platform allows citizens to engage with departments in an integrated manner both on provincial and local government issues.

**Local government** is the sphere of government that is nearest to the citizens. Substantial numbers of basic public services are delivered by local municipalities. In this light, it is important for local government to ensure that they improve the efficiency of their communication processes through social media use by continuously engaging citizens on service delivery matters, being responsive to citizens and allowing two way communication at all times. For Local Government, the existence of virtual communities brings a new dimension of reaching and engaging communities directly within a fast paced environment not bound by time or space. This requires planning and adequate resources.

**Use of social media across government machinery**

At **Cabinet** level the social media implementation plans should outline ways in which social media can be used to provide a channel for deliberation between policy-

makers and citizens before decisions are implemented. In addition social media can be used by Cabinet to support oversight across government departments.

Adequate support and drive from the highest authority in government should be entrenched across government institutions. Heads of government institutions and Ministers should incorporate social media as part of ministries' and institutions' communication strategy to engage directly citizens

At **Legislature level**, social media implementation plans should unpack processes to ensure citizens are engaged and informed through social media during the legislative process, and provide and ways for social media to hold elected government officials and public institutions accountable for the decisions they take as a means of facilitating transparency and accountability.

At the **Administrative level**, implementation plans should address avenues in which social media can provide citizens with a view of how government departments function; can be used as a platform for the public to monitor and evaluate the performance of government officials as they deliver public services; and for government to be answerable for its performance

**Roles applicable across all spheres of government**

**Keeping the citizens engaged on social media at all times** is vital for the successful implementation of social media and therefore department specific awareness campaigns both online and offline should be established for the purpose of citizen sourcing. Social media platforms should be updated with new content frequently and citizens should be encouraged to participate, deliberate and collaborate with government in the delivery of public services.

**Building internal organizational capacity** within government institutions is fundamental in making social media implementation administratively achievable with the necessary skills, funding, staffing and training. Within internal structures of government roles and responsibilities should further be defined in terms of assigning ownership of content and overall administration of the sites.

**Increased accessibility of social media** can be promoted through free or affordable Internet access to communities with no access though the implementation of the South Africa's Broadband Policy. There should be a drive by government to

work with the Facebook translations community to drive Facebook translations to all South African official languages to mitigate the risk of poor English literacy.

**Social media should be seamlessly integrated with other government systems as part of the broader e-Government** with the aim of providing the citizen with integrated access to government information and as a way of easily reaching government.

In conclusion, the creation of public value through social media requires partnerships between government and other stakeholders. Government can partner with the private sector to learn from their successes and get a better understanding of how to optimise the use of social media for business process improvement. In addition, continuous engagement with citizens should be established to determine their social media preferences and lastly partnership with the academic fraternity to be kept abreast with the latest development, best practise and trends in social media.

# Chapter 7

## Conclusion

This study set out to explore citizens' perception on social media and public value. The problem was that although social media presence exists for government institutions the platforms are not optimally managed to create public value for citizens. The focus was on the Facebook page for the Maponya Mall Thusong Service centre in Soweto which was found to not be responsive to the demands of citizens. It was established that the centre has not been able to utilise the Facebook page optimally due to limited knowledge of how Facebook can be used effectively and due a lack of allocated resource to look into social media issues. The premise of the study was that there is more to be done by government in terms of government understanding how social media can be utilised to add value to the lives of citizens and what citizens perceive to be valuable when collaborating with government through social media platforms. The research sought to respond to two main questions:

To determine how Facebook can effectively be used by government, for what purposes, and in what ways?

To what extent does the effective use of Facebook by government support the creation of public value?

In exploring the concept of social media and public value through the literature review section, a conceptual model was developed that set a framework through which this research was undertaken. The core of the conceptual model was based on the Strategic Triangle (Moore, 1995) which asserts that an enabling environment is required for public value creation supported by three interrelated components – legitimacy and support from key stakeholders, a capacitated operational environment and an inclination to yield public outcomes. The conceptual model depicted different kinds of public value identified through various public value literature: efficiency; citizen engagement; transparency & accountability and trust. On the other hand, literature on social media demonstrated the inherent ability of social media in

implementing and supporting the various kinds of public value. Furthermore, literature of social media provided a view on how social media has been utilized globally across government to yield the desired outcome in government functions such as education, health, policing, disaster manager and related spheres such as election campaigns and giving citizens a voice for transformation of policies.

The research strategy, research design and methodology permitted for manageability of the research process where time and resource constraint were a hindrance. This study was mostly concerned with the understanding of the social media and public value phenomena through the meanings citizens attach to these concepts; and therefore a qualitative research strategy, which adopted interpretive epistemological approach was used. A case study research design was undertaken with the main participants in the research being active social media users who have visited the centre at least once. Data collection was conducted using a web-based research method directly on the Facebook platform. In addition, face-to-face interviews were conducted with citizens who were not social media users to understand reasons for non-use. A comparison of a web-based research method and face to face methods was outlined and the findings were that, for this particular research the different modes of administering the interviews did not have any substantial impact on the outcome of the study.

**General findings of the research**

The overall findings of this study reveal that citizens perceive social media as a mechanism through which public value can be created. In line with research and statistics, this research indicated that Facebook is the preferred and mostly used social media site. Citizens expressed a desire to have continuous engagement with government through the Facebook social media platform. These findings illustrate the existence of virtual communities and digital citizens who have unique requirements for social media engagement with government. Furthermore, citizens were articulate and knowledgeable about social media platforms and ways in which government can use Facebook to effectively engage and collaborate with citizens and derive value in the process. It was further established that mobile technology is the preferred and

affordable mechanism through which social media can be accessed by citizens due to the cost of purchasing mobile products.

The findings of this research were presented to government through the GCIS. It was learned that recently, the South African government has realised the benefits of social media and has established a division within the GCIS that will drive the social media mandate for government through the development of a social media strategy that is aligned to the public objectives. The strategy is currently being drafted and is due for finalization in the near future. The response from the South African government on the findings of this research was that they are in agreement with the notion that the effective use social media has the potential to create public value. Although government focus has been on using Twitter for citizen engagement, the GCIS has indicated that the findings of this research reveal new information regarding citizens preferring to be engaged on Facebook and such information is imperative for the development of the social media strategy to ensure that there is a balance between citizens' requirements and government's approach.

**Main findings on social media and public value**

The views of citizens regarding social and public value are that the establishment of an enabling environment is pivotal for public value to be derived from social media use in government. The fundamental element for an enabling environment is the social media roadmap or strategy that articulates the public objectives and performance measures to be achieved by the social media implementation. This is line with literature review which indicates the significance of driving social media through a strategy and is aligned with work currently being conducted in government. The perception is that a social media strategy should be anchored by legitimacy, support, and drive from highest authorities in government, coupled with adequate resources and operational capacity to implement the strategy. In addition, an enabling environment should be built on good governance principles that support stakeholder participation, transparency, accountability and the ability to deliver an integrated digital ecosystem of government systems and technology giving the citizen an easy consolidated view of government information.

The respondents' views were that social media is a channel for supporting efficiency by providing a platform for a responsive government that is quick to respond to citizens demands and efficiently collaborates with citizens and stakeholders, independent of time and space. Citizens perceive social media as a convenient way to communicate with government while saving costs and time of travelling to a physical government premise. Efficiency is also supported by the ability of social media to record communication that happens on the platform and a way of providing a traceable way of monitoring promises made by government on social media.

Citizen's engagement through social media was identified as highly significant as demonstrated by the lengthy and explicit responses of what citizens perceived to be optimal citizen engagement. Citizen's felt that that social media should accommodate both one-way and two-way communication. Examples provided for one way communication were categories as: community based information, marketing information, automatic e-services, service delivery information, Natural Disaster Management, Statistical information and employment information. The perception from citizens is that the two-way communication provided by social media underpins collaboration, participation and deliberations between government and citizens. Citizens place the power of social media on mass collaboration, necessary for collective action by soliciting skills and expertise from diverse groups of people to assist government in resolving public service challenges and collectively designing public services. A need was also identified for government to consult and invite participation and debate on issues such as proposed bills and policies, new community projects, service delivery challenges, invitations for public opinion and polls amongst others. With more female participants as compared to males in this study, the findings further show that social media has a positive role to play in issues related to gender inequality, where the increase in women participation in social media platforms provide women an opportunity to engage government and other stakeholders and influence gender parity and children's rights.

Social media was further perceived as an appropriate platform to facilitate transparency and expose the happenings of government to citizens since it is based

on an open platform where citizens can reach government and understand the usually concealed happenings of government. It was further perceived as a tool that can be used for support monitoring and evaluation of government performance as they respond to delivering certain public objectives and thereby supporting accountability and the fight for corruption through whistle blowing on the social media site such as Facebook.

In terms of social media facilitating the entrenchment of trust between government and citizens the findings yielded varying responses. It was evident that trust cannot only be attained through effective social media use only but rather by government achieving public goals and delivering tangible outcomes that are targeted in uplifting communities and improving the quality of lives of citizens. A secondary view was that the optimal use social media could provide an element with the potential to improve the wavering trust that citizens have on government. Another perception was that citizens' mistrust of technology may hinder the establishment of trust between government and citizens.

It was interesting to note that both social media users and non-social media alike highlighted the existence of barriers to social media use in South Africa. Despite the cost of purchasing mobile devices having decreased over the years, the cost of purchasing data for connecting to the Internet remains unaffordable for the poor and unemployed. In addition, poor English literacy was identified as barrier for the majority of citizens with South Africa having 11 official languages. Those having access to the Internet but not using social media attributed their non-use to the fear of privacy being contravened and below average user experience encountered on government websites.

## Concluding Remarks

The case study under review presented citizens perception on how Facebook can be used effectively by government, for what purposes, and in what ways. It further outlined key public value dimensions that can be supported by optimal social media implementation in government. The findings confirm the notion that the effective use of social media by government has the propensity to create public value.

The methodology undertaken by this study in terms of using Facebook for conducting online interviews contributes to research methodology literature for social media platforms being used as data collection instruments.

The findings provided the South African government with significant insight into social media preferences of citizens that could be considered as part of the strategy to apply to all spheres of government and provided an avenue to test the applicability of the social media strategy currently being developed against perceptions of citizens.

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# Appendix A

## Conditions and guidelines for online participants

I'm in the process of conducting research exploring citizen's perceptions on social media and public value as part my Masters study programme. I'm currently looking for citizens who will participate in this study.

You need to meet the following criteria to participate in the study

1. You must have visited, communicated or received a service from the Thusong Service centre in Maponya Mall in the
2. Be available and willing to respond to questions through the Facebook social media site
3. You must be 18 years and older
4. You must be a resident of Soweto

**Conditions and guidelines for participation**

5. If you consent to take part in the study, you will be requested to complete a series of questions online using the Facebook platform and time frames will be provided within which you need to respond to questions
6. The Facebook account where interviews will be conducted will be highly secure. Facebook security and privacy settings will be enforced to ensure that research information is blocked from public view and therefore upholding confidentiality and anonymity of participants.
7. If you agree to participate in this study, please be aware of data and Internet related costs involved when connecting to Facebook and note that you will not be compensated for such expenses.
8. Although the findings of this research may be published, there will be no information that will selectively identify you as a participant
9. Please be informed that the researcher will do an analysis of your Facebook timelines to confirm you eligibility to participate in the study and to gain a better understanding of the context to which you use Facebook.
10. Your agreement to participate is on a voluntarily basis. You may decline to participate in the whole study or any part of the study.
11. This is an independent study and enquiries should not be directed to the Maponya Mall Thusong Service centre but to the researcher. The researchers contact details are available on her Facebook profile.

# Appendix B
# Interview Guide

## A. Interview Guide for Facebook participants

**Confirm biographic details of participants following the analysis conducted on participants Facebook timelines:**

**Section A: Bibliographic Details of participants**

Age

Employment Status

Level of education

Gender

Occupation

**Section B**

**Social media trends**

What do you use social media for?

How often do you use Facebook? Select one of these options:

- daily,
- more than once a day,
- once a week
- more than once a week
- monthly
- more than once a month
- every other month

What other social media sites including government sites are you currently connected to?

What is your preferred social media site and which one do you use regularly?

**Section B**

What are your general thoughts about government using social media (Facebook) to communicate with you as a citizen? **Please elaborate as much provide details**.

The next question are about your thought on social media use by government- for what purposes, and in what ways can government utilise it.

How do you see government using social media for **citizen engagement**?

What are your thoughts regarding social media contributing to government's **efficiency**

What type of information would you like **government to communicate to you** via social media such as Facebook? **Please provide your own example and state why you think this information is important**

What type of info would **you as citizens communicate to government** via social media? Why is it important for you to communicate this information?

How do you see social media facilitating **transparency and accountability** in government? Please elaborate as much as possible, you can even provide examples.

What are your thoughts regarding social media facilitating trust between government and citizens

## B. Interview Guide for face-to-face interview (non-social media users)

**Section A: Bibliographic Details of participants**

- Age
- Employment Status
- Level of education
- Gender
- Occupation

**SECTION B:**

What are your reasons for not having used social media?

What are your thoughts about government using social media to communicate with citizens

What are your thoughts about government using technology to reach citizens?

What are in your opinion are the main barriers to social media use facing you and the broader community?