A CONTENT ANALYSIS ON THE USE OF FACEBOOK TO ENGAGE WITH SELECTED GAUTENG PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS

By

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In accordance with Rule G4.6.3, I hereby declare that the above-mentioned thesis is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment to another University or for another qualification.

..................................................
SIGNATURE

DATE: January 2017
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This research study is dedicated to my mother Agnes Munzhedzi and the memory of my father Samuel Munzhedzi, for instilling in me the culture and passion of learning.
ABSTRACT

Using qualitative content analysis, this research study explored the Gauteng Provincial Government (GPG) social media use, with specific reference to Facebook, as a communication tool to engage with stakeholders. The study looked at how Facebook is used to promote two-way communication between the government and citizens, based on the principles of the Excellence Theory, which advocates for communication models developed by Grunt and Hunt (1984). The diagonal principles by Kent and Taylor (1998) used as a strategic framework to facilitate relationship building with the public and the organisations, were also explored.

The results indicated that the majority of the departments are active on Facebook, however not at a satisfactory level. The majority of the departments failed to use all the six dialogic principles to leverage two-way communication, in particular creation of the dialogue loop which facilitates the building of ongoing relationships and feedback. Some of the departments have not fully taken the opportunity to increase the engagement and dialogue through posting photos on Facebook walls. The numbers of videos posted were extremely low. The majority of the departments utilised the social media platform, Facebook, as a one-way communication, such as publishing of media statements, announcements, media conferences and interviews among others. Most of the departments use Facebook for information dissemination especially on events and campaigns. The poor use of Facebook can be attributed to the challenges such as a lack of resources, especially a budget, lack of skills on effective use of social media, the continuous use of one-way communication by the government and a lack of budget among others.

The findings correlate to the previous studies that found a lack of proper engagement, dialogue and interactivity on government’s Facebook pages.

Key words:

Social Media; Dialogic Principles; Excellence Theory; Two-Way Communication; Public Relations, Government
## ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDED</td>
<td>GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</td>
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<td>GDE</td>
<td>GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDHS</td>
<td>GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SETTLEMENT</td>
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<td>GDoH</td>
<td>GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH</td>
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<tr>
<td>GSACR</td>
<td>GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS, ARTS, CULTURE AND RECREATION</td>
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<td>GDRT</td>
<td>GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF ROADS AND TRANSPORT</td>
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<td>GPG</td>
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CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Research studies have shown that the use of new technologies such as social media is rapidly growing and continues to change the lives of many around the world (Duggan, 2015; Graham, 2014; Howard, 2012; Sobaci, 2014). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram, among others, are used to bridge the gap between the distance and further function as a link to family and friends (Sobaci, 2014).

The study conducted by World Wide Worx (2016) has shown that both Instagram and Facebook had the fastest growth in South Africa. Facebook has significantly grown by 8 percent, from 12-million to 13-million, while Twitter has increased by 12 percent, from 6, 6-million to 7,4-million users. The use of video sharing has also increased with a 15 percent rise from 7,2-million to 8,28-million users. The Worx and Fuseware’s study further revealed that more South Africans are using Facebook on mobile devices.

The use of social media is not limited to the governments, which have started to embrace the platform for diverse use such as disseminating and promoting information access to the public, increase public participation, job recruitment, improve service delivery, building mutual trust with the stakeholders, improving responsiveness to stakeholders, campaigns, creating awareness and changing of perception, greater transparency, democracy, accountability and policy making decisions among others (Sobaci, 2014; Salkin & Tappendorf, 2013; Wallace, 2011).

Social media platform enables citizens to create, share, participate, search and rate content or information and most importantly, they can have an influence on the policy agenda (Östling, 2011). This also creating citizens as could have their views or voices heard and considered in the decision making machinery. Essentially, governments could also timeously respond to the stakeholders concerns and increase transparency and accountability. As Steyn (2000) and Wu (2013) clearly point out, “Social media provides opportunities for a two-way communication between government and its stakeholders, thereby increasing the frequency and speed of engagement”. With all
else being equal, most governments are urged to follow Grunig’s model of communication where one-way information distribution is discouraged. The two-way symmetric model developed by Grunig and Grunt (1984), is a component of the Excellence Theory, which proceeds from the premise to promote or encourage dialogue and interactivity between the sender and the receiver. On the other hand, the dialogic communication theory, which also fits well as a part of the Excellence Theory, encourages organisations and the public to interact in honest and ethical ways in order to achieve effective two-way communication (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Canfield, Foster & Waters, 2011).

In the paper “Democratic Process in Online Crowds and Communities”, Haythornthwaite (2011) examined the rapid and ad hoc development and interactions of participative citizen communities during acute events in Queensland, and found that social media provided a channel of common discourse between Queensland citizens and their government institutions. Thus, through e-government, communication between government and its respective stakeholders could be forged.

However, despite all these developments, the use of social media in government is not at a satisfactory level (Graham, 2014; Haythornthwaite, 2011; and Sobaci, 2014). This may be due to lack of implementation of social media policies, the use of one-way communication, skill gap, capacity and resources such as a new web, social media applications, and a lack dialogue creation and being reactive to issues (Chauke & du Plessis, 2013; Graham, 2014; Mickoleit & Androsoff, 2015). With these challenges, government has to still find ways to sustain and make it work effectively. In addition, a two-way communication method on social platforms may not be at a satisfactory stage to engage stakeholders. As Sobaci (2014) argues, “posting a lot of messages on social platforms does not mean there is an engagement happening”.

Magro (2012), study reviewing social media use in e-government, highlighted the lack of a clear goal for e-government and the difficulty inherent in determining the “best” way to use social media in government. Magro further revealed “that people are positive and willing to interact with government agencies through e-government initiatives, and that they trusted government more than the private sector with their personal information”. Thus, social media is an effective platform to promote
government’s work through posting useful information and creating an ongoing dialogue between citizens and government.

This research study is, therefore, aimed at understanding how the Gauteng Provincial Government (GPG) is using social media, namely Facebook, as a two-way tool for communication with stakeholders. This academic study will also describe the benefits that could be derived from using social media in general and Facebook in particular.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In South Africa there are three spheres of government, namely national, provincial, and local government (Chauke & du Plessis, 2013). The Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), under the Department of Communications, formulates and implements the national communication strategy to be used as a basis and framework by all the governmental departments in the country. There is a public relations (PR) component in all these levels and its role is to inform constituencies/citizens about the programmes of government, encourage citizen support for programmes and policies, manage internal and external communication, build a good sustainable relationship with the stakeholders and also assist with the issue of redress (Angelopulo & Baker, 2013; Chauke & du Plessis, 2013; Steyn & Puth, 2000).

More governments are embracing and including social media platforms in their communication strategies, platforms and channels (Graham, 2014; Wu, 2013). Social media campaigns are being launched everywhere. Benefits for using social media platforms in governments include cutting costs for media time and space, creating awareness, sending out strategic messages to the public, spreading propaganda, increasing the democracy agenda setting and many more. This is also reinforced by Graham (2014) when he said: “Governments have more opportunities to interact with and engage stakeholders; social media are an inexpensive and swift communication channel for them to do this”. As such, governments acknowledge the need for social media, but still need to find ways on how to sustain and make it work effectively (Chauke & du Plessis, 2013; Graham, 2014).

Although social media is one of the preferred platforms to enhance and improve government/citizen’s relationships, there is too little research on how governments are
utilising social media (McCorkindal, 2010; Mickoleit and Androsoff, 2015). This may be fuelled by the fact that media such as social media is a new phenomenon and that several governments use one-way communication instead of two-way communication. Therefore, this research aims to fill that gap, by exploring how social media is being used as a two-way method of communication with Excellency PR to engage with stakeholders of the Gauteng Provincial Government.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

As new technologies such as social media are taking the helm, it is important for governments to take advantage of available opportunities. It is also necessary for government to develop strategies that leverage two-way communication with stakeholders. Through social media, governments are able to post information through their Facebook pages for photos, videos, discussion documents, white papers, green papers, gazettes, bills and legislations among others. However, as mentioned before, these new platforms could still pose various challenges to governments on how they are used, in particular, creating a dialogue. Several governments are still exploring and experimenting with the social media platform, and therefore continue to use one-way communication, which is a traditional way of disseminating information such as press releases (Mickoleit & Androsoff, 2015).

It is against this backdrop that this research seeks to investigate how the Gauteng Provincial Government uses social media, namely Facebook, to engage with its stakeholders.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine how the Gauteng Provincial Government is using social media as a two-way communication method to engage with stakeholders. Based on the results of the literature review, the next sections will outline the research objectives and questions.
1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives of this study are:

- To describe the use of Facebook and its attendant benefits by the Gauteng Provincial Government (GPG) to engage with its stakeholders.
- To identify the type of content posted on social media.
- To establish how frequently the Gauteng Provincial Government uses the social media platform.
- To understand how departments create dialogue on social media.

To understand the manner in which the departments respond to the questions posted by the stakeholders.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions of this study are as follows:

**RQ1:** How are the Gauteng Provincial Government departments engaging on social media?

**RQ2:** What type of content are government departments posting on social media?

**RQ3:** How frequently do government departments post on social media?

**RQ4:** How do departments create a dialogue on social media?

**RQ5:** How do departments respond to the inquiries posted on social media?

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY TO THE ACADEMIC FIELD

The significance of this study is to add to the existing limited body of academic knowledge in South Africa about the importance of using social media, in particular the government, to engage effectively with stakeholders.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study analyses how the Gauteng Provincial Government’s departments use social media platforms, in particular Facebook, as a two-way method of
communication to reach and engage with its stakeholders. As such, this study builds on and contributes to work of the Excellence Theory in public relations and stakeholder management theory by some of the critical communication experts. Grunig and Hunt (1984) argue that the two-way symmetrical model has some characteristics of excellence public relations programs.

According to the Public Relation Excellence Theory, for the organisation to be effective, it should be designed in a way that will solve the problems and satisfy the needs of the stakeholders (Grunig, 1992). In essence, it is a theory that explains the value of Public Relations well. Thus, the two-way symmetrical model makes organisations more effective. In addition, to behave in socially acceptable ways, organisations should scan their environment to identify publics who are affected by potential organisational decisions or who want organisations to make decisions to solve problems that are important to them (Angelopulo & Barker, 2013). Failure to meet the stakeholders’ needs will result in creating unfavourable conditions for both the organisation and its stakeholders, for example, stakeholders opposing views create high risk and costs and reputation damage, among other things (Grunig, 1992). Therefore, organisations should communicate symmetrically with stakeholders, taking their needs and goals into consideration.

1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A qualitative method was selected as being appropriate for this research. Compared to a quantitative method which attempts to make generalisations about a topic of interest based on precisely measured quantities, qualitative researchers are more concerned about issues of the richness, texture, and feeling of raw data, interpreting, and gaining understanding of the particular issue thus, in-depth analysis (Jensen, 2002; Neuman, 2006:149). It explores attitudes, behaviour, and experiences through methods such as interviews, observations, and focus groups (Angelopulo & Baker, 2013; Jensen, 2002).

1.9.1 Population and Sample

The population for this research includes Facebook accounts of the six Gauteng Provincial Government Departments. They are: Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH); Gauteng Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation (GSACR);
Gauteng Department of Human Settlement (GDHS); Gauteng Department of Economic Development (GDED); Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) and Gauteng Department of Roads and Transport (GDRT).

1.9.2 Data collection methods

According to Jensen (2002:79), data collection methods entail diverse operations of categorising, segmentation, and interpreting the evidence or dataset. Content analysis of the Facebook pages of the six departments in the Gauteng Provincial Government were collected and analysed for a period of three months, between March and May 2016. Screenshots of Facebook pages were recorded.

1.9.3 Content analysis

Data analysis is a search for patterns in data, recurrent behaviour, objects, phrases and ideas; and examining, sorting, categorising, evaluating and comparing the coded data as well as reviewing the raw and recorded data (Neuman, 2006:467). It requires creativity, discipline and a systematic approach (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). For this research, content analysis was used to analyse and review the data. Content analysis was chosen because it allows data to be reviewed, notes to be made and data to be sorted into categories (Boyatzis, 1998). This method also helps with the discovering of new themes from data collected, development of codes or categories, words, patterns or phrases that serve as labels for sections of data.

1.9.4 Structure of the research report

Chapter 1 - The first chapter introduces the study, background, problem and purpose statements, significance of the study, research questions, research design and methodology, definitions, and limitations/delimitations.

Chapter 2 - This chapter gives a literature review, which outlines a synopsis of the previous studies on the use of social media by government as a two-way communication.

Chapter 3 - This chapter presents, in detail, the research design and method used in this study.
Chapter 4 - This chapter consists of the presentation of the results and interpretation of the data.

Chapter 5 - This chapter outlines a summary of the main findings and the recommendations.

1.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter gave an overview of how social media as a two-way communication method is changing the way people used to communicate. The theoretical framework on the study has been clearly outlined. The chapter also discussed some of the challenges that communication practitioners may be facing while utilising the social media platforms, such as a lack of resources, skills and capacity, among others. The research design strategy was briefly explained. The definition of terms was also provided. The next chapter will provide a literature review on the use of social media, in particular Facebook, by organisations, including the government.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the use of social media; how it has changed the way public relations professionals function and its use for stakeholder engagement, specifically Facebook by the government. Benefits for the use of social media have been documented and recognised by organisations and public relations professionals globally (Graham, 2014). Challenges to the use of social media by government are also explored.

2.2 DIFFERENT TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

According to Sobaci (2014), social media is a complicated concept to define as it is often used together with Web 2.0. Sobaci (2014) further argued that as social media was developed using Web 2.0 technologies, it is therefore important to first define the Web 2.0, which is a networked platform that gives the user control in creating, designing, improving and sharing content and services (Sobaci, 2014). For instance, it enables the government to engage with citizens using social media tools that are known by the stakeholders, such as blogs, Wikipedia, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and many more (Lesame & Potgieter, 2012:5; Sobaci, 2014). It is anything that uses the Internet to enable communication between people. As Breakenridge (2008) argued: “It is about listening, in turn, engaging people on their level. Thus, Web 2.0 often encourages a two-way approach of communication. Some social media examples are as follows:

Debates occurring on social networks are participated nationally and internationally in real time, and more often faster (Sobaci, 2014). These reinforce the culture of participation amongst users. Many organisations, including governments, use social media to market their products, disseminate campaigns, to engage with their stakeholders and for agenda setting, among others (Graham, 2014). They include social media strategies in their plans.
Social media have different features that organisations can choose to communicate with stakeholders. These include blogs, video sharing (YouTube), photo sharing such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, online gaming among others (Msimangira, 2012).

- **Facebook** - A free social networking tool that allows registered users to create profiles, upload videos and photos, send messages and comments, and connect with friends and family.
- **Twitter** - It is a free microblogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users’ tweets by using multiple platforms and devices. 45 words maximum per post.
- **Google+** - It is designed to replicate the way people interact offline more closely than is the case in other social networking services.
- **Wikipedia** - It is a free, open content, online encyclopaedia created through the collaborative effort of a community of users known as Wikipedians. Anyone registered on the site can create an article for publication; registration is not required to edit articles. Wikipedia was founded in January 2001.
- **LinkedIn** - A networking site designed specifically for the business community. It is aimed at allowing registered members to establish and document networks of people they know and trust professionally.

The use of social media comes with some scepticism and criticism (Sobaci, 2014). As mentioned before, a lack of resources has been identified as one of the barriers that come with the use of social media. Sobaci (2014) mentioned technology, personnel, and time as the main causes. For instance, social media managers would require broadband to support the streaming of videos, good security measures, and sufficient space on the system among others. In regard to personnel, local government has to hire someone with the necessary experience and expertise and is often forced to train those without experience and skills. There are also legal issues to be considered whereby social media policies need to be implemented and monitored. The content that is being sent out should be controlled as the sender is sending on behalf of the institution (Salkin & Tappendorf, 2013; Sobaci, 2014). Another important barrier could be of reputation management, where information disseminated might generate either positive or negative consequences. For example, there might be negative statements
that could damage the reputation of the government. On the other hand, positive statements could enhance and boost the integrity, reputation, decorum, public standing and image of the organisation in a changing context.

2.3 THE USE OF FACEBOOK

According to Facebook.com (2016), having a Facebook page can help organisations to market their business as customers can learn about products and services. Furthermore, customers are able to see the products promoted on Newsfeed, which is constantly updating the list of content of Facebook. Facebook is being used in this study because it has unlimited data and has a high usage by the general public. It is also more user friendly when compared to twitter (World Wide Worx, 2015). The Pew Research Center (2014) also indicated that Facebook users are much more politically engaged than most other social media users; they are more trusting than others; they have more close relationships and that they revive inactive relationships. According to Browde (2016), on August 27th 2015, for the first time, a billion people used the site on one day; with its daily users between 1.2 billion and 1.8 billion. Facebook remains the most popular social networking site in the world (Duggan, 2015).

Interestingly, Strecker, (2011), argued that Facebook enables organisations to create a profile and group, allowing members to join and discuss issues. A Fan page can be created to disseminate information to the fans. Fan interactions happen when users click on “like” or comment on the information posted. Users can post content such as videos, photos, messages and comments and interact with friends, family members, organisations etc. As its founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg (2016) posted on his Facebook wall, “A more open and connected world is a better world. It brings stronger relationships with those you love, a stronger economy with more opportunities and a stronger society that reflects all of our values”. Furthermore, Facebook allows users to upload content to their Facebook page’s wall through Newsfeed (Wallace, Wilson & Miloch, 2011). Wallace, et al. further argues that interaction with fans might also happen through posting comments, or using the “like” button which increases the level of engagement between the organisation and the fans.
2.4 PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The environment of public relations is shifting due to new media such as social media, new technologies and mobile networks among others. Benefits for the use of social media have been documented and recognised by organisations and public relations professionals globally (Graham, 2014). According to Graham, in the study conducted by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and Dow Jones & Company, the participants, who were public relations officials and students, indicated that social media have positively impacted the public relations profession. The study further shows that the public relations practice is technologically driven, with the use of news web sites, blogs, Facebook, Twitter among others.

In a study exploring how social media can be used as a tool in crisis communication, using the mobile company, Research in Motion, during a four-day network outage, Hamann-Hilding (2012) discovered that social media can be used as a beneficial tool if used properly and effectively, but can be harmful if not used well. The study further revealed that stakeholders expect efficient, faster communication when using social media platforms.

Similarly, in the survey conducted by Wigley and Zhang (2011), investigating how public relations practitioners use social media in crisis planning and crisis communication and in ordinary situations, the pair conducted a survey with 251 respondents or participants of the Public Relations Society of America, “48% said they have incorporated social media into their crisis plans”. This is important to government as they can enhance their reputation as in most cases it is always in crisis. Hamann-Hilding (2012) also posits that social media can be a beneficial tool if used properly and effectively, but can be harmful if not used well. Hamann-Hilding further argues that stakeholders expect efficient, faster communication when using social media platforms.

It is evident that the Internet has given public relations practitioners a unique opportunity to gather information, engage and leverage dialogue among citizens and also monitor public discussions (James, 2007). However, James’ study on “the overall understanding of current and future challenges posed by new media to public relations”, pointed out that public relations practitioners are not ready to fully embrace
new technologies. There are still challenges such as a lack of resources, staff, the use of one communication, and clear policies on social media, among others.

2.5 SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY GOVERNMENT

Social media, if used properly, has proven to be an effective method of communication for the government. Social media platforms are highly regarded as a public relations function to promote citizen participation, engagement and to hold the government accountable, thereby increasing democracy and transparency (Sobaci, 2014). According to Ponte, Royo, and Ratkai (2012), government could reap these benefits if they increase their visibility by sharing information, and openly and transparently engaging with stakeholders. Bertot, Jaeger and Munson (2010), also posit the same views that social media could bring opportunities such as democratic participation and engagement, whereby the government uses social media technologies to engage the public in decision making processes to increase the dialogue, policy development and implementation.

In a study on how North Carolina local government engages with citizens, Strecker (2011) found that by engaging citizens on a regular basis, it increases transparency and citizen participation. Fan engagement increases as the government posts messages on the fans’ page. As a result fans have more opportunities to respond and engage with the government. The results also showed that engagement increases as government posts external websites, which encourages sharing of information with other organisations. Links such as news and events can be beneficial. Key to note is that engagements also increased when photos and videos are posted. Fan engagement also increases when government frequently and timeously responds to the comments and questions posted by fans.

In Virginia Beach citizens were encouraged to post information, inquiries and comments on the government’s Facebook page (Strecker, 2011). In California the government received comments and messages from citizens through social media platforms such as forums. Thus, public relations officers should create messages that encourage dialogue such as requests for citizens to post innovative ideas, send questions, participate in a survey, and polls which can allow government officials to get feedback and see the needs of the citizens. Strecker (2011) further recommended
that local government should continue to explore Facebook as a communication and engagement tool as it has proven to be a relevant platform for engaging citizens. Thus, a two-way communication increases the engagement between the government and the citizens.

As mentioned in the previous literature, one of the most important assets of using social media public relations is that it allows comments from visitors to the page (Salkin and Tappendorf, 2013; Sobaci, 2014). The comments allow local governments to get a sense of the concerns that the public has regarding projects and also to gauge how popular or even how valid these concerns are. The speed at which social media can be updated allows local governments to quickly address any concerns. For example, according to Salkin and Tappendorf (2013), in London, the mayor utilises his personalised twitter feed to address complaints by local citizens who are irritated by malfunctioning air conditioning units on London city buses. In a short period of time, the problem was solved. The pair further revealed that smaller municipalities in England have started to embrace the use of social media, where members of government posts videos, lectures and questions to the citizens through Facebook, You Tube and Twitter accounts.

In another study on the assessment of Facebook use by European Union (EU) municipalities, to see if they use Facebook as a communication and engagement channel and how citizens are engaging with their local government by using Facebook, Ponte et al. (2012) found that European municipalities are increasingly using Facebook in order to reach the citizens, with a 10% increase in a six-month period. In addition, most posts have been liked by the citizens who indicated the importance of the messages posted. The “like” in most cases reflects the engagement process.

The study by Bonson, Ratkai, and Royo (2014), revealed that municipalities are using the Facebook platform in order to communicate with citizens. However, the study found that citizen engagement was rather low. The authors further argue that “pushing a “like” button is the most popular form of engagement, but when participation of citizens involves greater effort, by sharing posts or commenting on them, engagement decreases”. Thus citizens have shown no further interest in engagement by sharing the messages or comments. The study further revealed that active presence in social
media varies according to the special circumstances of each local government, depending mainly on the political will and attitudes.

Promotion of dialogue through social media should be encouraged at all times. Using data collected from interviews with public information officers (PIOs) in local governments, Graham (2014) explored the use and perceptions of social media as a communication tool to promote democracy, participation and transparency. The results showed that social media is highly regarded as a beneficial communication tool for local governments and can be used for dialogue promotion and engagement. However, participants also highlighted challenges they face in incorporating social media into their communication strategies, such as lack of a sufficient budget, resources and time among other constraints.

Renken (2014), after analysing 67 Facebook posts of the missions, the results indicate that the majority of the missions have a high number of posts. However, they hardly used dialogue strategy or any two way communication models, and interestingly, by often posting messages on Facebook, they thought they were engaging in two-way communication, with additional information distributed as a press release.

“The Utilisation of Social Media: A Case Study of the U.S. General Services Administration Experience” study, which was conducted to examine and analyse the program’s effectiveness in reaching and engaging its target audience, found that although the region is on the right path of effectively engaging with its stakeholders, such as allowing two-way communication and being technology savvy, the efforts are not at a satisfactory stage (Guida, 2011). The region is not utilising social media to effectively communicate and engage the public and federal employees.

Similar to other authors, Mickoleit (2014) revealed that the uncertainty of institutions on how best to utilise social media beyond corporate communications was a major challenge. The study further revealed that most governments are slowly starting to embrace the use of social media to influence agendas and processes, with politicians having Facebook pages, blogs and twitter (Mickoleit, 2014). Major challenges are discussed, notably those related to the uncertainty of institutions on how to best leverage social media beyond “corporate” communications. The paper proposes tools
to guide decision makers to be considered by government institutions. Some of the guidelines proposed are as follows:

- Organisations should set up objectives and expectations including its core mission and the important information and services offered.
- Organisations should develop governance modes and guidelines and central oversight body for social media use across government.
- Organisations should have specific legal and regulatory provisions that could have an impact on how the organisation uses social media.
- Organisations should identify the human resources available or needed in order to properly execute the process of social media.
- The issue of managing risks on social media should be prioritised.
- Social Media should be regularly monitored and measured for impacts.

Graham and Avery (2013) examined the use of social media tools by local governments and their perceptions of social media use by their citizenry. The results of the study showed that social media is being underutilised by local government, at 70% usage, in particular increasing the engagement. The study further revealed that Facebook and Twitter were the platforms most used, with more posts on special events.

As shown above, social media is highly utilised by government for sharing of information with stakeholders. Unfortunately, to a large extent, the platform is not utilised at a satisfactory level and does not create enough dialogue as emphasised by Grunig’s two-way communication methods and excellence theory, which focuses on the dialogic communication and mutual understating and exchange of information (Graham, 2014; Salkin & Tappendorf, 2013; Sobaci, 2015). The increase of the presence of Facebook space does not guarantee two-way communication (Graham, 2014; Sobaci, 2014). The majority of citizens does not often share the information with friends or engage in dialogue or comments. Thus, citizens are not interested in taking part in conversations with municipalities.

It is therefore recommended that government should strive to revisit their strategy on social media and permit frequent engagement between itself and stakeholders (Ponte et al., 2012). By doing so, government would enhance transparency and trust between
stakeholders. The negative and positive feedback from stakeholders makes local government increase efforts to be more transparent and accountable. Information is published instantly and reports on government activities (Graham, 2014). In essence, government should not only use social media for the dissemination of information. It should be treated as a platform where fruitful engagements take place to build communities. Information should not be pushed down the throats of the public or stakeholders without any exchange or engagement. Waters et al. (2011) also highlighted the significance of interactivity between organisations and stakeholders and that it plays a huge role in developing relationships online with stakeholders, such as asking for email addresses and surveys. Sobaci (2014) also argues:

“There is a very close relationship between local governments and democracy. Because local governments are closest to citizens, it is easier for citizens to inspect and hold local governments accountable”.

2.6 WHAT CONTENT CAN BE POSTED ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

Through a content analysis of 275 non-profit organisation’s Facebook profiles on how they are using social networking sites to advance their organisation’s mission and programs, Waters, Burner, & Lam (2009) found that nearly all organisations have Facebook profiles and have published their history, mission statement, logo, and URL. Few of the organisations posted news announcements. There were also few postings of photographs and links to the external news. For engagement with fans, the majority of the organisations provided e-mail addresses to organisational representatives and generic emails. Furthermore, the Facebook pages of the organisations provided fans with events calendars, volunteer opportunities, and organisational phone numbers, among others. The study further revealed that transparency and openness was the main issue rather than the interactive nature of social media. For instance, information was only provided through external links to news stories, photographs and discussion board posts. The study also revealed that most organisations lack sufficient resources and time to effectively manage the Facebook page. Waters et al. (2009) further recommended that organisations should use videos and photographs to increase engagement and dialogue.
In general, citizens have started to embrace and rely on social media for communication with their friends, family, businesses, colleagues and government (Kavanaugh et al., 2012). Social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook enable citizens to be informed and also give feedback to the government.

An exploratory study conducted by Kavanaugh, Fox, Sheetz, Yang, and Li (2012) on how social media is used by government officials in Arlington, and also community as a whole to manage crisis situations, revealed that an overwhelming majority of the respondents had a profile on at least one type of social media such as Twitter, blog, photo/video collections and place-based application among others. In addition, the respondents visited social networking sites other than social media sites, frequently. The research study further revealed that more than half of the respondents used social networking sites on a daily basis with 76% using the social media sites only once per week.

In order to harness and encourage the use of social media among its agencies, The Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) (n.d) developed a social media policy. The government further urged its agencies to use social media for the following benefits:

- To improve the accessibility of government information, to serve as an additional channel for consultation so that citizens can communicate with government on important and urgent issues and concerns, all to enable greater citizen participation.
- Social media would be deployed so that citizens can co-create policies and services to achieve happiness; and enhance the transition to e-Government.
- Social media would enable greater information sharing and closer collaboration among ministries and other agencies for a better understanding of issues and greater efficiencies.

2.7 HOW SOCIAL MEDIA CAN BE USED TO GET TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION?

In an attempt to offer a more comprehensive understanding on public relations, Grunig and Hunt (1984) as in (Angelopulo & Barker, 2013), developed four models, which are Press Agency, the Public Information model, two-way asymmetric and two way symmetric models, explained below:
The Press Agentry is a one way communication method. It uses persuasion and manipulation to influence an audience to behave as the organisation desires. Communication is often incomplete, distorted, or partially true. The main objective is to “tell” a story, not to “listen”. In this context, the method is further perceived as propaganda.

The public information model is a one-way communication where PR officers distribute information to the public or stakeholders. It is regarded as one-way asymmetrical method. It provides true and complete information to the public in a persuasive manner in order to gain the trust of the public. It often uses press releases and other one-way communication techniques to disseminate information.

Two-way asymmetric communication uses information scientifically to persuade relevant publics to adopt a desired behaviour.

The two-way symmetric model uses communication to negotiate with the public, resolve conflict and promote mutual understanding and respect between the organisation and its stakeholders. It is about mutual understanding between the sender and the receiver.

As a symmetrical two-way communication medium, social media can be used for stakeholder engagements and has been proven to have given companies opportunities to engage with stakeholders (Angelopulo & Barker, 2013; Bryson, 2004; Ross, 2014). Thus organisations and stakeholders continuously influence each other. According to Angelopulo and Barker (2013), knowing and analysing the stakeholder is crucial to every organisation. By doing so the organisation could know the needs and trends of its stakeholders. Using social media can further build trust between governments and their stakeholders and in the meantime improve the quality of government service, encourage citizenship engagement to build community, grow leaders, increase collaboration, reduce costs and improve public service, transparency and collaboration (Graham, 2014). As mentioned before, by constantly consulting and creating a dialogue with stakeholders, government can gain confidence, support or trust from the public and ultimately support for its policies.

Grunig and Hunt’s symmetric theory is interlinked with Kent and Taylor’s (1998) dialogic public relations theory which is based mainly on the negotiated exchange of
ideas and opinions. Kent and Taylor argue that in order to fully understand symmetrical communication, one must first understand dialogic communication. The pair further argues that the term dialogic or dialogue is being used by scholars to describe ethical and practical approaches to public relations. It is a concept that is deeply rooted in philosophy and relational communication theory. Thus, a dialogue is based on that relationship.

Interestingly, Kent and Taylor further argued that there is confusion on the meaning of a two-way relationship between organisations and the public. The question is on how to use social media in public relations (Kent & Taylor, 2010). They contend that the internet should be viewed as an opportunity in public relations. One can talk to the customers; get instant feedback with no filters of information. However, the pair further maintained that the internet should be proactively monitored for incorrect information which could be rectified by public relations professionals. Kent and Taylor also warned that being able to “talk” and get “feedback” or monitor social media does not mean that there is an effective dialogue or conversation. Public relations professionals should rather recognise and meet the public needs through dialogue and understanding. The internet platforms offer both the public and the public relations officials the opportunity to create a dynamic and lasting relationship (Kent & Taylor, 1998). In essence, in order for public relations professionals to effectively use the internet and social media, they should adopt a proper dialogic loop in their communication. This is to avoid one way communication or a situation where public relations have become just another marketing technology tool. If used properly, the dialogic loop provides a sustainable relationship between public relations and the public.

Kent and Taylor’s dialogic theory on public relations suggested five dialogic principles that would guide organisations to build relationships with the public, while achieving the goal of two-way communication. Five principles that offer guidelines for the successful integration of dialogue are the dialogic loop, the usefulness of information, the generation of return visits, the intuitiveness/ease of the interface and the rule of conservation of visitors.
2.7.1 The dialogic loop

According to Kent & Taylor (1998), the benefits for using new technologies include the allowance of feedback from audiences to be embedded in the public relations communication. The pair further argues that feedback is where a dialogic communication starts between the organisation and its stakeholders. This allows the public to query organisations. On the other hand the organisation is given the opportunity to respond to the queries, and concerns. However, it was acknowledged that if there is no commitment in responding to these queries or give correct information, it will have a negative impact on the relationships and negotiations with the public. For example, the organisation publishes an email address on the website and social media but fails to respond to the questions or concerns sent in. This compromises the process of dialogic communication. Kent and Taylor (1998) further advised organisations who aspire to create an effective dialogic public relations to provide training to public relations professionals who are appointed, to handle the internet and social media. The professionals will need special skills in order to execute the tasks and also be able to respond to queries, and resolve problems from the public. However, Kent and Taylor pointed out that although responses are mainly regarded as part of the dialogic loop, the content of the response is also of importance.

2.7.2 The usefulness of Information

In the second principle Kent and Taylor urge public relations professionals to make an effort at the inclusion of valued information to the public. Thus, organisations should strive to provide general information on their websites and social media sites, such as background and historical information about itself. Information such as telephone numbers, email addresses, external experts, shareholders and competitors, among other things. Content on the product offered or services provided should also be included. The website should also be easily accessible by the public in order to develop a relationship with them. At the same time the public should have their concerns and questions addressed. In essence, this principle implies that relationship negotiations with the public should not only be cultivated for the interests of the organisation, but for the creation of the long lasting relationship.
2.7.3 The generation of return visits

The generation of return visits principle is more on how to make website features attractive for repeat visits (Kent and Taylor, 1998). Public relations officials to regularly update information, changing topics to discuss, discussion forums, new commentaries, create special forums, create a page on frequently asked questions (FAQs), easily downloadable documents, links to other agencies, featuring company’s President, CEO, or the Department Head at least once per month among others. The two authors further argue that sites that have limited and unchanging information rarely attract return visits. These strategies will not only build a sustainable relationship between the organisation and the public, but also create a dialogic communication. In general, the website or social media sites should be attractive and easy to use.

2.7.4 The Intuitiveness/ Ease of the Interface

The intuitiveness/ease of the interface principle focuses more on the content posted on the website. It also focuses on the image building and identity of the organisation through the internet. It stipulates that website visitors should find it user friendly. The site should be well organised with more text than unnecessary graphics as texts load faster than graphics. Kent and Taylor (1998) further argue that too many graphics may distract the users and annoy users who are in a hurry, especially if graphics or sounds are not combined with any text or content. Thus, public relations officers should avoid publishing unnecessary information that does not add value to the users. However, sites should remain interesting, informative, and have information that is of high value to the public. Organisational identity and image is of importance to the public. Thus, through website and dialogic communication, organisations could be able to create a good reputation and image. Information posted should be created in such a way that it meets the needs of the public. Posted information should be interactive and enable users to build a sustainable relationship with the organisation.

2.7.5 The rule of conservation of visitors

The last principle is more about the creative thinking of the website whereby designers are encouraged to be careful about links that may distract users. In essence, website visitors should be valued. Taylor and Kent (1998) suggested that links should be used as a platform to foster lasting dialogic relationships and unnecessary links should
therefore be avoided. Only essential links should be included on the websites or social media. Sponsored advertisements should be placed at the bottom of pages to avoid users straying. However, the pair warned against the overuse of sponsored advertisements as it might slow down the operation of the sites. In a sense, “dialogic communication should be a goal of the interaction and not merely a means to an end such as marketing or advertising” (Taylor & Kent, 1998).

Waters, Canfield and Foster (2011) also explored the use of Kent and Taylor’s dialogic principles of communication. Using content analysis of the health centres’ Facebook profiles, Waters et al. (2011) wanted to explore how US universities’ health centres are using dialogue and engagement on their social media pages to educate students and their followers on health issues. Results have shown that health centres attract many followers, and leverage the dialogic communication significantly. However, the study also revealed that although the university health centres are active on the Facebook page, the site is not used at a satisfactory level. Thus, the public relations professionals are not utilising Facebook strategically to get more followers and educate them on health issues affecting them. The health centre Facebook profiles are starting to embrace building online relationships through dialogue. However, none of the Facebook pages are effectively managed when applying the dialogical principles. The majority of the health centre link to internal and external health related information, such as news reports. More departments are publishing their upcoming calendars and events. Almost half of the Facebook pages contain mission statements, background information and provide links.

However, Waters’ et al. research showed that the area of greatest weakness among the health centres was in the generating of return visits. Another weakness was to create a dialogic loop which requires more interactivity and feedback. The majority of the health centres have discussion groups of forums. However, the forums are not discussed regularly and no new discussions are begun. In regard to response to the messages or queries posted by the customers, only 59% of the health centres responded to comments by simple response such as “great point”, or “thanks for your feedback”. Waters et al. further emphasise that responding to the user’s comments is another way of creating a dialogic loop ensures return visits.
Through a qualitative content analysis, Msimangira (2012) has shown how the thirty organisational websites and selected social media pages apply the six principles. The findings revealed that few organisations have adopted the use of social media. Thus, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter are being underutilised by organisations that wish to facilitate dialogic communication with the public. A handful of organisations had direct links to Facebook, Twitter or YouTube on their website. In regard to social media, organisations were more concerned with the conversation and generation of return visits by the public. Two-way communication was used on social media more than on the website. However, their efforts in promoting two-way communication on social media pages were not at a satisfactory level as they were underutilised in terms of creating dialogic communication with stakeholders. Failing to apply all six dialogic principles and effectively using two-way methods of communication as per Grunig and Hunt’s symmetric model and the Excellence Theory shows a general lack of understanding on how to effectively create and build a sustainable relationship with the public.

As per Kent and Taylor’s dialogic principles, organisations should respond to the post in a timely manner and update the sites frequently in order to increase dialogue. However, the authors argue that if the organisation is unable to keep return visitors there would not be any future dialogue. Waters et al. (2011) also suggested that social media managers should explicitly ask visitors to come back and become friends/fans for an ongoing dialogue.

In addition, in order to increase chances of dialogic communication, Strecker (2001), also recommended the following tactics:

- Post often to the Fan Page
- Share relevant information from external sources and organisations
- Use text-only posts freely and frequently
- Increase use of photos as part of a Facebook strategy
- Respond to fan comments and questions, and respond often
- Link to the fan page from the homepage of the website
- And create a fan page
2.8 CONCLUSION

The previous literature review showed that social media is being used promptly by both public relations practitioners and governments. The dialogic theory which provides a strategic framework to facilitate relationship building between the public and organisations was explored. If used positively, social media engagement can contribute to the performance of the government and enhance the transparency and accountability. As Guida (2011) said, “If the government uses social media effectively to reach out to the public, its efforts could better address the public interest, learn from the community, and improve relationships”. However, as mentioned before, there are challenges that may reduce its effectiveness, such as a lack of resources, capacity being one of them. The dialogue created in the social media is insufficient as governments post information as one-way communication instead of a two-way communication. As per recommendations by Magro (2012), future research on social media in e-government is required in the areas of objectives and strategy, categorisation of e-government applications and policy-making. The research is needed for sustainable citizen participation and involvement.

The next chapter outlines the research design and methodology.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 focuses on the research methodology of the study on how the Gauteng Provincial Government is using social media as a two-way communication to engage with stakeholders. The section reflects on the research design methods, data collection techniques and data analysis.

Research Questions:

  RQ1: How are the Gauteng Provincial Government departments engaging on social media?

  RQ2: What type of content are government departments posting on social media?

  RQ3: How frequently do government departments post on social media?

  RQ4: How do departments create a dialogue on social media?

  RQ5: How do departments respond to the inquiries posted on social media?

Research objectives:

  Research objective 1: To find out how the use of Facebook by the Gauteng Provincial Government (GPG) assists in engaging with its stakeholders.

  Research objective 2: To find out the type of content posted on social media.

  Research objective 3: To establish how frequently the Gauteng Provincial Government uses the social media platform.

  Research objective 4: To understand how the departments create dialogue on social media?

  Research objective 5: To understand the manner in which the departments respond to the questions posted by the stakeholders.
3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

A qualitative research method was selected as being appropriate for this research. Qualitative researchers are more concerned about issues of the richness, texture, and feeling of raw data, interpreting and gaining understanding of the particular issue, thus, in-depth analysis (Jensen, 2002; Neuman, 2006:149). It explores attitudes, behaviour and experiences through methods such as interviews, observations, and focus groups (Angelopulo & Baker, 2013; Jensen, 2002).

Manuli (2012), in the study “Policy makers use social media communication of public relations: An assessment of EU information Society’s policy-makers use of Twitter and Facebook”, used a triangulation method of combining qualitative and quantitative techniques in some specific case studies. Manuli used qualitative content analysis of posts on Facebook and Twitter. The methodology was used because it allowed an in-depth analysis of the content on the sites. Steenkamp (2011) on “Assessing the role of social media in the South African Political Sphere” also used content analysis of the Facebook materials in the study to recognise relevant themes within the selected text and to see what is really happening on the sites. Content analysis was used because it offers advantages such as effectively capturing and processing large volumes of qualitative data. The fact is that the method is relatively inexpensive and does not need contact with people (Steenkamp, 2012). However, Steenkamp further warned researchers against being biased and that they should strive to ensure greater objectivity.

3.3 SAMPLING AND POPULATION

Sampling is a way of collecting data when the population is exceptionally large (Jensen, 2002). For this study, the researcher used a method called a non-probability sampling technique, where the sample is selected from the population and it does not give all individuals in the population an equal chance of being chosen (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006). Good sampling implies a well-defined population, an adequately chosen sample and an estimate of how representative of the whole population the sample is. That is, how well in terms of probability, the sample conforms to the unknown population parameters. The selected population will make an informed contribution to the study because they are familiar with the subject discussed.
The Gauteng Provincial Government has a total of thirteen departments. The selected departments have a strong presence on the Facebook platform and regularly update information.

The selected departments and Facebook Pages are as follows:

- Gauteng Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation;  
  https://www.facebook.com/GautengSACR/?fref=ts
- Gauteng Department of Economic Development;  
  https://www.facebook.com/GPGDED?ref=hl
- Gauteng Department of Education;  
  https://www.facebook.com/Gauteng-Department-of-Education-235615369820139/
- Gauteng Department of Human Settlement;  
  https://www.facebook.com/GDHumanSettlement/?ref=hl
- Gauteng Department of Health;  
  https://www.facebook.com/pages/Gauteng-Department-of-Health/281958705197199
- Gauteng Department of Roads and Transport;  
  https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=gauteng%20roads%20and%20transport%20department\n
3.4 CONTENT COLLECTION METHODS

According to Jensen (2002; 79), data collection methods entail diverse operations of categorising, segmenting, and interpreting the evidence or dataset. In this research a qualitative method was used to answer the research questions. A qualitative content analysis was conducted between 01 March and 31 May 2016, to find out how the Gauteng Provincial Government’s departments are using the Facebook platform to engage with stakeholders.

The researcher manually collected and analysed Facebook pages and posts from the Facebook pages of the selected departments. The Facebook features such as the date of the posts, if the homepage has useful information such as a logo, mission statement, contacts, type of content, the use of photos and videos, the level of
engagement, how frequently the departments post; and how the departments respond to queries were examined. Screenshots of Facebook pages were recorded and saved as Annexure.

3.5 CONTENT ANALYSIS

For the purpose of this research, content analysis was used. This method is used when one needs to make an argument about quantities. However, it can also be used for qualitative research (Stokes, 2003: 66). The data investigated by content analysis are collections of encoded symbols or messages used in communication (van der Walt, 2013: 414). The method also helps with discovering new themes from data collected, development of codes or categories, words, patterns or phrases that serve as labels for sections of data (Boyatzis, 1998). According to Angelopulo and Baker (2013), content analysis in organisational communication can be used for the following:

- To identify the intentions, focus or communication trends of an individual, group or organisation.
- To describe attitudinal and behavioural responses to communication within the organisation.
- To identify a specified characteristic in textual messages.

In order to produce quality research findings, Graneheim and Lundman (2003) suggested the use of concepts related to qualitative analysis such as the unit of analysis, meaning unit, condensing, abstracting, content area, code, category and theme. Unit of analysis includes various objects of study including an organisation, a community, or a nation. It could also include abstracted and coded text. A meaning unit refers to the group of words, paragraphs or sentences or statements that have a central meaning or related to each other. The concept condensing refers to the shortening of the text without losing the meaning. The labelling of the units is referred to as “code”. Categories were created to group together content that has the same meaning. A category could be divided into sub-categories. Themes can be created and divided into sub themes. All these concepts could be adopted in order to get reliable, trustworthy results of qualitative analysis.
In regard to this study, as per Taylor-Powell and Renner’s (2003) and Graneheim and Lundman (2003) guidelines on how to conduct qualitative content analysis, the researcher had to read and re-read the screen shots of the Facebook posts. Based on the results of the literature review, data was organised by question to identify consistency and differences. Identified themes or patterns were organised into categories that summarise and bring meaning to the text (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). Other themes that emerged were organised under sub-categories. Data was then presented and interpreted.

The researcher further examined the departments’ use of two-way communication to engage with stakeholders based on the five dialogic principles developed by Kent and Taylor, which are: creation of the dialogic loop; usefulness of information; generation of return visits; ease and intuitiveness of interface and conservation of visitors.

3.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Qualitative content analysis is commonly used to analyse qualitative data. In the past, content analysis focused mainly on the objective or quantitative description, however it is now being applied on the interpretation of latent content, which is a qualitative method (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003; Stokes, 2003: 66). Studies on qualitative content analysis indicate conflicting opinions in regard to the concepts, procedures and interpretation (Elo, Kääriäine, Kanst, Pölkki, Utriainen & Kyngäs, 2014; Graneheim & Lundman, 2003). According to Kuzmanić (2009) validity is often defined in terms of ‘truth’. Kuzmanic (2009) also posits that the notion of truth or true knowledge in research on social phenomena is often problematic. “It presupposes that there is a ‘pure form of truth’ somewhere out there, which can be discovered through using appropriate, and most importantly, valid research methods”. Therefore, there is a critical need for proper strategies for evaluating content analysis studies (Graneheim, & Lundman, 2003).

In a study “Qualitative Content Analysis: A Focus on Trustworthiness” by (Elo, et al., 2014), trustworthiness was described for the main qualitative content analysis phases from data collection to reporting of the results. Similar to the views by Graneheim and Lundman (2003), Elo et al., (2003) that researcher should “scrutinise” the trustworthiness of every phase of the analysis process, including the preparation,
organisation, and finding of the results. Thus, research findings should enormously be trustworthy. The findings should be evaluated based on the procedure used to get the findings (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003). Generally, the trustworthiness of qualitative content analysis is commonly based on concepts including credibility, dependability, and transferability among others (Graneheim, & Lundman, 2003). Although the use of these concepts have become popular in qualitative content analysis, concepts such validity and reliability could be interlinked in the procedure to generate the findings (Elo et al., 2003).

**Credibility**

Credibility refers to the quality of data (Elo et al., 2003; Graneheim & Lundman, 2003; Shenton, 2003). It is about the focus of the study, the context, the approach of data collection among others. Graneheim and Lundman (2003) further argued that the meaning should not be too broad with many paragraphs. Thus, all data should be included and no irrelevant data is excluded. It is about judging the similarities and differentiation of categories. For example, these could be achieved through showing quotations from the representatives.

The aim of this research is to explore how the Gauteng Provincial Government (GPG) is using social media, namely Facebook, as a two-way tool for communication with stakeholders. In order to achieve the credibility of the findings in this research, three in the initial phase of preparation, data was collected from all six Gauteng Provincial Government departments Facebook posts that are currently active on social media. In order to obtain a successful content analysis with trustworthy findings, data was reduced to concepts through the creation of categories, concepts and themes. Based on the results of the literature review, data was organised by question to identify consistency and differences. Themes or patterns were organised into categories that summarise and bring meaning to the text. Other themes that emerged were organised under sub-categories. The representative quotations from the Facebook posts were also shown on the data findings and Annexures. Furthermore, the examination of literature review conducted in order to relate the findings with the subject contributed in achieving credibility of this research.
Dependability

The concept of dependability is also crucial in assessing the trustworthiness of the findings. Graneheim and Lundman (2003) defined dependability concept as the “degree to which data change over time and alterations made in the researcher’s decisions during the analysis process”. Thus, due to involving process of data analysis, chances are high for the researcher to acquire new insights and alter the data. The extension of collection could create risks of inconsistency (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003). Social Media is an evolving at a very fast pace. Its features and contents are frequently changing and updated. In order to avoid risks of inconsistency during data collection in this research, qualitative content analysis was conducted between 01 March and 31 May 2016, which is three months. Screenshots of Facebook posts of the six departments were generated, analysed, printed and attached as Annexures. The researcher only analysed data under the period of review and no extension of collection was done.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied to other situation (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003).” The pair argues that, in order for the reader to find findings transferable, a clear explanation on the culture, context, sampling, data collection and process of data analysis should be enormously clear. By presenting a detailed presentation of the findings that includes quotes will leverage chances of transferability. Shenton (2003) suggested the additional information to be considered before any attempts at transference. They are as follows:

- The number of organisations taking part in the study and where they are based;
- Any restrictions in the type of people who contributed data;
- The number of participants involved in the fieldwork;
- The data collection methods that were employed;
- The number and length of the data collection sessions;
- The time period over which the data was collected.

This research used the six departments in the Gauteng Provincial Government that have an active social media, in particular Facebook. The department’s background
information such as mission statement, information found on Facebook pages, and how they use Facebook platform to engage with stakeholders. The use of screen shots as a data collection method was explained, together with the time period of data collection which is the period of three months, between 01 March and 31 May 2016.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Neuman (2006), the researcher has a moral obligation to be ethical, even when research subjects are unaware of or unconcerned about, ethics. In examining the Facebook for this study, care was taken that the researcher complied with all social research ethics. Everything possible has been done to avoid plagiarism, to treat the data with respect and to ensure that the literature used or quoted is appropriately referenced.

3.8 LIMITATIONS

This research had a number of limitations. Facebook is evolving every day. The change in the format, layout, and design is changing all the time; it is not the same as the previous week. The sample size was rather small, making it difficult to determine the situation in other departments. However, qualitative studies generally require a smaller sample size than quantitative studies.

A content analysis only allows the researcher to do analysis on content and can therefore be subjective. The process takes time, as one has to go through the content reading and re-reading. There might also be a chance that social media managers deleted some of the posts or some of the enquiries. Users might send enquiries or questions to the inbox, which can limit a researcher from seeing a two-way communication process. However, with the use of screen shots that were saved; the risks could be limited.

In addition, in order to address the question of “why” and challenges faced by social media, interviews or surveys with social media would have been appropriate. The information obtained from interviewees would be a supplement to the results from the content analysis of Facebook pages of the departments. Future research on dialogic theories should be recommended.
The lack of literature on this study is also a limiting factor. However, the researcher tried to plan and coordinate properly in order to avoid compromising the quality of the results.

3.9 CONCLUSION

The chapter discussed the methodology used in the study. The section reflected on the research methods, data collection techniques, trustworthiness of the study, ethical considerations and limitations. The next chapter focuses on the data analysis and interpretation.
CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the methodology on this research, which includes collecting, categorising and analysing of data from the Facebook pages of the six Gauteng Provincial Government’s departments, was discussed. The qualitative content analysis explained in chapter four was used to collect primary data from the six Gauteng Provincial Government website pages. For the collection of data, Facebook “search” was used in order to acquire Facebook pages for each of the departments’ Facebook pages.

4.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The content analysis of the Facebook accounts of the six departments was conducted for a period of three months from March to May 2016. The departments are: Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH); Gauteng Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation (GSACR); Gauteng Department of Human Settlement (GDHS); Gauteng Department of Economic Development (GDED); Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) and Gauteng Department of Roads and Transport (GDRT).

The research questions of this study are as follows:

RQ1: How are the Gauteng Provincial Government departments engaging on social media?

RQ2: What type of content are government departments posting on social media?

RQ3: How frequently do government departments post on social media?

RQ4: How do the departments create a dialogue on social media?

RQ5: How do the departments respond to the inquiries posted on social media?
Research objectives

- To find out how the Gauteng Provincial Government (GPG) uses Facebook to engage with its stakeholders.
- To find out the type of content posted on social media.
- To establish how frequently the Gauteng Provincial Government uses the social media platform.
- To understand how the department creates dialogue on social media.
- To understand the manner in which the departments respond to questions posted by the stakeholders.

4.3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF THE FACEBOOK PAGES

GDED

The GDED is tasked with developing the right environmental framework for economic growth and job creation, and instituting sound financial management policies and structures. The department's vision is to become a centre of excellence, providing economic policy direction, development facilitation, financial management leadership, and contributing to an environment conducive to labour-absorbing economic growth and poverty reduction.

The Gauteng Provincial Government has committed itself to the revitalisation and renewal of effective, efficient and transparent delivery of services to communities and the general public.

The home page has a link to a Twitter account, @GPGDED. The URL address is http://www.ecodev.gpg.gov. The Facebook profile has more than 6 000 followers or friends/fans. The Facebook page has the department’s URL’s address; the logo is published, a contact number are included on the Home page of the Facebook page, 011 355 8000 and the physical address is also posted on the Facebook page, 56 Eloff Street, Umnotho House.

GSACR

The mandate of the GSACR is to ensure access, increased participation and transformation of the sport, arts, and culture and recreation sectors in a manner that
yields optimum socio-economic benefits for all in the province. The department’s vision is to develop Gauteng as a vibrant home of champions where sport, arts, culture and recreation promote nation building, social cohesion, economic growth and sustainable livelihoods through ensuring skilled, active and healthy communities.

The department has a link to its Twitter handle, @GautengSACR.

The Facebook page has more than 10 000 followers or friends/fans. The contact numbers, physical address and website address of the department are published on the Facebook page. The website address is http://www.sacr.gpg.gov.za; the physical address is Surrey House, 35 Rissik St, Johannesburg and the contact number is 011 355 2500. The Facebook page has a slogan on the home page, “Together Moving Gauteng Region Forward”.

GDE

The GDE’s vision includes smart service delivery of quality public education, to promote a dynamic citizenship for socio-economic growth and development. It aims to be at the cutting edge of curriculum delivery, providing access to quality, lifelong, learning opportunities. The department is committed to eliminating inequality in education.

The department has more than 13 000 followers or fans/friends. The physical address is 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, South Africa. The contact number is 080 000 0789. The website address is http://www.education.gov.za. The Facebook page has a picture on its home page.

GDHS

The department provides human settlements in Gauteng and seeks to build sustainable communities and give communities access to affordable housing within targeted precincts. One of its programs is the Mixed Housing Developments - an innovative approach to housing delivery that provides a mixture of housing products to suit low income earners, middle income earners as well as high income earners. Mixed income developments are aimed at integrating communities in well located areas that provide economic opportunities or have greater potential for economic growth.
The slogan is: Together building a people centred government and sustainable communities.

The website address is www.gdhs.gpg.gov.za. Its Twitter handle is @GDHuman Settlement. The physical address is no. 37 Sauer Street, JHB; No contact numbers are published. The Facebook page has around 3 000 friends/fans or followers. The Home page has a picture of the houses.

GDoH

The Department of Health aims to provide quality health services and ensure a caring climate for service users, implement best-practice healthcare strategies, create a positive work environment for staff, and provide appropriate and top-quality training for health workers.

The department’s Facebook page has contact details such as physical address, website address and contact numbers. Website address is www.health.gov.za; contact number is 011 355 3000; physical address, 37 Pixley Seme Street, Marshalltown. The Facebook page has a photo on its home page.

GDRT

The responsibility of the Department of Roads and Transport is to improve mobility and accessibility in Gauteng and to develop transport and socio-economic infrastructure that helps residents to participate meaningfully in economic and social activities. The department’s vision is to develop an integrated, sustainable infrastructure that promotes people-centre, innovative, developmental public works and an accessible, safe and affordable movement of people, goods and services.

The physical address is no. 41 Simonds Street, Johannesburg; contact number is 011 355 7000; the website address is http://roadsandtransport.gpg.org.za. The department has around 5 000 followers or fans/friends on Facebook.
4.4 CONTENT POSTED ON FACEBOOK

Facebook wall

Ease and intuitiveness of use/interface

According to Kent and Taylor’s dialogic principles (1998), visitors who come to the internet should find the site or the social media page easy to navigate and understand. Thus the sites should be organised and hierarchical. All departments in the GPG use a Facebook wall and Information Tabs to disseminate information to users. Information is organised in a hierarchical order. All departments have more than five tabs on their wall. More than half of the Facebook pages have plenty of photos on their home page, displaying services and functions related to their mandate, such as education, economic development, sports and recreation, roads, human settlement or houses and transport. However, videos shown on the home page were limited. There was no specialised search engine on the Facebook pages, as per Kent and Taylor’s suggestions.

Figure 4.1: Facebook Home page

Source – GDE
Usefulness of information

In this principle, organisations should strive to provide useful information including general information appealing to the public. Thus, the information provided should be of value to the public. Usefulness of information includes the link to news, link to other organisations, calendars and mission statement among others. The Facebook profiles’ functions vary widely, based on the type of services offered by each department, such as sports and recreation, economic development, education, infrastructure development, social development and community issues.

Although the departments’ services vary, their Facebook profiles have almost the same features, such as a home page with links to their websites, operating hours, which are 07h00-16h00 or 08h00-16h30, physical location, links to the Twitter accounts, slogans, logos, links to photos, videos, notes, posts, and tabs to the links, which might assist users to navigate more easily (Figure 4.1). The majority of the departments provided background information about themselves. They also provided contact addresses, telephone numbers, and email address for the department. However, none of the departments have information on their stakeholders, experts and competitors, as per Kent and Taylor’s dialogic principles.

The results also show that the majority of the departments posted content on special events, forums and meetings (Appendix A/2). Departments posted news updates such as articles, speeches, media statements, employment announcements, events, exhibitions, projects and photos, etc. (Appendix B/3):

**GDED (news article)**

*Published by Imbaliyamalala Zondi · March 16 ·*

#StandUpForYourRights #RespectConsumerRights (The Citizen pg 8)

**GDE (Speech)**

*May 27 ·*

*Budget Vote speech: Delivered by MEC Panyaza Lesufi Yesterday at The Gauteng Legislature.*

GDE (Media statement)

May 21 ·

20 May 2016

Media Statement on the Constitutional Court Judgment in the matter between GDE and Fedsas

The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) welcomes the judgement handed down by the Constitutional Court in the long running case about admissions regulations.

...See More

GSACR (Shared a link).

April 25 ·

Gauteng residents urged to join Freedom Day celebration

The month of April marks an important milestone in the history of South Africa. April 27 remains a critical occasion that reminds the nation of the triumph over the sad...

SACR.GPG.GOV.ZA

Fewer departments posted photos on media briefings or interviews. However, none of the departments posted sound bites of interviews.

For example:

Gauteng Department of Economic Development

Published by Imbaliyamalala Zondi · May 27 ·

MEC Maile on Ukhozi FM earlier #GautengBudgets #Gautengdelivers

Gauteng Department of Education

March 3 ·

Catch MEC Lesufi tonight on Soweto TV...

Compared to other departments, the GDED, GSACR, GDE published plenty of news articles and media releases with links to their websites. Topics posted by the departments ranged from education, economic opportunities, and roads campaigns to education, economic and social activities.
The departments put the slogans on their mandate. For instance, the slogan for the GSACR reads like this:

“To ensure access, increased participation and transformation of the sport, arts, culture and recreation sector in a manner that yields optimum social and economic benefits for all in the province, and promotes nation building and social cohesion”.

The vision for the Education Department is: Our Vision is to ensure that every learner does well at school and leaves our institutions with the values, knowledge, skills and qualifications that will

GDE:

About

Our Vision is to ensure that every learner does well at school and leaves our institutions with the values, knowledge, skills and qualifications that will

General Information

The 4 Strategic Goals are:

1. To ensure that Gauteng has effective schools and learning institutions

2. To ensure that GDE head and district offices provide rel...See More

The majority of the Facebook pages did not share information on events or update the events calendar; only the GDHS updated their events calendar regularly (figure 4.2).
Conservation of visitors

Pictures

A vast number of Facebook profiles had links to websites, sharing information through pictures as a way of keeping visitors using the published information. The majority of the departments posted pictures such as high definition photos, posters about campaigns, jobs, events and conferences, which might help to conserve visitors. Most of the photos are posted to promote events such as campaigns or walkabout.
As shown in Figure 4.3, the GSACR proportionally has more pictures than other departments. Departments posted photos together with the text or information on the issue. Pictures posted obtained more “likes” by Facebook friends compared to text messages. Most of the pictures published are during the events and campaigns. On average, the departments publish 2 to 5 pictures per post; except for the GDE which published more pictures at an average of 2-55 per post (appendix B/1). Few posted photos with Twitter and news links.

**Figure 4.4. Videos**
Although all departments fairly posted photos on their Facebook pages, videos were poorly utilised. The majority of the departments do not have links to YouTube or videos. Figure 4.4 show GDHS, GDoH, GDRT never posted videos during the period under review. The GSACR posted the highest number of videos on their activities and campaigns. The videos posted were on special events and campaigns such as international Women's Day, Consumer Awareness and Human Rights Day by the GDED (appendix B/3). The GSACR posted videos on events on sports and recreational activities such as the celebration of human rights day, sports, and health and fitness (appendix B/3). The GDE published videos on education activities (appendix B/3).

The use of entertainment features such as cartoons and mascots in order to keep the visitors entertained were never used by the departments during the reviewed period. The use of these tools conserves visitors (Kent and Taylor, 1998). None of the departments used or provided a special search engine as per dialogic principles. However, the majority of the departments used attention grabbing headlines.

4.5 FREQUENCY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Figure 4.5: Posts per Month

![Graph showing posts per month for different departments]

Source: Developed by the Researcher
The generation of return visits

Based on the return visits principle, which requires the organisations to make sites attractive and appealing for repeat visits by regulating and updating information regularly, on average, the majority of the departments posted more posts weekly than daily, with an average of 4-8 posts per week. The majority of the departments posted information during office hours, which is 07h00-16h00 or 08h00 – 16h30. Users responded to the posted messages by clicking “like” or comment. However, the departments of Education and Sports and Culture posted almost daily. Occasionally, the majority of the departments posted more than once per day when there were events. For example, Roads and Transport had more posts during its “Arrive Alive campaign” during March 2016 (appendix B/2). The Economic Development Department also posted more posts during the month of March when they had a Qondis Ishishini Lakho campaign, which encourages entrepreneurs to register their businesses, and during the Township Awards event (appendix B/3). The findings give an indication that the number of posts is influenced by the number of events that departments host per month (appendix B/4).

4.6 CREATING A SPACE FOR DIALOGUE ON FACEBOOK

Dialogic Loop

Questions, surveys, emails, discussion boards, and comments

The dialogic loop allows the public to query organisations, and allows the organisation to answer the questions or concerns (Kent & Taylor, 1998). In essence, the dialogic loop provides a platform for the organisation to give feedback to the public; thus encouraging interactivity. This dialogic process includes the use of e-mail addresses, replies to comments, frequently asked questions, surveys, requests for information to stimulate dialogue, among others.

The results of this research show that the majority of the departments have embraced the process of engaging on Facebook platform pages by allowing for people to review, share like, suggest edits, message (inbox), which form part of the dialogic model, however, some of the dialogic principles are not being used abundantly. Although the majority of the departments have social media signs on the home page of their
websites, where users can click on the icons in order to participate on social media pages, they lack proper tactics that will stimulate conversation, such as surveys, frequently asked questions, no email addresses on the Facebook pages, among others. For example, the DHS and GDRT are lacking in terms of creating dialogue. However, departments such as GSACR and GDED are in the forefront when it comes to the dialogic loop. For example, the GSACR has an explicit message from its Acting Head of Department, requesting information from users:

The appeal reads as follows:

**Please Help Us Serve You Better**

*Dear Valued Citizen,*

As the Acting Head of the Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation within Gauteng Provincial Government, I want to thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve you. Please help us serve you better by taking a few minutes to tell us about the service that you have received so far.

*Sincerely,*

BoyNgobeni  
*Acting Head of Department*

In your most recent customer service experience, how did you contact the department’s representative?

The GDED also posted an invitation to all stakeholders to send their suggestions and inputs for the MEC’s 2016/2017 budget vote speech. This was done to encourage public participation and collaboration and get feedback in the Budget Vote process. A website page and an application (APP) on the budget vote were created. The users responded to the message by liking the message, commenting and sharing it:
With regard to the use of emails as a way of enhancing dialogue, the majority of the departments did not post or reminds fans about contact details such as emails and phone numbers or where stakeholders can get hold of them. In terms of discussion groups and forums, the majority of the departments have more than closed groups on their Facebook wall, thus the administrators decide who should participate in the group.

The departments also utilised the platform to address a crisis, however, they seldom respond to questions. For instance, most of the posts by the GDE where posted during the registration process when parents were informed to register through online registration. However, most people struggled to log in. Here are some of the posts and complaints:
We sincerely apologise for the delay in the Learner Admissions website, which is due to a technical glitch. The website will go live at 10h00 and not at 8h00 as previously communicated.

As a result of this delay, today’s media briefing will be postponed to 12h00.

Masite K Clint The MEC with due your respect we are having a challenge with the site here and I doubt that will have grade 1 at die poor and schaumburg schools next year, believe I or not. I am saying this because we have been trying to assist people to register at...See More

LikeShow more reactions

· Reply · May 4 at 12:04pm

Precious Masindi Makumbila MEC, you are really working but when coming to this is not fair to other parents that are not educated for using Internet and they must travel to reach the internet cafe and libraries, can we stick to the old way of registrations and not to stress people. Or someone is making money through this online application, yes I can register my child but what about others?

With regard to comments, the majority of the departments received few comments from posted messages, an average of 1 to 4 comments per post. The GDE received the highest number of comments; however, the comments were on the online registration crisis at schools. In general, comments received by the departments were mostly on events, crises, and employment.
As indicated in figure 4.6, the GDE obtained the most comments with 1815 (86%), however, it was during the online registration crisis. The rest of the departments had fewer comments. This could mean that users were only interested in the posted topics and not interested in participation or interaction through posting comments. In addition, the majority of departments often did not respond to comments made by the users or “like” them, or shown appreciation. For example:

10 April 2016

*Gauteng starts admissions early to ensure its all systems go in January 2017 - MEC Panyaza Lesufi Statement on Learner Admissions, 5 April 2016.*

*The Gauteng Department of Education call on parents to first register and verify their details and then apply for space for Grade 1 and 8 for the 2017 academic year.*

Users responded to the message:

*Mikael Adam* *The site is still a mess!!!!*
Sibongile Elizabeth Manganye  Hi MEC, i tried to register but it seem as if your server its down it keeps on giving me error message kindly assist

· Reply · 1 Like · April 13 at 3:52pm

Melanie Smith "We never anticipates that so many people would be registering on the site" really don't you have a brain?? Looks like you that work at the education department need to be educated...stupid TURDS!!!

LikeShow more reactions

Some users got use the opportunity to sell - Grace Kelly ABORTION PILLS ON SALE: it's cheap and affordable (original) recommended by professional from (women on waves) organisation delivery is free call or watsap +27787945630

In terms of discussion groups and forums, a handful of the departments have active groups on their pages. The GDE has the highest number of groups, with 161 members in one group alone. The GDED has 2 groups with one of them having around 50 members. The GDRT and GSACR have 2 to 3 groups (annexure H). The GDoH, and GDHS Facebook pages do not have any groups.

In terms of the sharing of content, the results indicate that the majority of the departments’ posts were shared at an average of 1 to 25 shares per message by the followers. Interestingly, most of the departments received more shares than comments. Messages with pictures or videos got higher shares. However, the shares were fewer than the “likes” received (see annexure I).

In addition, as part of creating a dialogic loop, in order to increase two-way communication and also to conserve the visitors, most of the departments posted information that is of importance to the stakeholders. The departments got more ‘likes’ than comments when posting important information. Users also like light information such as entertainment and birthday announcements. Information such as news links press releases and news articles did not receive enough “likes”. For example, GSACR posted a message and a picture wishing a happy birthday to the MEC and users responded by clicking a total of 93 “likes”, 17 comments and 1 share.
**Gauteng Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation**

April 2 ·

Happy birthday to our MEC, Ms. Faith Mazibuko. We wish you a day that is special in every way.

#HappyBirthday

**Gauteng Provincial Health Dept** added 5 new photos.

May 12 ·

Today we celebrate International Nurses Day 2016 under the theme: "Nurses a Force for Change, Building Health Systems Resilience".

We celebrated with the nurses at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital who reaffirmed their commitment to their profession today.

4.7 RESPONSE TO THE INQUIRIES POSTED ON SOCIAL MEDIA

One of the elements for creating a dialogic loop is for the public relations professionals to reply to comments timeously. Unfortunately, the majority of the departments do not respond to questions from the fans on time. In some cases inquiries were never answered. For example, on 12 April 2016, the GDHS posted a message:

Celebration of 4,3 million houses and housing opportunity delivered nationally since 1994.

On the same date, users responded to the message by asking questions; however the department never respond:

**Mzwandile Maila** InWedela a Fire Station was built since 2012 but is not operational. It has costs taxpayers more than R4.9million. Why is it not operational? Whos is responsible for the Fire and Rescue department in the Province?

**Dee Mmabakgatla Moilwa** Where is the RDP houses for people who registered?
The GDED and GDE strove to respond to some of the enquiries; however, the responses were largely given after a while. Their response turnaround time was between 30 minutes and 1 day. However, occasionally they responded within 15 minutes. For example:

Salim Slosh Moripe Does The Gauteng Department of education have an ICT wing / Office in Gauteng that one can access? April 7 at 10:14am -

GDE Please visit our website for the contact details of the switchboard who will put you through to the unit Reply - April 7 at 11:50am

Vicky Lamb What about special education learners? April 7 at 5:54pm

GDE Special education learners and Grade R must apply directly to the school Reply - April 8 at 6:29pm

Sydney Pollux Mathebula Gded please be champion and support my entrepreneurship project. Please my See my wall May 24 at 2:31pm

GDED Hi Sydney please email your request to gdedenquiries@gauteng.gov.za May 24 at 2:37pm

Fentse Fefe Jessica hi i would also want to register my business so where can I get the banking details starting my own business has always been my passion this are the important details i’vbeen waiting for

Like

SadAngry

Reply · Message · 1 Like · April 28 at 10:49am

View 2 more replies

GDED Unfortunately we have already visited all the areas in Tshwane. However, you can register your business on the CIPC website (www.cipc.co.za) April 28 at 11:46am
Although the GDE was on the fore front in terms of responding to queries, during the online registration crisis it did not reply on time and the users’ tone was often negative. For example, on 10 April 2016, the GDE posted a statement and did not respond timeously. *The statement read as follows:*

“MEC Lesufi officially announced the #Admissions2017 Learner Application dates and the process that must be followed by Grade 1 and Grade 8 parents when applying into GP schools. For details and step by step guide, please see the media statement below... Don’t get left behind. Be an#earlybird and apply on time!”,

The following are the responses from the angry users due to a lack of feedback.

*Reply · April 11 at 9:04am - Beverley Rademeyer Moreland We get no feedback. Phone is not answered. What are we going to do next week when we have to do the admissions???
At least give feedback. And not, keep trying.*

*Henning Boshoff its the education board...THEY DONT CARE*

*Reply · 1 Like · April 11 at 8:53am*

*Roedina Desai Been trying since 6.30 am and VERY frustrated*

· *Reply · April 11 at 8:53am*

*Loyiso Dube Like I have been trying to access this site since early this morning can you give us feedback as to what to do now????????*

*Reply · April 11 at 9:04am*

*Musa Molapi Web page not opening.*

*Reply · April 11 at 9:04am*

*Beverley Rademeyer Moreland We gets no feedback. Phone is not answered. What are we going to do next week when we have to do the admissions???
At least give feedback. And not, keep trying.*
It seems the users turned to Facebook as the last resort when they realised that their calls were not answered. This shows that social media can be used to complement other forms of communication. Cross referencing on websites has also been identified as a problem, as a link provided on a post couldn’t open. The “no response” attitude has created a lot of frustration from the users. At some stage, due to the lack of response, users started their own dialogue and assist each other with information on the issues posted by the department. For example:

GDoH

Reply · 9 Likes · April 25 at 5:37pm · Mosa Mphore What proactive steps will the government take to alleviate the problem of having a shortage of organ donors when its already at its worst?? South Africa has been facing this problem for far too long while the department of health has been dragging its ...

Kwakhe Msibi This is so true Mosa Mphore...The government hasn't taken any step in providing awareness for organ transplantation, but I feel the need of sharing this much information and experience we have of these illnesses so that we could try and increase organ donations in this country...

4.8 DISCUSSION

The overall results of this research indicate that although the majority of Gauteng Provincial Government departments are active on Facebook, a few of the departments have shown significant inactivity in creating conversation for an effective dialogue and are not using Facebook to its fullest potential. Thus, the departments demonstrated an inability to effectively apply all six dialogic principles as per Kent and Taylor’s suggestion. The dialogic principles encourage the process of two-way communication while leveraging feedback from the public and redress on the part of the government,
while leveraging the process of transparency and democracy. According to Waters et al. (2011), the important principle of using social media properly for the organisation is to create an ongoing dialogue, which is a conversation between the organisation and the public. The study further showed that the use of social media to engage stakeholders varies from one department to another.

**Type of content posted on social media**

In terms of usefulness of the information, the results indicated that most of the departments are using Facebook mainly to distribute useful information to the public. The presence of useful information such as background information, mission statements, tabs that assist to navigate the pages, pictures, videos, press releases and links shows the commitment and aspiration to engage with stakeholders. In addition, the fact that the majority of the departments have published their logo, URL and slogan indicates how the government is committed to creating awareness on services offered. It also shows the importance of brand positioning and building through the use of communication channels such as social media. As revealed earlier in the literature review, Waters et al. (2009) found that nearly all 275 non-profit organisations have active Facebook profiles (97%) and have published their history, mission statement, logo, contact addresses, URL, telephone numbers and email addresses. “A website for a non-profit organisation primarily serving a particular public or group of publics, should make an effort to provide ‘background’, or historical, information about itself” (Taylor & Kent, 1998).

Waters et al (2009) further recommended that organisations should use videos and photographs to increase engagement and dialogue. For this research, results show that the majority of the departments posted more pictures and fewer videos and sound bites on their pages. Pictures posted were mainly on events such as campaigns, media briefings, and projects. Users responded by making comments of ‘like’ on the pictures posted. For example, the GDE once posted 55 pictures of a school project on its album. As indicated before, users respond well to posts with photos and videos. In terms of videos posted the GSACR published more videos than other departments; followed by the GDE. A handful of the departments never posted video on their Facebook page. This might be an indication of the challenges highlighted by Graham (2014), such as a lack of budget and resources among other things. By posting
pictures and videos on social media, government could increase a two-way communication and increase dialogue with stakeholders as per the PR Excellence theory.

The results of this study also found that content published on the pages of the Gauteng Departments ranged from press releases, media advisories on policy issues, statements, employment announcements, events, projects announcements to photos. The majority of the departments posted more information on events such as campaigns, conferences, meeting and forums, compared to other activities such as media advisories, news articles, interviews or general messages. This was confirmed by a study conducted by Graham and Avery (2013), who revealed that Facebook and Twitter were the platforms used most often, with more posts on special events and information about government activities and programmes. Waters et al. (2009) stated that non-profit organisations failed to publicise their public relations efforts, as only 20% was on their campaigns and 5% was on press releases. This may indicate that the Gauteng Provincial Government uses the social media platform mostly for events announcements and is thus event driven. Sobaci (2014) urged local government officials to use social media to communicate important decisions such as economic data, legal issues, and government social legitimacy. In principle, social media creates opportunities for stakeholders, such as citizens, to know about their rights to improve their lives, and enhance democracy. They are able to interact with each other and with government, and share content. Thus, creating a two-way symmetrical communication, according to Grunig (1992), makes organisations more effective.

In addition, Facebook wall posts enable the government to see how it is engaging with its stakeholders. On the other hand, citizens will also make an effort to connect with government and voice their concerns (Östling, 2011).

**Frequent use of the social media platform by the departments**

The findings of this research study are in line with the literature review earlier, that by posting information regularly, it does not only encourage engagement with the citizens, but also return visits (Graham, 2014; Kent & Taylor, 1998; Ponte et al., 2012; Sobaci, 2014; Strecker, 2011; Waters, 2011). In a study by Ponte (2012), Facebook use by European Union (EU) municipalities is increasingly in order to reach the citizens, with
a 10% increase in a six-month period. Communication on social media platforms should be frequent in order to distribute information, engage the citizens and increase accountability. This study found that most of the Gauteng Provincial Government departments post messages once or twice after two days, which is not enough. In case of events or crises the departments published more messages. For example, the Gauteng Economic Department posted more messages during the Qondis Ishishini Lakho campaign; the Roads and Transport Department posted more messages during the Arrive Alive campaign. The majority of the departments also posted more messages during the tabling of the Budget Vote. According to Graham (2014) and Mickoleit (2014), the more the social media is updated, the more posts become interesting and relevant.

**Creation of dialogue on social media**

One of the benefits of using new technology is that it allows feedback from audiences to be included in the public relations tactics (Kent & Taylor, 1998). The overall results of this research shows that most of the departments have embraced the process of engaging on Facebook pages, however, not enough as some of the dialogic principles are not being used satisfactorily. There is a weakness in terms of creating a dialogic loop which encourages an effective and ethical two-way communication, while promoting transparency and good governance. For example, departments lack proper tactics that will stimulate conversation, such as surveys, frequently asked questions, no email addresses on the Facebook pages, among others. Out of six departments, only two, GSACR and GDED, managed to post requests such as surveys and polls. The GDED once posted a message with an application encouraging citizens to engage with the MEC by sending suggestions and enquiries on the Budget Vote Speech. It got 13 “likes” and 3 shares. GSACR posted an explicit appeal for users to participate in a survey. The use of public relations tactics that allow feedback and encourage two-way communication have been found challenging in many studies. As in Waters et al. (2011) on the dialogic communication study, on examining how university health centres convey health messages, found that one of the lowest scores was a lack of proper implementation of the dialogic loop communication. Only a handful of the profiles had e-mail addresses for the contact centres, few Facebook pages encouraged visitors to participate in surveys or polls, and only a handful encouraged
visitors to use RSS feeds. There was also a failure by health centres to encourage users to respond or comment to their posts. Waters’ et al.’s (2011) research also revealed that the health centres received the lowest score on the generation of return visits by Facebook users. Few health centres have made an appeal for users to come back.

Ponte et al., (2012) and Sobaci (2014) have noted that existence on Facebook should not be treated as the only goal, but how the government is engaging with the stakeholders. Literature review further revealed that more content on the social media platforms does not automatically mean that there is a two-way communication or engagement (Sobaci, 2014). The two-way communication is thought to leverage the dialogue between the government and organisation with the citizens. As stated before, Grunig’s two-way symmetric model encourages an effective communication between organisations and stakeholders where feedback helps in the decision making process. Bertot, Jaege, Munso, and Glaisyer (2010), also posit the same views, that social media could bring opportunities such as democratic participation and engagement whereby government used social media technologies to engage the public in decision making processes to increase the dialogue, policy development and implementation.

The results of this research study further showed higher levels of “like” than comments, discussion forums and sharing. Thus, the citizen engagement level was low. This is supported by the prior research by Ponte et al. (2012) on the use of Facebook by EU local government who also found that “like” was the most popular way of engagement, without higher levels of engagement such as sharing of posts or making comments. Thus, users liked most of the messages posted; however, they do not have any interest in engaging further with the government. In general, there is a decrease in citizen participation and engagement, which could have a negative impact on the goals set, such as the creation of trust between governments and their stakeholders. Other goals would be to: improve the quality of government service, increase collaboration, reduce costs, improve public service, transparency and collaboration and many more (Graham, 2014). According to Facebook (2016), “Groups are great for getting things done and staying in touch with just the people you want”. Most of the departments never pose questions, conduct surveys or polls to increase the level of dialogue. A few departments posted messages with contacts details, especially during events and
campaigns. The number of discussion groups is also limited. The above results indicate the lack of utilising Facebook as a means to increase collateral engagement, despite being active on Facebook. As revealed in the literature review, according to Strecker (2011), in Virginia Beach in Virginia citizens were encouraged to post information, inquiries and comments on the government’s Facebook page in order to increase engagement, dialogue and transparency.

According to Salkin and Tappendorf (2013), one of the crucial assets of utilising social media in public relations campaigns is that it allows comments from the users or friends. This gave some guidance to the government on the concerns raised by citizens. On the other hand, government can quickly address these concerns, engage with citizens and become accountable. In this research study, although the majority of the departments received very few comments, the Department of Education got more, especially during the online registration crisis, and heard the users’ frustrations and advice. As mentioned before, by allowing citizens to post negative and positive comments on their pages, it indicates that the department’s efforts for a transparent and democratic government are recognised. Citizen’s comments and views could contribute positively on policy formulation and crisis management strategy. This confirms the survey done by Wigley and Zhang (2011), which investigated how public relations practitioners use social media in crisis planning and crisis communication as well as in ordinary situations, and revealed that many of the participants have incorporated social media into their crisis plans.

**Responses to the inquiries posted on social media**

Responding to questions within a reasonable timeframe is one of the effective ways of creating ongoing dialogue (Msimangira, 2012; Kent & Taylor, 1998; Waters, 2011; Strecker, 2011). The results revealed that the majority of the departments did not respond to the questions from fans. Only a handful of the departments gave their best in responding to some of the enquiries in a timely manner, for example, Economic Development. Their response turnaround was between 30 minutes and 1 day (see annexure J). The findings also revealed that users posted opinions or views from the fans or stakeholders, however, the departments did not indicate if they like or dislike most of the comments. Most of the users failed to comment on the posted information. Similarly, Waters et al. (2011) found that few users posted comments on the health
department’s walls. The negative views and tone expressed by the fans might well be an indication of stakeholder dissatisfaction with government services.

Failure to respond to some of the questions from stakeholders or fans is an indication of Government’s PR officials not being effective and transparent. This undermines the process of two-way communication as it wants to promote dialogue between stakeholders. As Salkin and Tappendorf (2013) argue that the speed at which social media can be updated allows local governments to quickly address any concerns.

In overall, the department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation and the department of Education are on the lead in terms of the use of social media to engage with stakeholders, in particular Facebook, respectively. The departments posted more videos and photos on their wall and received more comments and “like” which could leverage the dialogic communication, generate return visit, and create trust between departments and stakeholders. The department of Human Settlements and Health seems a bit weak and backward in terms of engaging on Facebook platform, in terms of content that could leverage dialogic communication such as videos, photos, and respond timely on queries, among others.

4.9 CONCLUSION

In spite of the academic evidence and the findings of this study that the government has started to embrace social media as a tool to distribute information and reach stakeholders, the level of engagement to increase dialogue is poor. The creation of dialogic communication to facilitate two-way communication is being used moderately by the public relations professionals. The use of questionnaires and survey studies has been proven to be an effective way of starting a dialogue (Salkin & Tappendorf, 2013). The Gauteng Provincial Government could benefit from the use of social media if it re-enforces the culture of participation amongst the users, exchanges views, and shares content, use surveys and group forums, and more posts photos and videos, among others. As a two way method of communication, the feedback from citizens can also help in policy making decisions (Sobaci, 2014).
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the results of the empirical study were tabled and the findings of the study were discussed in detail. This chapter provides an overview of the study, together with the conclusions drawn and the resulting recommendations.

5.2 CONCLUSION AS PER RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this study, an attempt was made to explore and understanding how the Gauteng Provincial Government (GPG) is using social media, namely Facebook, as a two-way tool for communication with stakeholders.

The research questions of this study were as follows:

**RQ1:** How are the Gauteng Provincial Government departments engaging on social media?

Overall, most Gauteng Provincial Government's departments have taken advantage of the opportunities of Facebook but were not using the platform to its fullest extent. Majority of the sites have Facebook pages that are easy to navigate, with information Tabs. In order to attract more users, the departments displayed information on their walls such as photos, mission and value statement, and links to websites. According to McCorkindale (2010) Facebook wall posts offer an opportunity for corporations to show they are responding to or engaging with customers. However, results of this report suggested a general tendency by the departments of using the Facebook platform for mainly information dissemination which promotes a one sided communication.

**RQ2:** What type of content are government departments posting on social media?

The majority of departments are utilising Facebook platform mainly for information distribution such as press releases, announcements, campaigns and events among others. The departments further showed a commitment to make their Facebook pages by categorising information, publish mission statements, contact numbers, URL on the
pages among others. However, posting of information that will keep the visitor engaged and interested such as cartoons, surveys, and videos or graphics were underutilised. According to Waters et al. (2011), posting information such as videos and surveys on social media attracts more visitors and retains users.

RQ3: How frequently do government departments post on social media?

A majority of the profiles were updated once or twice after two days, with more posts published during events. Failure to publish relevant information such as departmental policies, information from experts, messages from the heads of the departments, among others will affect the democracy and transparency, meanwhile denying the public their rights to information. Overall, the majority of the departments posted more information, especially during events. According to Taylor and Kent (1998) Social Media Managers should regularly update information in order to retain users.

RQ4: How do the departments create a dialogue on social media?

According to Waters, et al. (2011) organisations should create a dialogic loop as a means of feedback for publics. Similar to the results of literature review, this research reveals that although the majority of Gauteng Provincial Government’s departments are striving to engage on social there is an enormous lack of knowledge in applying the dialogic loop, which encourages more interactivity and dialogue between the organisation and the public. For instance, the majority of departments did not encourage a conversation with stakeholders, limited number of surveys, lack of frequently asked questions (FAQs), lack of active discussion forums, no email addresses on the Facebook pages, among others. Moreover, by posting minimal videos and photos, lack of updated events calendars, and insufficient comments from fans could have a negative impact on the development of a sustainable two-way communication. Only few of the departments, namely, Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation, Education and Economic Development gave a bit of efforts to foster engagement at least by posting messages, one each, asking for the public to participate in the survey, through the use of surveys, and responded to the enquiries.
RQ5: How do the departments respond to the inquiries posted on social media?

Taylor and Kent (1998) encouraged social media managers to respond to enquiries and comments faster in order to build a sustainable relationship with stakeholders. Results of this study suggested a few departments such as Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation, Education and Economic Development attempted to respond to enquiries faster, with turnaround time between 30 minutes and 1 day. Other departments did not sufficiently answer the queries and comments posted on Facebook.

In sum, the findings further confirms previous literature that there is a critical lack of understanding on how to use social media platforms by Public Relations officials, in particular creating ongoing dialogue which is a conversation with stakeholders (Waters, et al. 2011). There are remarkable constraints that public relations professionals face when using social media. The literature review revealed some of the challenges, such as a lack of skills and proper training, the use of one-way communication in the past by the government, whereby they struggle to adapt to the two-way communication process, and also a lack of understanding on how to apply dialogic principles on the use of social media, among others. Taylor and Kent (1998) also encouraged organisations to properly train the public relations professionals on the use of social media. The departments should therefore incorporate relationship building strategies on their social media for the achievement of two-way communication goals for the benefit of users and organisations. As McCorkindale (2010) posits: “Understanding Facebook and the strategy behind using Facebook is essential for corporations in this social-media driven environment.”

5.3 FUTURE RESEARCH

- Future research on effective policies and strategies is needed on social media and e-government.
- The use of a qualitative method by interviewing government officials who use social media as a communication tool, to find out more about the challenges they face.
- Continue to engage more with social media users or fans to explore their needs and expectations.
5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings indicated a lack of effective use of the Facebook platform to promote effective and sustainable two-way communication by the majority of the departments. Lack of implementation of the dialogic principles such as the dialogic loop, the usefulness of information, generation of return visits, the intuitiveness/ ease of the interface and the rule of conservation of visitors; not responding to queries on time; insufficient photos by the some of the departments and the limited use of videos made the situation worse.

**Recommendation 1: Dialogic loop**

It is recommended that departments that are lagging behind in terms of creation of dialogue such as Roads and Transport; Health; and Human Settlements should start to fully adopt the Facebook platform to engage with stakeholders, as Kent and Taylor (1998) postulates that social media managers should reply to inquiries or questions in a timely manner, could start a conversation by posting a survey with an explicit request for fans to participate; frequently asked questions (FQA); an email address on the site; stimulate more comments from users; reply to the comments etc. As per Strecker’s (2001) suggestions for effective dialogue, public relations officials should post often to the fan page, share relevant information from external sources and organisations, use text-only posts freely and frequently, post more photos and videos, respond to comments often and on time, and have a link on the home page of the website.

**Recommendation 2: The type of content posted on Facebook**

Although most of the departments have useful information on the home page of their Facebook sites, such as logos, URL, contact numbers, mission statement, among others, they use traditional one-way communication methods to distribute information, such as media releases, events, announcements, speeches and so on. A shortage of enough photos and videos could be viewed as failure in terms of leveraging a two-way communication. As per Kent and Taylor (1998), posting photos and videos is another effective way of conserving visitors to the site and increasing dialogue and feedback. Users respond well to posts with photos and videos. Citizens will also make an effort to connect with government and voice their concerns (Östling, 2011). Therefore, for a sustainable relationship with the citizens, departments should post more videos,
photos, sound bites, discussion forums, interview clips among others. Departments should put search engines on their Facebook pages, surveys, and explicit messages appealing to users or visitors to come back.

Recommendation 3: Frequent use of the social media platform by the departments

As indicated earlier, posting information regularly enhances chances of return visits (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Sobaci, 2014; Graham, 2014; Waters, 2009; Ponte, 2012; Strecker, 2011). Most of the departments posted messages twice per day or after two days and also during campaigns and events, which is not good enough. Lack of knowledge or skills on how to utilise social media, in particular on the creation of the dialogical communication, is one of the major setbacks in leveraging the concept of a two-way dialogue. As per Kent and Taylor’s advice, social media and website managers should be trained on how to use social media effectively.

In addition, Magro (2012) attests that the use of social media platform for information dissemination is crucial in government. However, citizen feedback through e-government often does not bring change in government. He further argued that government entities using social media is a long term goal or objective for the interaction they want with citizens. They should identify the type of social cultures that are less likely to participate in e-government.

Recommendation 4: responding to queries

This research revealed that majority of the departments has shown the lowest frequency in responding to queries. Some of the queries never received any response. These could pose a major setback to the reputation of the organisation as users might start posting negative message about the organisation. By responding to the queries on time, officials could conserve visitors, get feedback from the stakeholders, promote dialogic communication, and also create trust with stakeholders. In essence, organisations should create a dialogic communication for feedback from stakeholders thereby allowing the public to ask questions and the organisation to respond timely and effectively (Waters, et al. 2011).
5.5 CONCLUSION

The findings of this research indicate that those GPG departments have embraced the use of Facebook platform mainly for information distribution, announcements, events and campaigns, among others. The results further indicate that the key challenge faced by the GPG’s Social Media Managers is the insufficient use of dialogue with stakeholders. Majority of the departments did not post content that could increase engagement such videos, graphics, discussion groups, and surveys. These could compromise the achievement of a two-way communication.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A/1 – Facebook page – Home page with useful information
Source: Gauteng Department of Education

Appendix A/2 – Facebook page showing events calendar
Source: Gauteng Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation

Appendix B/1 – Most of the photos are posted during the events such as campaigns or walkabout
Source: Gauteng Department of Human Settlements
Source: Gauteng Department of Economic Development

Appendix B/2 – Posts about employment or job announcement
May 10 ·
Please SHARE so others can see opportunities.

#GPDRT

Source: Gauteng Roads and Transport Department
Appendix B/2 – Posts about employment or job announcement

Source: Gauteng Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation

Appendix B/2 – Posts about employment or job announcement

Source: Gauteng Department of Education
Appendix B/3 – Videos posted on the Facebook walls

Source: Gauteng Department of Economic Development

Appendix B/3 – Videos posted on the Facebook walls

Source: Gauteng Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation
Appendix B/3 – Videos posted on the Facebook walls

Source: Gauteng Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation

Appendix B/3 – Videos posted on the Facebook walls

Source: Gauteng Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation
Appendix B/3 – Videos posted on the Facebook walls

Source: Gauteng Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation

Appendix B/3 – Videos posted on the Facebook walls

Source: Gauteng Department of Education
### Appendix B/4 – Events by some of the departments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>March 2016</th>
<th>April 2016</th>
<th>May 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng Department of Economic Development</td>
<td>#QondisIshishiniLakho: Today and tomorrow we are in Ga-Rankuwa, Tshwane (Ga-Rankuwa Community Hall, Zone 1) from 10am to 4pm#LokisaKgweboYaHao</td>
<td>- Gauteng Department of Economic Development added 7 new photos to the album: Qondis'ishishini Lakho (Etwatwa).&lt;br&gt;- Gauteng Department of Economic Development added 10 new photos to the album: Qondis'ishishini Lakho (Daveyton).&lt;br&gt;- Gauteng Department of Economic Development added 8 new photos to the album: Qondis'ishishini Lakho (Sharpeville).&lt;br&gt;- Gauteng Department of Economic Development added 7 new photos to the album: Qondis'ishishini Lakho (Bophelong).&lt;br&gt;- Gauteng Department of Economic Development added 7 new photos to the album: Qondis'ishishini Lakho (Boipatong).</td>
<td>#QondisIshishiniLakho This week we are in Cosmo City and Westbury, business owners are encouraged to come register their businesses #FixYourBiz #maakJouBesigheidReg #LokisaKgweboYaHao&lt;br&gt;- The purpose of the #EntrepreneurshipOpenDay is to, among other things, showcase to SMMEs what products Monageng Market could potentially source from local entrepreneurs and to relay what standards and quality would be expected. &lt;br&gt;- Potential candidates will also be identified from the SMMEs for evaluation to supply the store. &lt;br&gt;- tp://www.ecodev.gpg.gov.za/…/Qondis%27ishishini%20Lakho%20…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


- Which human right from the Constitution will you be walking for? Join us this Sunday as we affirm constitutionalism.
- Closing date for entries is Friday 22 April 2016
- Published by Imbaliyamalala Zondi · March 30
- MEC Lebogang Maile will visit Katlehong on Friday 01 April at 11am to meet with spaza shop owners and to ensure calm and peace in the area
- Published by Imbaliyamalala Zondi · March 30
- www.ecodev.gpg.gov.za
- ECODEV.GPG.GOV.ZA
- Gauteng Department of Economic Development updated their cover photo.
- Published by Imbaliyamalala Zondi · March 30
- Published by Imbaliyamalala Zondi · March 23
- Catch Adv. Fati Manamela, Chief Director for Consumer Affairs on Mams FM tomorrow at 08:00 #RespectConsumerRights#DontSilenceMeIHaveRights
- #DontSilenceMeIHaveRights Consumer Affairs officials will be at Krugersdorp Station in the West Rand tomorrow from 9am - 2pm.
- On Thursday you can catch them at Sammy Marks Square in Tshwane#RespectConsumerRights
- Gauteng Consumer Affairs officials continue with the World Consumer Rights month exhibitions this week.
Today they are at Vereeniging Railway Station until 2pm to educate consumers about their rights and about the importance of demanding correct and proper food labelling.
- #DonSilenceMeIHaveRights
- #RespectConsumerRights
- #QondisishishiniLakho today and tomorrow we are in Laudium, Tshwane from 10am to 4pm. Business owners from Laudium and surrounding areas are invited to come register their businesses #FixYourBusiness

| Roads and Transport | The Gauteng MEC for Roads and Transport, Dr Ismail Vadi at the OR Tambo Airport with some of the International quests who honored the International Conference on Transport Authorities
- The three-day consultative International Conference will be held on the concept of Transport Authority for the Gauteng City-Region. #1GPTA | Gauteng MEC for Roads and Transport Dr Ismail Vadi will on Monday, 18 April 2016, launch the 2014 Gauteng Household Travel Survey (GHTS2014) report at the Parktonian Hotel in Johannesburg.
- The survey is the second in the series of household travel surveys carried out by the Gauteng Province to determine household-related transport needs in the province, and subsequently to facilitate proper transport service delivery | VADI OPENS R259 MILLION UPGRADE OF R82 (OLD VEREENIGING ROAD)
Gauteng MEC for Roads and Transport, Ismail Vadi, today officially opened Phase 2 of the newly-constructed R82 (Old Vereeniging Road) from Eikenhof to Walkerville….
- May 17 ·
- Gauteng to licence Uber services, condemns intimidation
| - The conference will take place from 9 to 11 March 2016 at the Birchwood Hotel, Boksburg. #1GPTA |
| The three-day consultative International Conference will be held on the concept of Transport Authority for the Gauteng City-Region. #1GPTA |
| March 8 |
| #1GPTA further ensures that identified transport related deliverables and projects are coordinated |
| - The Department of Roads and Transport is introducing regulations for Uber type e-hailing services through the licensing of driver partners as public transport operators. Driver partners need to submit metered taxi applications to be licensed for the service. |
| Detailing reasons for taking this step, MEC Ismail Vadi indicated that “the aim is to ensure the continuation of a public transport service for the people of Gauteng... |
| - MEC Vadi to launch Uber operating license application process |
| - Gauteng Department of Roads and Transport will on Monday, 16 May 2016, officially launch the process of regulating Uber partner-drivers as Public Transport Operators. |
| - Gauteng government assesses service delivery in Johannesburg and West Rand |
| Gauteng Department of Education | OR Tambo International Airport donated a fully functional library with 4 new computers, stationery packs with solar powered lights, and a R400 000 cheque to Kwanele Primary School in Katlehong. But that's not all, as part of this initiative, the learners will have extra tutoring and counselling sessions for those that require the service. The learners will also get free eye screening from SpecSavers South Africa. | The Gauteng Provincial Government’s MECs constituting the Social Cluster will on Thursday, 07 April 2016, address the media on the cluster programme for the 2016/17 financial year. | Gauteng Premier David Makhura, Members of the Executive Council (MECs) and Mayors will this week take the Ntirhisano Community Outreach programme to Johannesburg and the West Rand. These engagements will take place simultaneously in the two regions on Wednesday, 11 May and Thursday, 12 May 2016. | MEC Vadi to launch the Gauteng Household Travel Survey | Gauteng to launch Online Learner Admission Campaign
#earlybird#admission2017
The Gauteng MEC for Education, Mr Panyaza Lesufi will on Sunday, 10 April 2016, launch the Province’s Online Learner Admission Campaign, to encourage parents to register their children for the 2017 academic year using a convenient online method. |
- Addressing the school, the visibly touched OR Tambo Internation...
- Catch MEC Lesufi tonight on Soweto TV...
- The People's Republic of China have donated a new Planetarium to the Minister of Basic Education, which was officially opened at the Sci-Bono Discovery Centre in Newtown today. The Minister of Education in China, Mr Li Song also officially handed over 2000 Chinese (Mandarin) textbooks, which will benefit about 14 schools that currently offer Mandarin.
- Speaking on the SA-China cooperation, Mr Song said this marks the strengthened people-to-people relations between China and S...
- Make sure you make a booking and visit the planetarium!
- Watch the Pretoria School for Girls render a beautiful poem in Chinese#Planetarium #SciBono #SACchina

- We're at Chief Albert Luthuli Primary School in Daveyton for the official launch of #Admissions2017. Look out for our live demonstration - more info to follow... Don't miss out, be an #earlybird
- Gauteng starts admissions early to ensure its all systems go in January 2017 - MEC Panyaza Lesufi Statement on Learner Admissions, 5 April 2016.
- The Gauteng Department of Education call on parents to first register and verify their details and then apply for space for Grade 1 and 8 for the 2017 academic year
MEC Panyaza Lesufi currently briefing media on the status of Education in GP for the 2016 academic year, including issues emanating from 2015. The MEC has also announced the application period for 2017, which commences on 19 April until 1 June. Please apply on time to avoid delays...

- All Media
  Att: News Editors
  For immediate release
  ...See More

MEC Lesufi has officially opened the Gauteng Provincial Government's Senior Manager's Conference in Birchwood, which aims to “pave the way to strengthen Government in order to provide better service to our people” said the MEC.

#GPGManagers2016
| - Premier Makhura: I want to emphasise that corrupt public service officials and managers are the enemies of the people. We are prepared to work with Chapter 9 institutions such as the Public Protector and other anti-corruption institutions. #GPGManagers2016 |
| - Gauteng Premier: Clean audits are important to achieve for the Province. This is one of our key areas of focus particularly for Education, Health, Infrastructure and Human Settlements. |
| - Paying service providers in 30 days is no longer ideal. We need to achieve the goal of paying in 15 days otherwise we'll be killing businesses"#GPGManagers2016 |
| - Premier Makhura: If you are a public servant and want to go somewhere in Gauteng, don't just work from 8am to 4pm, especially if you are a senior manager #GPGManagers2016 |
- MEC Lesufi to Visit learners and teachers participating in the SSIP holiday classes
- The Gauteng MEC for Education, Mr Panyaza Lesufi, will on Thursday, 31 March 2016, visit PJ Simelane Secondary School to interact with learners and teachers participating in the Secondary School Improvement programme (SSIP) holiday classes.