

**AN ANALYSIS OF ONLINE PRESENCE OF THE
SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS:
WEBSITES. FACEBOOK AND TWITTER**

Key words: Social Media, transparency, brand building,
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participation

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Declaration

I, Mmatau Felicia Mashego, declare that this final paper is my own work. It is submitted in fractional fulfilment of the requirements for the BS Honours in Brand Communication at Vega. This is the first draft and has never been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other institution.

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CHAPTER ONE

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The word “social media” comprises of a wide variety of tools that allow immediate consumer interface on computer facilitated atmospheres. Lately, a lot of divisions of government have perhaps tried, or are of the notion that they should try social media as a technique of communicating with citizens using innovative methods.

A social media existence is a symbol of an energetic and transparent communications strategy, and also, social media offers precise value to government public relations. Social media tools could increase interactivity between a government and its citizens, and they spread to people that are not exposed to traditional media as often as others (Bertot, Jaeger, Munson, & Glaisyer, 2010). This recent technology gives officials in government the opportunity to form relations with key stakeholders, namely the citizens it represents. Social media can improve governments’ capacity to relate with and involve citizens as well as to continue building the brand image of government by being transparent to their citizens (Smith, 2011).

Social media gives many opportunities for governments. The open, dialogic environment of social media eradicates several obstacles in communication that these state organs have practiced previously (Bertot & Jaeger, 2010). Communication with citizens should be additionally regular, open, and more focused. Traditionally, state has depended severely on conventional mass media to distribute state news and information (Dixon, 2010).

The arrival social media, in the form Facebook, Twitter, and others offer state representatives new ways to converse openly with their citizens minimising the interference of editors and journalists, who can be seen as gate keepers or censors of information (Smith, 2010).

Additionally, with the decreasing newspaper consumption, the value of local reporting of news and information could be fading (Kingsley, 2011), thus compelling officials to find new forms of media outlets to reach their citizens. Historically, governments have had to rely solely on traditional media (Dixon, 2010), specially newspapers, television, and radio to get their message across to citizens. Based on this, governments had restricted control over what messages were distributed to citizens and had no control of the time it would be delivered to citizens. The arrival of the Internet and especially social media has altered the way governments communicate with its citizens and thus changing the communication landscape.

Traditional media are no longer the only source of public government information swaying citizens thinking and thoughts. Furthermore, traditional media provides a one way communication model, a one way control over news generation and distribution is mainly outdated (Shirky, 2008).

The important variances amongst social media and traditional unconventional media are the user-to-user arrangement as compared to top down news distribution (Clark & Aufderheide, 2009). With Social media, consumers are able to post, share, and republish data effortlessly and very fast. Social media is quickly moving to dynamic spaces (Kaplan & Haentein, 2010). It is fundamental for organisations and governments to have policies in place for using social media.

This research assesses the usage of social media by national government departments in South Africa and speaks about the opportunities and challenges that government officials come across in integrating this new technology into their communication and brand building plans. The transformative competencies that social media can convey to governments are substantial, developing more openness and transparent governments, building new procedures for independent public participation as well as brand building are just a few of the possible opportunities presented to governments through the interactive and direct abilities of social media (Berto & Jaeger, 2010)

This research analyses government communication, which Stromback and Kiousis (2011) say is the main part of the political public relations sphere. The research questions look at the acceptance and usage of social media tools by National government officials' insights of social media including e-government in the form of websites. First we review the literature on governments and social media and the opportunities it presents to them in promoting the brand image of government, increasing public participation amongst citizens and encouraging transparency.

A national survey of 46 National departments in South Africa which provide services to 50 million South Africans in 9 provinces will form part of this study. Moreover, a total of 20 citizens will be included to form part of this study, 5 from each province.

1.1 Research Questions

Subsequently these coming questions are asked to get a clearer understanding of the utilisation of social media by National government departments to communicate with their citizens as well as enhancing their brand building initiatives.

As governments' engagement with citizens and online presence advance away from a stagnant website, citizens are given improved opportunities to connect with governments in a number of online domains including social media, while governments are given the opportunities to become more transparent.

Almost one-third of adults who are online echo being online visiting social media sites to acquire information about government product offerings (Pew, 2010), it is crucial to advance a larger understanding of how governments are utilising the advantages social media offers them. The following research questions were established to examine the use of social media by South African national departments.

1. How are government departments using social media to communicate with citizens in South Africa in a transparent way?
2. Is social media being used to by government departments to increase their brand building initiatives?
3. How can government departments leverage the power of social media contributions to their everyday communication models?

CHAPTER TWO

2. Literature Review

Social Networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are growing in popularity in South Africa especially amongst the youth. With the growing affordability of mobile technology, users are able to access information at the click of a button, Bosch, T. (2013).

Social media has the potential to substitute relations amongst those who make policy, people who are employed by the state and their citizens Lampe, C. (2012). Nonetheless, the capability to notice these possible benefits airs essential blockades in the sense of observations of social media, capability of administrators to make efficient utilisation of social media tools, and plan software utilised to get started on social media (Lampe, C. (2012).

According to Bohler-Muller, N and Van der Merwe, C (2011), stated in their paper, the potential of social media to influence socio-political change on the African Continent, they argue that social media is a political power tool that can bring about change as more and more people gain access to the internet and mobile technology.

Shirky, C (2011) in an article titled 'The political power of social media' states that many countries have used social media to initiate changes within their governments in the past ten years or so. This is another example of how social media can be positively utilised to begin a dialogue between governments and its citizens to bring about social changes that affect the youth directly.

Prior literature has revealed that social media and the Internet communication in general, can be utilised for different kinds of outreach programmes. In 2003, West investigated over 2000 government agencies in 198 states and discovered that most of them were present on the Internet but only 16 % utilised any form of interactive media (West, 2003).

Businesses are familiar with the benefits of social media throughout all industries. The word social media comprises a range of tools and services that allow direct engagement online. Sweetster and Lariscy (2008) describe social media as positioned on the notion of a read-write web, where the online audience moves away from the inactive viewing of web content to essentially contributing to the content (p.179). In simple terms, social media is made up of anything that utilises the Internet to enable dialogues and most of the time it takes the shape of social networking site (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009). This simple understanding of social media was utilised to navigate this research.

A strategic framework for generating dialogic relations with citizens via the Internet was given by Kent and Taylor (1998, 2002) over a decade ago. Dialogue is any

interchange of ideas and opinions (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p.325) and signifies efforts by those involved in a relationship to partake in an open and honest conversation. This perception is familiar with the existing rationale about the role communication plays in relationship building, where healthy relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders are refined through communication managed by social media practitioners or public relations practitioners (Ledingham, 2003).

The recent "socially informed" generation, expect conversation, and governments at all levels are being obligated to move their opinions of citizens from general consumers to vigorous participants by letting citizens contribute online to the growth of governments (Azyan, 2012).

A lot of the literature on the implementation of social media has concentrated on non-profit (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Waters, Burnett, Lamm & Lucal, 2009), supposedly because of social media's ability to give organisations with mostly constrained budgets a low cost platform for a two-way communication with their stakeholders.

Social media tools are becoming valuable devices of communicating and that businesses with distinct social media departments are more likely to implement social media technologies and utilise them to realise organisational goals (Curtis, Edwards, Fraser, Gudelsky, Holmquist, Thornton & Sweetster, 2010). Honesty and transparency is increasingly becoming important for government departments in order to build relationships and create robust public participation (Coombs & Holladay, 2010). James Grunig (2009) argues in support of two-way communication and highlights the importance social media can have on this dialogic communication.

Moreover, The American Red Cross has been effective in utilising social media to construct relationships, precisely with the youth, the media and the public (Briones, Kucj, Liu & Jin, 2011). In contrast, there is confirmation that public relations practitioners in the health sector have been slower to implement social media technologies, and there are substantial differences in implementation rates based on the size of the community (Avery et al., 2010).

Urban societies show the highest implementation rates, followed by suburban, bigger towns and rural societies. Furthermore, amongst those who utilised social media to circulate health information, the most frequently utilised tools were social networking sites (Avery et al., 2010). Same as the non-profits that usually have constrained financial resources, governments can also benefit from this low cost, yet vast audience reach that social media can provide.

2.1 Government Public Relations and Transparency

Communicators who have functioned in government often note that implementing communications strategies for government organisations is not the same as when implementing for business or non-profit organisations; Grunig and Jaatinen (1999) recommend that while the general values are the same for all organisations, the precise environments to which the principles must be applied are not the same (p. 219). Liu and Horsley (2007) provide a theoretical approach to analysing the differences between corporate and government communication practices with their overview of the government communication decision wheel.

They emphasize that public sector environment develops unique challenges and opportunities that distinguish the practice of public relations in the public sector from the private sector. Challenges and opportunities contain: politics, legal constraints, reduction of communication, negative public perceptions and lagging professional growth (Liu & Horsley, 2007). Furthermore, Sanders (2011) detected three key subjects in research with regards to government communication and brand building: the role of power, the relationship to and the role of the new media and normative questions associated to government communications purpose and performance in constitutional democracies.

There is greater awareness in the utilisation of social media relative to transparency but Gandia (2011) states that the opportunities of disclosure are not being correctly engaged. Gandia refers to how governments may perhaps use extraordinary media to increase transparency in order to build their brands and improve relationships with citizens (2001, p.59) but he has recognised through his study that many government agencies are nonetheless missing out on this important opportunity.

In this age of increased government inspection and suspicion by citizens, transparency is vital to effective government relations (Bertot & Jaeger, 2010). Transparency is defined as the accessibility of information on matters of public concern, the capacity of citizens to partake in political decision-making, and the accountability of government to citizens' point of view (Cotterrell, 1999). According to Piotrowski (2007), governmental transparency permits citizens' to create a more precise picture of what is going on in government, which enables citizens to hold governments accountable and gauge performances of government agencies.

Brief and focused communication between government and its citizens is a practical practice as well as a moral responsibility that originates from the principles of democracy (Viteritti, 1997). To address the need to heightened transparency in public organisations, Fairbanks, Plowman and Rawlins (2007) established a model with commitment to transparent and open communication procedures as its basis. The key origins of the model are communication practices, organisational support, and the provision of resources. The most imperative portion of the public communication model, according to Heise (1985), is for governments to

communicate in an open, truthful and timeous way with their citizens, without manipulating the information they share. The Internet and especially social media offer excessive opportunity to that end.

2.2 E-government and Social Media

The utilisation of the Internet by governments to communicate with citizens is surely not new; regularly referred to as 'e-government'; these initiatives comprise of all online communications and actions by government (Dixon, 2010). E-Government, can be well-defined as the utilisation of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) in public administration (Lofstedt, 2005), its purpose is to provide effective right to use to government data to publics and other stakeholders. The e-government is e-democracy which can be endorsed by engaging social media's capacity to interact openly with citizens. E-democracy is an evolving notion that signifies the transformation of citizen participation in democratic and purposeful procedures (Stayaert, 2000) and can be facilitated by social networking media.

Norris (2004) summaries the differences in the opposing democratic theories and their relation to e-government and e-democracy. The most important qualities of pluralistic theory are that elections are significant to gain accountability and legality of government and that a robust civil society is the key to the flexibility and efficiency of a democracy. New technologies decrease the cost of distributing and getting information from citizens. In the representative theory of democracy, democratic governance occurs through citizen participation. New technologies can enhance participation by enabling citizens the capability to analyse the records of governments and chosen officials and by providing the means for citizens to interact openly with government officials. Direct theory recommends that democracy works best when the public are openly participating in policy discussion, activities and conclusions.

Citizens who are disconnected can become re-connected through the utilisation of new technologies; e-democracy can overcome space and time limitations on citizen participation, as well as those related with position differences, such as age, gender, ethnicity and wealth (Scott, 2006, p. 344).

Bryer & Zavattaro (2011) note that government citizen managers are engaging social media related to their vigorous use of the e-government and e-democracy podiums. A current evaluation of the literature regarding social media's effect on e-government initiatives in the public sector by Mangro (2012) discovered that describing an crucial goal for government, changes in government values, and resources management are required before governments can realise success in the social media.

Hand and Ching (2011) observed local governments' in the Phoenix metropolitan areas utilisation of social media and discovered that utilising social media at the local government level appears to offer potential of improved citizen engagement, reaching citizens on a shared platform, and letting citizens' comments (p. 379).

Another research that was the same by Bonson, Torres, Royo and Flores (2012) focused on local governments in Europe discovered that a lot of governments have grasped the opportunities that social media can offer and that by making their information attainable on social media they can greatly grow their citizen reach at very little cost. Furthermore, local governments are utilising social media tools to improve the brand image of government as a whole by remaining transparent. But the utilisation of social media to endorse e-participation with citizens is still underused.

2.3 Predictors and Social Media Use

Research in the past has revealed an association between a person's age and the ability to adapt and adopting this new technology (Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2004, 2008; Olsen, O'Brien, Rogers & Charness, 2011). The youth is confidently associated with the extent of new technology usage; though, there is indication of that gap in trend rates lessening. This same relation could also apply to government officials' and their citizens' usage of social media. The main users of social networking sites are younger adults, and three quarters of adult Internet user's under the age of 25 have social networking site profiles (Lenhart, 2009).

Furthermore, the current acceptance of these sites has fascinated more and more adult users. In 2005, only 8% of adult Internet users had a profile on a social networking site; in 2009, that figure had improved to 35% (Lenhart, 2009). Age began as the single strongest judge of social networking usage in a new government communication research by Chou et al., (2009); adult aged 18-34 were the highest users of social networking sites. Consequently, health communication programs making use of social media should look at the age of the target population to ensure that messages reach the correct recipients (Chou et al., 2009).

Minimal experiential studies exist on the usage of social media by government. As the public often trust that they can have the greatest influence at the level of government, it is imperative to note if and how these new technologies are being utilised to communicate with citizens. In the United States, social networking accounts for 11% of all time spent online, and it is one of the most engaging activities across the web (Centre for Media Research, 2009). Social Media's suggestions for government leaders are dominant and can change the way governments communicate with their citizens, this research takes the few steps in understanding their present usage rate and movements.

2.4 Social Media and Citizen Engagement

Political discussion, distinct as a mutual unbiased procedure of logical deliberations (Dahlberg, 2001), was recognised as one of the most crucial portion for a effective democracy. Public involvement in these discussions are noting to practice heightened stages of awareness with regards to the political structure, understanding with companion publics, including a positive logic of their own politically aware benefits (Mendelberg, 2002). Political discussions have remained related to delivery of paybacks for shared decision-making (Delli Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004), creating a stimulating adaptable topic to learning when investigating how governments participate with the public.

Utilising social media for radical debate could improve the affiliation between publics and their states (Dalberg, 2001). The determinations of states to interact with communities in democratic ways have strengthened in the past (Tambouris, Liotas & Tarabanis, 2007). E-government submissions are seen as valuable tools for this objective. E-government escalates the excellence of amenities and gives citizens the possibility of participatio. (Lofstedt, 2005).

Making usage of social media for governmental drives by the public, though, this has become increasingly vibrant during the advancement. Connected communities make usage of the Internet to rally movements (Chadwick, 2006).

Muhlberger (2006) discovered the fact that using e-Government programmes to substitute consultations could inspire community debate, perfecting the undesirable things of public confidence in a sneaky government. Scott (2006), in his research which looked at the abilities to backing public participation of 3000 state websites of the 100 major U.S. cosmopolitan regions, discovered that a small number of government websites have programmes that enabled online dialogue. In dissimilarity, extensive data was shared, pertaining to finances and request for data.

The features of engagement happen via e-Government programmes which enhance online conversation are not known. Furthermore, the practical structures that positively enhance worthy conversation and contribution are also not known.

2.5 Social media and online interaction

Robust involvement on social media for governments is highly reliant on an overall basis of social media engagement in added frameworks, as essential activities in social media could shift from one place to the next (Arguello, Butler, Joyce, Kraut, Ling, & Wang, 2006). Past studies have looked at the aspects that impact involvement and engagement in social media, the approaches to stimulate involvement, and online activities such as marginal involvement, luring and flaring. A few features were discovered in order to forecast vigorous contribution and involvement (Arguello, Butler, Joyce, Kraut, Ling, & Wang, 2006).

CHAPTER THREE

3 Methodology

The objective of this research was to give a clearer understanding of how government departments in South Africa are making use of social media to interact with their citizens as well as to enhance their brand building initiatives. This was investigated having the below research questions:

1. How are government departments utilising social media to engage with citizens in South Africa?
2. Is social media being used by government departments to increase their brand building initiatives in a transparent way?
3. How can government departments leverage the power of social media contributions?

The study was implemented after the exploration idea of Interpretation because of the responsiveness it can create as well as the emphasis on understanding the citizens that form part of the study (Fisher, 2010).

Observational research was essential in order to establish South African government departments' online presence in a thorough manner (Robson, 2002). Organised observation (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009) was utilised during the analysis of these departments online and recommendations on best practice made by Edwards (2006), Grunig (2009), Ingenhoff & Koelling (2009), Kanter & Fine (2010), and Rybalko & Seltzer (2010) were utilised to measure intensities of information, website transparency and interactive probabilities of the South African government departments on websites, Twitter and Facebook presence.

This study was conducted through with the three research questions in thought to analyse each department's presence online mostly focusing on the website, Twitter and Facebook, and if the social media movement was applied in a transparent method that would assist in building the collective brand image of the South African government.

In order to learn more about how these government departments work and to receive the opinions for their significances (Proctor, 2005) qualitative research method of dialogs was used, by interviewing experts employed in the directorates that manage social media in the different departments. The qualitative interviewing method was mostly used in order to recognise behaviours and attitudes (Quiring, 2009) articulated by public participation practitioners based at the different government departments.

Semi-structured interviews remained utilised where precise subjects and themes would be discovered and the candidate being interviewed was given the chance to contribute the responses in an in-depth manner of deliberations if essential. The interviewer could utilise the interviews as conversation formats in order to confirm forms of communication channels selected by each government department and to obtain thorough explanations with regards to engagement plans and enthusiasms for usage of social media or not.

Questions concerning the part played by public participation, social media usage and reciprocal communications were probed to each participant to mirror the three research questions.

3.1 Sampling

When regarding at sampling methods on offer the applicable populace was the 46 government departments in South Africa. Although, not all the government departments in South Africa were included in this survey because not all the 46 departments had an extensive online presence on Facebook and Twitter including websites. So a smaller sample of 26 departments was used to gather the data.

An additional 10 people who actively participate on these or some of these departments Facebook and Twitter accounts were also interviewed to get a sense of their experience with government online and what they would like to see improving in the way government engages with them.

These departments were selected through purposive sampling. Since the sample is now smaller, departments that were selected were those that were predominantly informative and had a stronger presence on Twitter and Facebook that included up-to-date accounts both on Twitter and Facebook, accounts that were active in order to achieve a fair comparison. The selected government departments that have an up-to-date Facebook and Twitter account are as follows:

1. The Presidency
2. Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
3. Department of Small Business
4. Department of Public Enterprise
5. Department of International Relations and Cooperation
6. Department of Labour
7. Department of Home Affairs
8. Department of Human Settlement
9. Department of Agriculture and Forestry
10. Department of Arts and Culture
11. Department of Communications
12. Department of Correctional Services
13. Department of Defence
14. Department of Economic Development

15. Government Communication and Information System
16. Department of Health
17. Department of Higher Education & Training
18. National School of Government
19. National Treasury
20. Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation
21. Department of Public Works
22. Department of Sports & Recreation South Africa
23. Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services
24. Department of Tourism
25. Department of Trade and Industry
26. Department of Transport.

With regards to the interviews, self-selection sampling (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009) was used, where communication professionals within the researched departments were interviewed. Additionally, 10 individuals who participate and follow the departments on social media either by liking, sharing, commenting on posts and posting on the departments social media pages of Facebook or Twitter. This was done through emails, phone calls as well as one on one interview to take part.

3.2. Data collection

Data was collected from sources who chose to be a part of this study and were happy to avail themselves be interviewed and their social media pages being analysed.

From the general public the people who agreed to be interviewed were chosen on the basis of availability. Those people were identified from Facebook and Twitter and were chosen on the fact that they regularly interact with some government departments. For this 10 people were identified.

3.3. Limitations to the study

Limitations to the study can be found in terms of the number of all government departments that are not on the chosen social media tools that are being analysed. Out of 46 government department only 26 of them had an online presence on Facebook and Twitter.

Qualitative research through a larger number of department could have resulted in a large number of respondents being interviewed and this would have resulted in gaining added in depth data with regards to each department so that an understanding of their motives for being active or lack of on the internet would be.

Additional data could assist the research in learning where these departments are communicating if not on social media. More qualitative research should be undertaken to understand Government communication using new media.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Findings

Prior studies have validated reciprocal communication opportunities of social media (Grunig, 2009; Breakenridge, 2009). Some research has recognised that there is a substantial crack in the middle of the probable offerings of social media and its real usage (Gandia, 2001).

Government departments appear to be utilising social media for participation drives but not making use of the full potential of social media features of a reciprocal engagement. Grunig and Hunt (1984) state that two-way discussions could be an objective for public communications officers as this will result in trust, enhanced brand building and transparency.

4.1. Websites

The findings in this research portray extremely high levels of educational websites with dedicated press sites out of 26 departments assessed, 24 (92%) of the government departments have active websites that are interactive and contact information and other relevant information. This shows that the government departments are practicing transparency by clearly stating aims and objectives as well as annual reports being made available on their websites. (Edward, 2006). The two that do not have websites, are fairly new departments that are part of an already existing department, Traditional Affairs which forms part of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and the School of Government which is still operating under the Department of Public Service and Administration.

18 out of the 26 government departments which results in a high 69 % lack a two-way communication channel online where citizens and stakeholders cannot engage with the department on their websites. This could lead members of the public to stop engaging with the departmental websites as they do not receive immediate if any feedback.

Interactive potentials of websites and social media inspire citizen involvement and reciprocal engagement through two way Internet tools and social media like Facebook and Twitter which are being used by 16 of the 26 departments (60 %). With only 14 (53%) of the departments offering a platform for citizens and stakeholders to write on their Facebook walls.

The lack of reciprocal communication opportunities consequently limits the possibilities for citizens to make their concerns vocal or give public feedback and questions on these websites.

4.2. Twitter

A larger number from these studied departments (24) (92%) give followers an explanation of their department including a linkage to their other pages, including Facebook, website and other social media platforms they are found on. When looking at Twitter, the results are the same when observing reciprocal communication, none of the departments respond to citizens tweeting them although they constantly tweet about departmental news. Only 10 of the departments Twitter accounts are updated regularly. A shocking 38 % of these accounts are consistently sharing news with their followers; the others are old and outdated. Their last tweets were over a year ago.

4.3. Facebook

Looking at Facebook activities, the results depict, heightened points of information sharing the government department, post regularly in a form of information sharing. All of them give extensive data via written posts, and posting pictures of the projects the departments are currently involved in. This regular updating of Facebook pages by departments keep followers interested in the page and allows them to want to be part of the discussions.

Furthermore, the observational research shows that most of these departments share some information of a reciprocal manner which gets people to comment. Although, the kinds of data posted are not regular and participation by followers is never answered to. Interacting with followers on Facebook in the form of maintaining conversations and responding to comments keeps the interest alive.

The research performed in this paper was established on research questions concentrating on the utilisation of social media by government departments in brand building by increasing transparency. These results depict that the social media usage is somehow clear and obvious in general they seem to focus on an absence of communication that is reciprocal. The bulk of the studied departments utilise their social media sites in order to give a description of the department and to give news linked to the work the department does, which could be seen as outdated form of engagement as compared to the reciprocal communication social media allows.

The dialogue that can be created in communication with citizens can be developed via social media tools is underused by departments making use of these media tools to make public the departmental news and activities.

The findings show government departments being interactive via social media although missed chances will always be there, where government departments could have utilised the reciprocal communication forum to increase participation and involvement with communities.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research presents findings regarding social media activities by government departments indicating a lack of two-way communication. These results are of relevance to public relations practitioners in general and those working in the public sector in particular since the study represent an initial attempt to discuss whether social media opportunities are taken advantage of.

Previous research has mainly focused American case studies whereas this research brings the discussion to South Africa. In contrast to earlier studies this research has researched two social media outlets for each organisation in order to compare uses of the two different outlets and to present a holistic picture.

Theoretical frameworks presented in the research concern two-way communication, interactivity, transparency, and brand building but for a study to thoroughly investigate the importance these concepts have on the public sector there is a need for further research into these areas as well as the true meaning of interactivity. This research is a step in this direction and could be used to inspire further research in this field as social media use continues to grow within the public sector. As the use grows so will the issues and concerns which is why governments should start considering these points sooner rather than later. A fundamental aspect of the public sector is trust due to the importance of stakeholder relations for successful communications. It has been argued that transparency is vital to gain trust and social media application is increasingly significant for public relations practitioners (Coombs & Holladay, 2010).

The digital age today's governments operate within insists on information sharing and far-reaching conversations and it is crucial for governments to take part in these conversations. The general public discusses experiences, organisations and causes online, whether an organisation approves or not, so they are advised to join in the online debate. Governments will benefit from presenting information and news, positive as well as negative directly to their citizens so transparency is essential.

Endorsing credibility, maintaining sites, and listening to stakeholders are vital aspects of public relations practice online in order to sustain two-way communications. Listening to citizens is additionally an essential part of social media activity for governments or organisations insecure about their online strategies since ideas and thoughts from citizens regarding social networking can be considered as guidelines.

A government departments' social media tactics should be based on what the citizen's require from the specific site. It is also necessary to regard social media sites for what they are, social networking sites and implement social networking in instances where broadcasting is not sufficient. In terms of brand building,

governments constantly need to devise innovative ways to connect with the public and to promote solutions so two-way communication is crucial in order to create discussions and engage the public.

Public relations practitioners ought to understand stakeholders and using social media to get to know them is highly valuable. Listening, discussing, engaging, and sharing will contribute to further interactivity which subsequently would encourage offline action in support of the cause.

Social media has quickly developed into a fundamental aspect of public relations and practitioners therefore need to explore and experiment with online tools. There are new features being added continuously and social media possibilities for government departments are increasingly being highlighted, so public relations practitioners in the sector should take advantage of these opportunities. Being comfortable with the social media tools used by an organisation is vital but being open to further developments, new trends, and suggestions from stakeholders is equally important.

Findings presented in this research highlight use of one-way communication rather than dialogic communication implemented to generate discussions. The extended discussions that can be created through two-way communications online should be valued in order to engage publics, spread messages and drive change.

6 ACTIVATION

6.1 Core Insights

Governments need to shift from the traditional way of communicating and join their citizens on the new media platforms: Social Media

6.2 Message- what are these insights saying?

I am trying to show governments the importance of and strength of Social Media, everyone is on Social media, why not be part of the dialogue

6.3 Concept- What is your idea? What will activate this message?

Government need first and foremost to develop a policy for using social media, a policy that will guide all government departments so that their messages are synchronised and related. A Digital strategy for government needs to be developed and implemented. The Idea that I have is to show the government how far behind they are with regards to using new methods of communications. How they need to quickly catch up or they will lose a large number of their constituents.

People who vote for the government are always on their cell phones, they receive a lot of their messages on their cell phones including emails. It is high time the government joined many South Africans on social media.

I have two cell phones here, one of an outdated nokia 3310 this cell phone represents the government as it is old fashioned and does not use two way communications at the touch of a button.

On the other hand I have the latest Samsung Note 4 which is your whole life. You can practically do everything on this cellphone. Emails, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, Skype name it it can do it. New media, new technology, new way of communicating.

It is high time government communicators throw out the old nokia 3310 and shift to the latest technology where they will be able to communicate effectively with their constituents. Government needs to urgently be where the people of South Africa are on Social Media. Social Media

Better websites + Better Social media sites = Better government communications.

6.4 Execution

This concept is based on the notion of each one teach one. A campaign will be initiated where a tour bus called Bokamoso which is tswana for heading

into the future. This bus will be responsible for making stops at Government departments at the national level and to get on board you would have to be a government employee in the communication field. Communicators on board the bus will be taken through a fun way of learning how to get started with social media.

Communicators will be taken through a step by step process of moving from the traditional way of communicating to the new way of communicating and taught also how to mix these old and new tools. They will also be equipped with the latest technology on board of this bus where they will be assisted in setting up social media pages and how to make their website and social media pages interesting.

The bus will tour the city of Tswane where all National departments resides for a period of 6 months. Once a communicator feels he/she is ready to go back to the office and implement what they have been taught they will then write a test and do a mini practical exam. Once they pass this test, it is then the responsibility of the National department communicator to take it to the Provincial level, what they have been taught in the Bokamoso bus they will teach the communicators at provincial government departments of their respective sector.

From the provincial government it will be taken to the local municipalities. In this way Government communicators start incorporating new media into their communication strategies and move into the future with the citizens they communicate with.

Bokamoso lets move into the future together.

6.5 Who is your audience? What do you want them to walk away with?

My Audience is Government communicators. I would like them to improve their communication efforts by using the correct mix tools.

YouTube Video of what the government communicators will be taken through in the Bokamoso Tour Bus

How to use social media strategically in the federal government reference
Howcast.com.flv

7. REFERENCE LIST/ BIBLIOGRAPHY

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