THE IMPACT OF WEB 2.0 (GOV 2.0) AND SOCIAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES ON ENGAGEMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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Abstract

This paper aims to assess the impact of Web 2.0 (Gov 2.0) and Social Media technologies provided by Local Government on different community groups. Findings represent the first stage of a longitudinal study conducted on a Local Government in Australia, namely Randwick City Council. The study explores key drivers and inhibitors behind the adoption of Gov 2.0 and Social Media technologies and identifies three distinct groups of adopters. The majority of people, those in the 25-64 age group, were identified as being current or willing adopters of the technologies; whilst others were deemed to be in the “Hard to Reach Group” (HtRGrp), those in the 18-24 and 65+ age brackets. From a Local Government perspective, those belonging to the HtRGrp are historically deemed to be difficult to engage in local issues and to communicate with. An interesting finding was that the inhibiting factors identified across the two groups were distinctly different. This had a direct result in Randwick City Council developing strategies in the next stage of the project in order to target the use of Gov 2.0 and Social Media technologies for the HtRGrp in order to facilitate engagement and communication, with limited success.

Keywords: Gov 2.0, Social Media, Hard to Reach Community Group, Local Government
1 INTRODUCTION

Historically, before the concept of electronic communication, social networks depended on people using face-to-face communication. In Ancient Greece, a system of governing relied on citizen participation in a ruling council (Tocqueville, 2006). In the 20th Century, it was predicted that the more equal a society, the more it would be necessary to provide more newspaper sources to contest individualism by offering modes of coordination (Tocqueville, 2006). This was a one-sided affair which did not always cater for the interest of the many. Much akin to Web 1.0 one-way conversation, which has allowed numerous minority political groups to publish content on their opinions very cost effectively (Caldow, 2004).

On the other hand, Web 2.0 and Social Media technologies refers to a wide range of tools, such as, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and community blogs that enable people and drive organisations to associate and communicate using internet-based technologies via inter-network connected devices such as computers, laptops, tablets and smart phones. Web 2.0 and Social Media technologies are providing a two-way conversation enabling many more people to participate in the democratic decision making process (Purser, 2012).

Marginalised communities are using Social Media tools to amplify social and political communications and actions. One such example was the Arab Spring uprising (Wolfsfeld et al., 2013). Social media has played an integral part in grassroots communication and participation affecting political change (Wolfsfeld et al., 2013). Although, social media creates many opportunities for marginalised community groups to increase their engagement and participation in the political process, it is also important to identify the inhibitors to social networking technologies for other marginalised and hard to reach community groups.

The key functions of a Local Government, also referred as council, are “to identify community needs and aspirations; to set strategic priorities; and to develop effective plans to implement them” (Randwick City Council, 2013). Local Government manages basic services such as providing and maintaining recreation and leisure including beaches and parks, library, social work, street cleaning, removing of households’ waste and recycling, planning and approving of building and development, maintaining local roads, providing childcare centers and public housings (Randwick City Council, 2013).

The Gov 2.0 vision of improved Local Government engagement is drawn from the motivating belief that more resident choice and involvement is good, and that for this to happen residents need access to information (transparent and open government). The connection to technology and citizen collaboration makes access to online services and open public debate more readily available (Nam, 2012). For instance, when the State Government proposed to amalgamate a few smaller councils into a super-sized council, councils created links such as “Have your say on proposed global city amalgamations” on their websites (Randwick City Council, 2013) to invite comments and feedback from the local communities.

The first author of the paper works for a Local Government in Australia, namely Randwick City Council. It is one of his duties to implement Web 2.0 (Gov 2.0) and Social Media technologies and examine the use of these technologies by different community groups. Data collected have shown some groups are not adopting the technologies, and they are classified as “Hard to Reach” community groups (HtRGrp).

This paper is broken into four main sections. The first being a literature review on Local Government, Web 2.0 (Gov 2.0), and Social Media tools. We then discuss the research methodology and case study. In the third section, we review and discuss the results. In the last section, we conclude the actions need to be taken by the (Randwick City Council, 2013) at the next stage of the project.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In conducting the literature review, we first look at government directives, and then define the construct of Web 2.0 and Gov 2.0. Secondly, look at traditional methods of communication and citizen engagement to compare with Web 2.0 (Gov 2.0) and Social Media communication channels. Thirdly, look at the current drivers and inhibitors for Local Government and finish with discussing hard to reach community groups and their challenges in accessing social media tools.

2.1 Australian Government Directives

Governments have been directing and encouraging their agencies to use Web 2.0 (Gov 2.0) and Social Media technologies to interactively engage citizens (United Nations, 2012). Australian Governments at all levels have identified that Social Media technologies play a key role in modern communications. While there are some areas of best practice in high profile agencies, one inhibiting factor is that all levels of Australian Government have been seemingly slow to develop and embrace Social Media technologies. In today’s immediate online access to information with location independent telecommunications devices, it is unrealistic to restrict public sector communications to traditional channels (NSW Government, 2012).

The NSW Government Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy 2012 states “Open Government – a fresh approach to engaging with the public and industry through online and social media technologies will enable Government to enhance transparency and accountability, and to deliver better, more targeted services to the community.” One of the key actions being, “Implement a whole of government approach to the use of social media for improved consultation and community engagement” (NSW Government, 2012). Collaboration with citizens is to be enabled and encouraged. Agencies are to reduce barriers to online engagement, undertake social networking, crowd sourcing and online collaboration projects and support online engagement by employees, in accordance with the Australian Public Service Commission Guidelines”. These outcomes can be achieved through the use of social media (Tanner, 2010).

2.2 The definition of Web 2.0, Gov 2.0 and Social Media

DiNucci (1999) created the term Web 2.0 in her article “Fragmented Future” and was popularised by Tim O’Reilly (2004) in late 2004. Web 2.0 describes web sites that make use of technology, which enables users to collaborate and interact with each other beyond the static pages of earlier Web 1.0 sites (Purser, 2012). The three key characteristics of Web 2.0 are: dynamic content, user participation, and rich user experience; additional characteristics, such as freedom and collective intelligence, allowing user participation and openness can also be seen as fundamental attributes of Web 2.0 (OReilly, 2005).

In contrast to Web 1.0 sites, where people are restricted to the inactive viewing of content, virtual community conversations via social media are considered dynamic user-generated content. Gov 2.0 technologies offer content syndication, widgets, video sharing, bookmarking, and mashups, blogs, wikis and social networks (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Bonsón et al., 2012). Though there is no universally acknowledged definition, Gov 2.0 is mostly about using technology to realise a more consultative, open and transparent form of government (AGIMO 2012). The term Government 2.0 or Gov 2.0 is derived from Web 2.0, which refers to technologies that encourage sharing and collaboration and online discussion. The document Gov 2.0 Primer for Australian Government agencies defines tools and scenarios, which apply to use of agency Social Media and Web 2.0 activities, which includes engaging with the public and publishing government data online (Australian Government 2014).
2.3 Traditional Local Government Methods of Engagement

Having described Gov 2.0, we now examine the four main traditional communication methods of engagement by Local Government with their communities (Herriman, 2011; Hay, 2013):

1. Local Media: announcements in regular columns in local newspapers including media release articles and editorials, local TV and community radio;

2. Direct Mail: ‘letterbox drops’ or personally addressed correspondence to the householder, council newsletters, letters and information to specific stakeholders and targeted geographic communities;

3. The Internet and Website (Web 1.0); and

4. Public Signage: noticeboards in the council foyer and libraries, bus shelters and shopping centres.

Other more widespread and frequently used communication tools include public meetings/workshops, written submissions, survey, and displays, or a combination of these methods for complex issues (Herriman, 2011; Hay, 2013). e-Government and traditional services and are needed because some issues are better to resolve by traditional methods such as telephone (Reddick and Turner, 2012).

2.4 Current Drivers and Inhibitors for Local Government

The use of Social Media tools in society has been a change to Local Government’s traditional relationships with their citizens, and businesses are conducted. This now represents a monumental shift in the way Local Government can communicate with local residents, but with all new technologies comes the initial drive to rush to implement and reap the rewards of new innovation, but as time progresses the hurdles to implementation need to be overcome.

Purser (2012) in her report on “Using Social Media in Local Government: 2011 Survey Report” has summarised the drivers and inhibitors Councils’ currently experience with using Social Media tools. Some of the most prominent drivers and inhibitors by Purser (2012) are summarised in Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drivers</th>
<th>Inhibitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increases engagement with hard to reach</td>
<td>Lack of resources/time consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcast media/provide information</td>
<td>Negative community feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide channels for increased engagement</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge and understanding within the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanses the council for the community</td>
<td>Lack of sector wide guidelines/education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows true collaboration between council &amp; community</td>
<td>Fear of loss of control of message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective emergency/crisis management tool</td>
<td>Increased transparency/engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps to address negative media and false information</td>
<td>Staff not able to communicate effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost effective, timely communication</td>
<td>Technology/security issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community reporting issues for action</td>
<td>Record keeping issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drivers</td>
<td>Inhibitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level of degree and above</td>
<td>Education level of year 12 or below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in communicating &amp; participating in LG democratic process.</td>
<td>Not interest in communicating &amp; participating in LG democratic process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home ownership</td>
<td>Renting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High income</td>
<td>Low income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good English proficiency</td>
<td>Lack of English language proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient in the use of ICT</td>
<td>Disabilities in using ICT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live in a major city</td>
<td>Live in a remote area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger than 65</td>
<td>Older than 65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Technology Coupling of Social Media Tools to Drivers and Inhibitors.
2.5 The Digital Divide and Hard to Reach Community Groups

2.5.1 The Digital Divide

The Digital Divide is a social issue referring to the amount of information accessible between those who have regular access to the Internet and those who do not. Advocacy groups, scholars and policy makers concerned with issues related to the Digital Divide popularised the term in the late 1990s.

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), there was a 23% increase of the Internet usage from 2006 and 2011. The variance to accessibility is not necessarily determined by access to the Internet alone, but by availability and quality of ICT and to the content and related services that different cohorts of society can consume (OECD, 2001).

However, from the literature to date there is no clear single gap to the digital divide, which can be seen to split society into haves and have-nots. Fitting the ICT access profile of have-nots can take such forms as low performing computers, price and quality of internet connection, price and quality of obtaining technical assistance, and lower access to subscription-based content, e.g. education services, due to price (United Nations, 2012). Moreover, the use of Gov 2.0 and social media tools does not depend on demand of the residents (Bonsón et al., 2012).

Nevertheless, we found in the census data conducted by Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011) that there were some distinct gaps among the populations in terms of the Internet access. Some of the key findings include:

- Have personal income above A$120,000 pa Internet access is at 94% as opposed to A$40,000 pa or less at 72%.
- Have an education of bachelor degree or above then access to the Internet is at 95% as opposed to year 12 and below at 70%.
- Are employed then Internet access is at 90% as opposed to being unemployed at 60% or where born in an English speaking country then Internet access is at 83% as opposed to 71% for non-English.
- Live in a major city access to the Internet is at 81% as opposed to living in a remote area at 70%.
- Are of Australian indigenous decent and live in a major city then internet access is at 50% as opposed to very remote areas at approximately 8%.
- Are aged between 15 and 44 then access to the Internet is between 90% to 95% as opposed to being 65+ at 37%.

The above data suggested that people; without tertiary education, on low income, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander decent, living in rural or remote areas, unemployed, aged over 65, with a language background other than English are less likely to have quality access to the Internet. This leads us to consider such groups of people as Hard to Reach Community Groups.

2.5.2 Hard to Reach Community Groups

For Hard to Reach Community groups, the Local Government councils have recognised that Non-English speaking, elderly, disabled, indigenous, homeless people, youth 15-19 and 20-24 as hard to reach. Other groups that at times could be considered hard to reach include those on low incomes, sex workers, drug users, single parents, recent immigrants, problem gamblers and residents of hostels and boarding houses (Brackertz et al., 2005)

On the other hand, the age groups 15-19 and 20-24 with their prolific and proficient use of social media technologies (Zimerman, 2011) do not exactly fit a profile of being disadvantaged in accessing the Internet, but from the previous study of Purser (2012) and Local Government communication point of view they are considered hard to reach groups because they do not engage with other community and local issues.
2.6 eGovernment Literature

The latest theoretical framework Technology Acceptance Model (version 3) or TAM3 has been updated and enhanced since it introduced by Davis (1989). TAM3 is primarily used to predict and explain an individual behind the adoption and the use of new technologies (Venkatesh and Bala, 2008). Apart from TAM, other popular theories used in the study of eGovernment include theory of planned behaviour (TPB), unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) and diffusion of innovations theory (DOI) (Hofmann et al., 2012). Nam (2014) has extended Dimitrova and Chen's (2006) conceptual model into five key components to examine citizen-sourcing. Other studies, such as Hofmann et al. (2013), examine how local governments use public social networking sites such as Facebook as a communication channel. However, the number of studies on the use of technologies such as e-Government remain low in the literature (Snead and Wright, 2014).

Factors have been identified by Hofmann et al.’s (2012) meta-analysis on previous studies on eGovernment that factors such as intention to use, level of satisfaction, intention to continue using, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, performance expectancy, information quality, security, privacy and trust. Although these factors were found to be related to adoption of eGovernment, there are still gaps identified and future research is needed. One such gap fits our study:

“We really see a gap in e-Government acceptance and IT adoption research as communication has often been regarded as an intuitive influence factor but has not been analysed exhaustively even not by the diffusion of innovations theory. It also astonishes that although the assumption of influence of communication is mentioned that often, practice predominantly does not reflect this (assumed) success factor.” (Hofmann et al., 2012, p.15)

Thus, the preference of communication by the local communities can be an inhibitor to adoption of Gov 2.0 and social media technologies. Furthermore, we paid special attention to socio-demographic component (Nam 2014). This leads us to our research question:

What are the issues that drive or inhibit different community groups to adopt Gov 2.0 and social media technologies?

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this study, an action research approach to data collection was adopted. Action research, as initially framed by Lewin (1951) and developed concurrently by the Tavistock Institute (Rapoport 1970; Baskerville and Wood-Harper 1996), uses intervention into problematic social situations as a means of developing scientific knowledge (Iversen et al. 2004). Action Research has been successfully adopted and developed in other IS research areas (Avison et al. 1999, Avison et al. 2001; Baskerville and Wood-Harper 1996; Checkland 1981; Hult and Lennung 1980; Iversen et al. 2004). This methodology is appropriate for this study as we are researching phenomena in the context of a temporally unfolding social process. The ideal domain of the action research method is therefore revealed in three distinctive characteristics (Baskerville and Wood-Harper 2002). The researcher is actively involved, with expected benefits for both researcher and clients (Gill and Bhattacharjee 2009). The knowledge obtained can be immediately applied. Such a researcher is not a detached observer but an active participant wishing to utilise any new knowledge based on an explicit, clear conceptual framework.

While different action research approaches have been used, Susman and Evered’s action research cycle (see Figure 2) is regarded as an exemplary framework for action research. It consists of diagnosing (Problem Identification), action planning (Assessment), action taking (Rectification Planning), evaluating (Implementing Plan), and specifying learning (Reviewing Progress surveys) (Davison et al. 2004; Susman and Evered 1978).
3.1 Background of the Case study

Randwick City Council (2013) was proclaimed a Local Government Area (LGA) on 22 February 1859. It was one of the first to be established in New South Wales, Australia, after the City of Sydney. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 census, a snapshot of the population living in Randwick City Council including some other factors is shown in Table 1. Other factors not shown in the table from the census include 76% of households have access to the Internet; 14% of adults aged 25-54 being degree qualified or above and approximately 60% of the total population 15-65+ earning above A$37,000 p.a. Thus, it could be considered that a high percentage of the total population could have a high exposure to accessing quality ICT and internet access. Only small percentages, as outlined in Section 2.5.1, do not fit the criteria: 3.3% being unemployed, 1.7% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and 4.4%, other language, as well as English spoken but not very well or not at all (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total persons 15 to 65+</td>
<td>53,351</td>
<td>56,136</td>
<td>109,487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years</td>
<td>3,571</td>
<td>3,350</td>
<td>6,921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24 years</td>
<td>6,710</td>
<td>6,496</td>
<td>13,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 years</td>
<td>12,066</td>
<td>12,277</td>
<td>24,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44 years</td>
<td>9,805</td>
<td>10,164</td>
<td>19,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54 years</td>
<td>7,791</td>
<td>8,025</td>
<td>15,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64 years</td>
<td>6,007</td>
<td>6,307</td>
<td>12,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+ years</td>
<td>7,400</td>
<td>9,518</td>
<td>16,918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Factors:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>1,957</td>
<td>1,682</td>
<td>3,639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>943</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1,843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language spoken at home:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English only</td>
<td>39,107</td>
<td>40,809</td>
<td>79,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other language as well as English spoken but not very well or not at all</td>
<td>2,0658</td>
<td>2817</td>
<td>4875</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Demographics who live in Randwick (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011))

In December 2011, Randwick City Council adopted a Social Media Policy committing to the use of social media both as a communication and discussion tool. The app was developed and launched in
July 2012. The free app puts the user at the centre of the experience and uses geographical awareness and social media to provide unique information about individual properties, suburbs and areas.

The purpose of implementing Gov 2.0 and Social Media tools by Randwick City Council includes:

- “Have Your Say” on Randwick City Council website
- “Have Your Say” on Randwick City Council Facebook
- “Have Your Say” on Twitter (for Mayor of Randwick City Council)
- YouTube (Randwick City Council)
- Randwick City Council App (iPhone & HTML 5 mobile site)

Examples of features include:
- Notifications for new nearby Development Applications (DAs)
- Ability to comment on a DA
- Reminders for bin night, DAs and events
- Daily beach condition reports and photos
- Local news and events based on each suburb
- Live details for the user’s next garbage, recycling and green waste collection
- Interactive maps of suburbs showing parks, pools, libraries and facilities etc.
- Ability to book a free clean-up
- Ability to report problems for Council to fix

3.2 Data Collections

Randwick City Council developed an online communication survey from business and literature requirements to find out how local residents like to receive council related information. The online survey endeavoured to find out more about how residents would like to receive their information. Likert scale questions and freeform text fields are included in the survey. The purpose of the survey was to understand how the residents would like to engage and participate in council’s decision-making process. Thus, to find out which communication channels people read most to assist with administering Council’s Policies and to obtain feedback on how to improve communication process.

This survey is not only used by academics but also used by Randwick City Council for making decisions. Thus, some of the factors such as trust in technology and trust in government from the previous eGovernment literature (such as Yang, 2012) are not included in the survey as it was deemed as not as an important factor from the business perspective. The number of residents that completed the survey was 1,160. A second supplementary survey was conducted to find out how people found out about the online survey. The online survey was publicised across a number of media types.

In general Gov 2.0 data from Council’s Facebook and YouTube sites highlights how many people use Social Media to obtain information about local government activities.

4 RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Of the 1,160 residents who responded to the survey, 1,154 residents completed the survey online and 6 completed on paper. The survey asked how people receive their information from Randwick City Council in a variety of ways, and how often they can recall using these means of communication including using Gov 2.0 and social media technologies. There are also questions on how the residents’ recall of receiving the last piece of communication related to the council’s activities.

The results, as shown in Figure 3, clearly presented receiving information via the traditional methods, namely direct mail, printed material and in local newspapers, remain strong. Communicating via Gov 1.0, namely via website and eNews, are still the means of electronic communication. As for Gov 2.0 and social media communication, it is still at the early stage. Some of the residents are still unaware of Gov 2.0 and social media technologies currently provided by the Randwick City Council.
Examples of positive and negative feedbacks from the survey include:

(a) “Prefer digital communication rather than printed.”

(b) “… I don’t recall seeing the Randwick City Council Community Newsletter and this is probably because I have a ‘No Junk Mail Sticker’ on my unit mailbox. I am happy with the email communication as we are kept updated on what is being proposed and have a chance to comment. Keep up the good work!!”

(c) “Love the little posts on Facebook about dolphin and seal sightings etc., which I sometimes share. It creates a nice community feel.” And

(d) “The com[munication] via social media is a really good way for me to keep in touch with the council and also seems to be my most efficient way of staying up to date with local events - I more informed now than I have been over the last 3 years. Keep up the great work Randwick City Council!”

(e) “It does seem that the council has a lot of avenues to communicate activities to the community, I wasn’t aware of many of them until this survey - I didn’t know there was a Facebook page but I will be linking that now, and keeping an eye out for flyers. I will also have a look at the council web page, which I hadn’t thought of visiting before. Possibly it may be a good idea to send a flyer promoting the options to receive communications from the council. My wife and I just bought in the area in August, and have received some information from council already, and attended the eco fair, so well done!”

On the other hand,

(f) “Yes, I think that everyone is forgetting that a lot of people in this country ARE NOT ON AN IPAD, FACEBOOK, TWITTER OR A COMPUTER and don't want to be, so really a LETTER is the only way you are going to reach the majority of people. By just putting info out electronically you are missing all the people that aren't interested in computers and such” and

(g) “I guess it is all very well to have good communication methods, but I am more concerned that my council actually be using its money to provide good services, services we need, rather than spending lots of money telling us about them! Good services will speak for themselves!”
For the Randwick City Council, the strategy of using technologies received favourable feedback. It is expected that some of the feedback are negative, such as feedback (g) above, and Randwick City Council would like to address some of these issues. As shown in Figure 3, the use of Gov 2.0 (labelled 10, 11 and 12) remain low when comparing with other methods. However, learning from the feedback such as (e) above, it seems some people are willing to use the Gov 2.0 and social media tools but unaware such technologies exist. The next logical step might be to target people who are currently visiting Randwick City Council’s website and receiving eNews to convert them to adopt Gov 2.0 and social media tools.

Moreover, from analysing the freeform text, it seems most residents do not mind using the technologies. Those who do not like using the technologies or do not have technologies such as the feedback (f) above, a strategy needs to be developed to allow them to adopt the technologies such as providing them free iPad and laptops in the library.

As for who responded to the survey, there is an over-representation of survey responses from 30-39, 40-49 and 50-64 age groups when compared to the 2011 census population data. One of the major reasons would be that these age groups are statistically more likely to be involved, experienced and interested in Council’s activities than any other age groups.

Residential status is probably one of the key reasons for the over representation of 30-64 year cohorts. People who own their own property or are paying a mortgage are more interested in completing the survey than people who are renting. Again, people who have a committed financial attachment to an area are perhaps more likely to fall into this age group and consequently more likely to be engaged in council issues than people who may be renting.

To find out how people found out about the communication survey, a second survey was undertaken. There were 62 respondents the results of the survey question are outlined in below table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaflet in the letterbox</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eNews from Council</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook or Twitter</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email from “Bang the Table”</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Quick Survey on Communications Survey.*

The results show that the uptake of social media to receive information about Council is still in its infancy. Even though the sample is very small the irony is that all of the respondents were using a Web 2.0 technology, in the form of an online survey, to tell Council that they predominately like to receive their information via more traditional methods.

We also tracked registered residents using the Gov 2.0 technologies on Youtube and Facebook, which are shown in Figure 4 and 5. Similarly, this pattern was also reflected in the age groups who completed the communication survey.
When combining Figures 4 and 5 together, it mirrors the previous Local Government studies that age groups 18-24 and 65+ are the HtRGrp. Figure 6 clearly shows whom the Randwick City Council is attracting via its social media channels. The figure highlights the comparison where the drop off below 18-24 and over 65 is clearly evident.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13-17</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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Figure 4.  Randwick Residents using Gov 2.0.

Figure 5. Randwick Residents using Facebook.

Figure 6. Council Social media persons engaged (left) and not engaged (right) by percentage.
5 CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

From the evidence presented Gov 2.0 and Social Media is generally failing to communicate with two demographic groups (HtRGrp), namely age groups 18-24 and 65+ (refer to Figure 6). Current literature, describe factors such as perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, performance expectancy, privacy and trust. These are clearly not inhibitor factors for (younger) age groups 18-24 as they are very computer literate and use social media technologies habitually. Thus, it’s clear that some of the frameworks from previous studies are clearly not suitable for this study. Moreover, the generalisation of some of the previous studies might become problematic when drilled down to further details. This study furthers our understanding of the socio-demographic component (Nam 2014) in the e-Government literature.

We are not here to criticise the previous studies but to accentuate that there is no one ideal solution to the problem of communicating with all the residents especially the HtRGrp’s. The drivers and inhibitors in this study differ with the age demographic of citizens. Currently, Randwick City Council try to reach the majority of citizens living within the council’s geographic boundaries using the contemporary set of drivers. However, to effectively communicate via a web interface, the more mature 65+ HtRGrps effective strategies and drivers clearly lie with the continued use of the more traditional communication methods (e.g. paper, “snail” mail, posters and pamphlets). For the 18-24 citizens, there is an ongoing need to embrace and adopt the latest social media apps and technologies (both hardware and software). Our future research seeks to identify “what” do these people (18-24 group) use to communicate, “when” do they change communication methods (social media apps) and “how” does the council best use this information to communicate with them as well as all citizens, and finally, “why” they do not communicate with local government. This will fulfil the research gap of addressing the different socio-demographic components (Nam 2014).

Given that this problem is escalating and not shrinking, it highlights the need for future research in the area of technologies that can effectively communicate the same message across multiple channels and embrace the diversity of HtRGrps. This challenge will be taken up by the first author in his next cycle of action research (future research) on HtRGrps. The project will be divided into three directions, each with their own problems in terms of resourcing and cost:

1. Continue to communicate via multiple channels with the HtRGrps but attempt to convert them to use Gov 2.0 and Social Media tools and technologies,
2. Educate and train the 65+ age groups in how to communicate via the new technologies, and
3. Change and adapt the communication strategies of the council to the 18-24 age groups in order to reflect emerging changes and trends in apps and social media.
6 REFERENCES


