2011

The Public Facebook: A Case of Australian Government Facebook Pages and Participation

Sultana Lubna Alam
University of Canberra, lubna.alam@canberra.edu.au

David Walker
University of Canberra, dwalker@netspeed.com.au

Follow this and additional works at: http://aisel.aisnet.org/acis2011

The Public Facebook: A Case of Australian Government Facebook Pages and Participation

Sultana Lubna Alam & David Walker
Faculty of Information Sciences and Engineering
University of Canberra, Australia
Email: lubna.alam@canberra.edu.au; dwalker@netspeed.com.au

Abstract

This paper presents the case of Australian government use of Facebook (FB) pages. This research-in-progress paper investigates six Australian Government FB pages to assess visible government and audience online participation. It seeks to provide a general understanding of the types and forms of FB uses by government and audience participation visible in government FB pages. FB page wall posts and comments are analysed quantitatively using genre analysis to determine what type of online participation is visible in these sites and what the agencies are trying to achieve. Findings show that the Facebook page participation varies across the agencies and the pages are being used for the purpose of announcing, informing and involving type of online engagement. The pages are being used for communication, compliance, recruitment, promotion and crowdsourcing. Some pages show strong audience engagement and have successfully served as a platform for its audience to share and communicate and respond to queries. However the engagement of the agencies has been limited. The paper concludes with further insights into agency FB strategies and highlights some concerns that may rise within the usage of these sites as evidenced from wall posts and comments analysis. The paper aims to contribute to better understanding of the government FB phenomenon on the public Social Network Site (SNS) that can lead to useful conclusions for government agency deployment, adoption and usage of SNSs.

Keywords: Facebook, Gov 2.0, Web 2.0, online participation, audience engagement

INTRODUCTION

The exploding reach and scope of social networking tools opens new venues for online collaboration (McLoughlin & Lee 2007, Mintz 2007, and Dutton 2011). Social networking is a phenomenon that is hard to ignore (Richter et al 2009, Clarke 2008). Web 2.0 and 'social software' are becoming ubiquitous and changing the way how individuals communicate and collaborate (Boyd & Ellison 2007). Since its emergence in 2004, web 2.0 has rapidly moved from a purely socialising tool to a key professional application to leverage technology for virtual and mass collaboration to workplaces (Cummings et al 2009, Richter et al 2011). Latest statistics by Experian Hitwise (2010) on Internet use by Australians show that social networks and forums are the most visited sites online. Traffic to government web sites is still mostly coming from search engines (41.8%) but the second highest source is from social networks and forums at 7.6% (a 44.6% rise from 2007 to 2009) (Experian Hitwise, 2010). Furthermore a research report on online government from the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project (2009) shows that nearly one in three online U.S. Internet users were using social media and new tools to access government services and information (Smith 2010). A 2007 survey of Australian residents found that the internet was the preferred method of contact for government agencies for 41 percent of those surveyed which was up from 31 percent in 2005. Preference for face-to-face contact was much less popular at 20 percent which was significantly down from 33 percent in 2005 (DoFA 2007, p.5). In this changing context, the expectations on governments to engage, work openly, be accountable and move more quickly on issues are growing (Bennett et al 2008, Osimo 2008, O'Brien 2008, Tapscott, Williams & Herman 2007). The ways in which Web 2.0 is used by government agencies around the world varies greatly. There appears to be stronger support for Web 2.0 technologies in the U.S. after their successful use during the Obama presidential campaign (Borins 2009, Gordon-Murnane 2009).

Web 2.0 (a term coined by O'Reilley 2005) is a set of economic, social and technology trends that collectively form the basis for the next generation of the internet – a mature, distinctive medium characterised by user participation, openness and network effects (Baltzan, Phillips, Lynch & Blakey 2010, Böhringer & Richter 2009, Dabbagh & Reo 2011). An important point about the use of Web 2.0 by government (also referred to as "Gov 2.0") is that it is not all about governments adopting the technology associated with Web 2.0, but what the technology can enable for governments and communities (DoFD 2010a). For the purposes of this paper, the description of Gov 2.0 provided on the Australian "Government 2.0" Google group's site is used as a defining statement:

> Government 2.0 is not specifically about social networking or technology based approaches to anything. It represents a fundamental shift in the implementation of government - toward an open, collaborative, cooperative arrangement where there is (wherever possible) open consultation, open data, shared knowledge, mutual acknowledgment of expertise, mutual respect for shared values and an understanding of how to agree to disagree. Technology and social tools are an important part of this change but are essentially an enabler in this process. (Gov 2.0 Australia 2009)

The use of social media to engage with the public within the Australian government has been 'modest' (DoFD 2010a) and slower than the uptake in the corporate world (Samuel 2009). Samuel (2009) outlines a number of constraints which may make government agencies reluctant to embrace social media: legacy systems and aging infrastructure, organisational risk aversion as they may be held accountable for content they have no or minimal control over, personal risk aversion as they may be advocating the use of an unproven approach or, if approved, see it fail, and policy limitations such as design constraints and content approval. With the positive Government response to the Government 2.0 Taskforce's report) and the release of the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) policy on social media in November 2009 (APSC 2009) and the recent publication of Gov 2.0 primer by Department of Finance and Deregulation (DoFD), the path to overcoming the constraints outlined by Samuel (2009) is clear and more government agencies will consider social media as a valid and positive means to engage with people. To encourage the take up of social media, the DoFD has set up a showcase website where government departments can describe their successful use of platforms such as wikis, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to engage the public in their activities (DoFD n.d.).

Within this context, this paper investigates Australian government's use of Facebook (FB). This research-in-progress paper investigates six Australian government FB pages to assess the online participation and seeks to provide a general understanding of the types and forms of user participation and engagement visible in government FB pages. FB page content is analysed quantitatively using genre analysis to determine what type of online participation is visible in these Facebook pages and what the agencies are trying to achieve. It is anticipated that consideration of all social media (e.g. Twitter, YouTube etc) engagement by agencies may produce better outcomes. However this paper aims only to contribute to better understanding of the government FB phenomenon. The paper falls into three parts: discussion on Facebook use by government, analysis of selective government Facebook pages and reporting of the findings from this research. The paper concludes with the analysis of the type and level of participation and engagement visible on these government Facebook sites.

FACEBOOK IN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

Internet social networking research is still in its early stages, fragmented and does not yet facilitate a general understanding of the phenomenon (Richter et al 2011). The research field is not yet mature enough to identify findings that may yield general, theoretical contributions to the Information Systems field. In their review of literature on internet social networking Richter et al (2011) found that between 2003 to 2009 there has been a surge on SNS research and majority of the research concentrated on single SNS (such as FB or MySpace) and mostly on user groups such as students. Most papers evolve around describing or explaining the technology and various facets of the phenomenon in four streams: 1) personal information disclosure and user privacy, 2) Nature of links and the role of the personal social network, 3) User self-presentation and impression management and 4) user motivations for adopting and using SNSs. FB papers selected in these studies (97 papers) falls within these categories. The authors do not mention any paper on Facebook use by citizens or government with only few references for business use of FB. This clearly identifies a gap within literature on government use of SNSs, in particular FB.

There is very little academic research on the use of social media by Australian government, though papers on the use of social media by government do exist (e.g. Collins 2009, Samuels 2009, Skeels & Grudin 2009). As mentioned earlier Samuel (2009) outlines a number of constraints which may make government agencies reluctant to embrace social media. However there is an influx of non-academic articles and reports and these tended to cover the corporate and business spheres (e.g. Luke 2009; Buttel 2010) while discussion on government use of Facebook tends to occur in blogs and government-specific websites (for example Thomler's eGovAU blog; DOFD n.d.; State Government of Victoria 2010; Klapper 2009a, Janson 2010).

There are limited papers for Australian context, in particular government context (except Griffiths 2007 & 2010, Bruns & Swift 2010, James 2010). There are a number of papers from public administration and social science that studied citizen engagement and e-democracy issues for social media usage for the Australian context (Griffiths 2010, Bruns & Swift 2010, and Backhouse 2007). Bruns & Swift (2010) articulated the problems with existing g2c & c2c model of interaction and recommends a g4c2c model where government partners with a third party for policy discussion and engagement. Hui & Hayllar (2010) discusses private-public-citizen collaboration models and how web 2.0 can be used for greater public value. Griffiths (2010) studied the digital economy blog for policy consultation which went wrong. Looking through effective online consultation lens she identified some of the factors (such as lack of moderator intervention, shared grounds, readily accessed information, re-structure

the feedback channel etc) which may have contributed to this failure. She proposes other innovative ways to engage citizens in policy formulation. Backhouse (2007) provides a framework with factors that may influence e-democracy in comparison with e-business (such as environment, access channels, citizen engagement, disruptive technology, resources, and disintermediation). James (2010) articulates a set of factors for designing web 2.0 sites for local government organisations. These factors include deployment, users/citizens and development. Recent papers on crowd sourcing (Dutton 2011, and Griffiths 2007) highlight some of the challenges this form of collaboration manifests (e.g. motivating users, reaching a large user base, quality of contribution).

Many Australian government departments and agencies are using Facebook to engage with the community (DoFD n.d.). Facebook has actively been working with the US Government to help them understand how to make the most of Facebook, launching a best practice government page (Eldon 2009, Klapper 2009b) and the US Defence and UK Defence have an extensive Facebook footprint (Janson 2010, MoD 2009). Recent positive experiences with Queensland floods and natural disasters have gained much attention and regenerated interest in SNS applications such as FB and Twitter.

Statistics released by Nielsen (2010) show that Facebook is visited by 54% of the world's[1] internet population who average 6 hours per month on the site. Facebook reach within Australia is 63% of active users[2], averaging 7 hours 45 minutes per month. Such high statistics makes it tempting for government agencies to launch a page in Facebook; however it needs to be a considered approach. Authors such as Luke (2009) and Wakeman (2009) warn to first consider the organisation's strategy and how Facebook can contribute (or not) to that strategy. For instance, Buttell (2010), amongst other points, states not to over-promote the company as this can lead to loss of clients and reputation. This would be similar to a government agency broadcasting media releases, rather than engaging with its community. Luke (2009) advises choice of the site that best suits your company's strategy and matches your customer profile. This highlights the fact that a social media tool shouldn't simply be used because others are using it, a point also raised by Wakeman (2008). Moreover transferring social software with their associated benefits to the corporate context requires a good understanding of the associated user phenomena (Richter et al 2011). This paper aims to contribute to understanding the government FB phenomenon.

1   METHODOLOGY

The research investigated six government FB pages – Australian Tax Office (ATO), Australian War Memorial (AWM), Department of Defence sites for Army, Navy and Air force and lastly Australia Tourism. As the paper aims to understand the government FB phenomenon, the FB pages were selected with an aim to cover a spectrum of differing usage patterns, audience participation and objectives that the agencies trying to achieve. For example, Tourism Australia was chosen as it has the largest fan base among the government FB pages. Defence is an interesting case with respect to their use of free social media within a restrictive culture. As there is no formal list of Australian government Facebook page exists, the selection was driven by word of mouth, unofficial listings (e.g. Government 2.0 best practices wiki[3], Craig Thomler's lists, Government Taskforce report) and FB page search by using terms like Australia, government etc.

The research data was collected as part of author's ongoing research into government's use of social media ranging from September 2009 to early 2011. The extent of organisation's footprint on Facebook can amount to huge amounts of data. Hence to reduce it to a manageable level, analysis was carried out on a case by case basis and timeframes were decided based on the amount of data available on the FB sites. For example, for ATO data was collected over six months (only 29 posts found), whereas Australia Tourism data was collected for a single day which amounted to 300 wall posts.

1.1   Genre Analysis of FB wall posts

The research carried out a genre analysis of the Facebook page posts and user comments for six government organisations specifically looking at the wall posts & comments that show user participation in these sites.

Yates & Orlikowski (1992) have coined the concept of 'genre of organizational communication' in their research on organizational communication. Yates & Orlikowski (1992, p. 301) define genre analysis as a:

---

1 World figures are based on 11 countries: Australia, Brazil, Germany, Japan, Spain, France, Italy, Switzerland, UK & USA
2 The term 'active users' is not defined in the Nielsen Wire post. It may be based on the frequency of users accessing Facebook.

3   http://government20bestpractices.pbworks.com/w/page/10044429/Australia

"typified communicative action invoked in response to a recurrent situation. The recurrent situation or socially defined need includes the history and the nature of established practices, social relations and communication media within organization."

According to Askehave & Swales (2001), the main approach of classifying communicative activities into genres is by understanding the purpose and tyoe of the communication. In this paper, applying genre analysis to classify the agency's FB wall posts into genres based on the purpose and type of communication is suitable for this study. The wall posts content were analysed to carry out the analysis and the posts on these pages fell into five main categories:

1. Giving information - the person doing the posting wishes to inform their readers about some fact or event, show them a picture, point them to a web location or answer a question.

2. Requesting information - the person doing the posting is requesting information or posing a question that will (hopefully) elicit a response.

3. Positive comment - the person doing the posting has something positive to say about a previous post or about the topic under discussion.

4. Negative comment - the person doing the posting has something negative to say about a previous post or about the topic under discussion.

5. Miscellaneous - anything not fitting into the above four categories. This was an issue for the tourism page which will be discussed below.

In addition, the wall content of the FB page was analysed for behavioral statistics such as frequency of posts, number of likes, content creator (administrator or audience) and feedback or reaction to the content was collected. Further the analysis was broadened by looking at the overall FB page structure and design elements. The discussions were analysed for overall total number of discussion threads and brief look at content was carried out to gain an understanding of what is being discussed, the participation and engagement among participants. These matrices hence was qualitatively analysed and it assisted in examining both audience and organisation engagement. Due to page limit, this paper will present the quantitative analysis but will draw on other qualitative analysis to make conclusions.

THE FOUR CASES: ATO, TOURISM, DEFENCE AND AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Overall page structure & wall post analysis

Three pages were analysed for Defence, one each for the Army, Navy and Air Force. For the others, one page each. Overall the structure and the wall posts of the six pages were analysed. The six pages shared some similar content, however were distinct in other ways. All six pages were liked by many people, with the Tourism Australia having the largest following with over 1,322,939 likes; AWM was liked by 13,600 and ATO by 1,435. Within Defence Army was liked by 73,000, Navy was liked by 4,899 people and Air Force by 7440 people (as at February 2011).

All six pages had the Wall and Info tab, as these are mandatory Facebook page elements. Each page contained Photos except ATO. Most pages had a Safety or Security or privacy tab which contained the same information about staying protected online and privacy issues. Australia Tourism had the most photos with over 24,247, almost all loaded by fans, followed by Air Force with over 1600 photos, most loaded by the Administrator; Navy about 500 photos, with over 400 posted by the Administrator; Army 300 photos mostly posted by fans, and Australian War Memorial (AWM) had the least photos 59 posted with equal posts by both administrator and fans. Table 1 lists similarities and differences in the page structure.

Table 1: Summary of overall Facebook page structure comparison

Tabs/Org	ATO	AWM	Tourism	Army	Navy	Air force
Wall	√	√	√	√	√	√
Info	√	√	√	√	√	√
Notes	×	√	√	×	√	√
Discussions	×	×	√	√	√	×
Photos	×	√	√	√	√	√
Events	×	√	√	√	√	√
Video	√	√	√	√	√	√
Twitter	×	×	√	×	√	×

Recruitment	×	×	×	√	√	×
Video	√	√	√	√	√	×
Safety	×	×	×	√	√	√
Special tab	-Privacy -FAQs	-Artshare -Reviews	-Making tracks -Poll -Link to other pages	-QLD Flood Appeal - Fair go -Wounded Digger -Victoria Cross	- link to Flickr, YouTube, iTunes - Navy Newspaper Countdowns	-RSS/Blog

Table 2 lists all the genre classification of the actual wall posts by agency. The wall content was further classified into administrator and audience posts. This analysis shows evidence of both administrator and audience engagement with the respective pages by agency. It is evident that majority of the posts are about giving information.

Table 2: Content analysis of Facebook pages

Site		ATO	Australian War Memorial	Army	Navy	Air Force	Tourism
Start Date		25/07/10	22/11/10	15/10/09	18/10/09	18/10/09	30/10/10
End Date		12/02/11	08/02/11	29/10/09	30/10/09	30/10/09	04/11/10
Posts							
Total number of Posts		29	31	97	63	60	300
By Admin (organisation)		24	31	35	24	60	
-type	Giving Information	24	31	35	18	60	
	Requesting Information				5		
	Positive Comment				1		
	Negative Comment						
	Misc						
By audience				62	39		300
-type	Giving Information	1		3	5		105
	Requesting Information	4			26		59
	Positive Comment			4	7		56
	Negative Comment	12					1
	Misc						79

The following sections further analyse these data and outlines the purpose, strategies and concerns with these FB pages with an aim to understanding the government FB phenomenon such as the spectrum of online participation, usage patterns and objectives being achieved through these sites from the evidence gathered as part of the broader analysis.

Australian Taxation Office: Compliance

The purpose of the page appears to be to encourage users to use the electronic tax lodgement system (e-tax) or tax *compliance*. The page adopts a one-way communication strategy. Most wall posts are by the administrator. These include a series of tutorials about the e-tax system, some advice on tax issues, and daily reminders that the lodgement deadline for personal tax returns is approaching. There is no discussion area. In terms of audience engagement, no evidence is found. There are hardly any comments (16 comments in total over 6 months).The

comments & posts by audience can be classified mostly as positive (35%) and negative (37%) comments. The majority of negative comments related to the lack of accessibility of e-Tax software to Australian taxpayers, and most related to the fact that the e-Tax software was not compatible with operating systems other than Microsoft Windows, including Apple Mac. Positive comments were varied and ranged from general comments such as "We love you e-Tax. One of the best tools we've seen!" to more specific comments like "A reminder … that e-tax 2009 is now available …Do try it as its very user friendly, fast, free & refunds are available in just 14 days!". There were queries (9%), however none of them were responded to. While it would not be possible to address an individual's tax situation in a public forum such as Facebook, there is scope to direct the enquirer to a contact number or a website in order to find information to help with their query. However, this had not been done.

The ATO had specifically stated on the Facebook page that they "won't respond to your individual tax questions on this page" (ATO 2008b) in order to protect privacy, but will post information relevant to topics discussed on the wall. The Tax Office therefore had no intention to converse or collaborate in any way with its Facebook fans. The Facebook page was therefore being used as an information only communication channel for compliance.

Australian War Memorial: Promote collection and share history

The purpose of this site seems to be to promote the War Memorial's collections to its users. All wall posts are by the administrator, but there are comments on them by users. Many of the posts relate to anniversaries of events, or to current events, and draw users' attention to relevant artefacts such as diaries and photographs in the collection. In most cases, they are links from Facebook to digitised versions on the War Memorial's web site. There are also progress reports on the restoration of an exhibit, and a promotion for the War Memorial's magazine.

Of the 31 posts by the administrator, 20 had comments. There some comments supportive of the post or of Australian troops, some asking questions about the subject of the post. Most questions are replied to by other users, some by the administrator. There was one exchange involving a user who was critical of the War Memorial's approach. Other users responded, but not the administrator. The maximum thread length was 10. The two biggest likes were on defence assistance for the Queensland floods (110) and the donation of a Victoria Cross to the AWM (59).There is no discussion area.

The War Memorial does show some signs of both audience and organisation participation. This seems to reflect an "involve" level of engagement, but only occasionally. It is also not clear if contribution through these comments that are worth noting being added to their collection. Hence the audience seem to have no impact on the collection itself.

Defence Sites: Recruitment

The purpose of this site seems to be to communicate effectively with members of the community, serving members and specifically to recruit. The Department of Defence (Defence) launched its social media presence in 2008, with service-specific profiles in YouTube, Facebook, Flickr and Twitter and an Australian Defence Force (ADF) profile on YouTube, Flickr and Twitter. The Chief of Army, Lt GEN Ken Gillespie, has been an active advocate of social media use by Defence (Taylor 2010) and is committed to developing the Facebook page further to allow Army to communicate more effectively with members of the community, serving members, potential recruits and well wishers (Army Admin 2009b). He comments that the Australian Army is trying "very hard to change the way that Defence and the Army, in particular, communicate with the Australian people" (Defence 2010e). This and similar comments in other places infers that there is a need to change the culture within Defence to accept and integrate social media such as Facebook. The Chief Information Officer Greg Farr has stated that it will require organisational and cultural change as it isn't going to go away (Taylor 2010).

There are three "official" Facebook sites, one each for the Army, Navy and Air Force. On all three, the bulk of wall posts by the administrator are about current or historical events, media releases, and links to photographs and videos on other sites. Posts by other users are largely requests for information (mainly on recruitment and assessment), comments on events and tributes. The Navy administrator also asks regular questions. Some are quiz questions, such as what ship was a particular documentary filmed on? Others are about the user audience, e.g. how many of you came from or are currently in cadets, or know someone in cadets? These have a large response (190 of the 301 responses were to the five questions posed in the survey period).

Both Army and Navy have discussion forums. The Air Force does not. The Air Force page appears to have a different communication strategy than the Army and Navy pages. The lack of a discussion tab suggests that it is not interested in conversations with people, nor encouraging people to converse amongst them. The high number of administrator posts, the presence of an RSS feed tab, the posting of many links and the high number of photos suggests that the Air Force page is more a social broadcast platform rather than a conversation platform.

A cursory look at the comments showed them to be mainly supportive with some dialogue between commenters. Negative comments or posts were very few. All administrators responded to posts and comments and post quickly.

Tourism Australia: Crowd source experience

Australia Facebook is an interesting case because of its rapid growth in terms number of fans compared to other Facebook pages run by Australian Government. Since April 2010, the number of Australian Tourism Facebook Page has increased from just over 370,000 to over 938,000 fans (as of November 4, 2010) to 1, 661,993 fans (as of July 1, 2011).

This site has a different approach. It is essentially an open forum for users to discuss the "Australian Experience", which includes their experiences in visiting Australia, and to ask questions (Tourism Australia, 2010). There are no administrator posts. Of the 300 wall posts analysed, 101(33.7%) were of pictures with Australian subjects, including scenic locations, city landmarks, flora and fauna. These are classified as Giving Information in the table. A number of posts (36) expressed a desire to visit Australia. These are included in the Requesting Information category. The miscellaneous category includes 79 posts. These are technically out of the scope of the site. Many are self-introductory and looking for friendship.

The discussion forum (328 topics) adopts a similar approach. Questions asking for tips on travelling (best places and times), studying, getting jobs and managing risks (including snakes) are answered by other users. First early topics were posted by Australia administrator, but the majority were posted by fans. Observation on the discussion page indicate a change in the role of discussion board from what initially a page to disseminate information by Australia Administrator (most of the postings are links to travel information) to a discussion board open for all fans. Discussion topic that received most feedback is "Australia describe with one word". As recorded on November 4, 2010, there were 156 replies to this post.

Tourism FB page is naturally more popular and thus more engaging in terms of content. Also having the ability to upload pictures has been one of the engaging mechanism through which tourism experience can be easily shared. This is an example of a crowdsourcing endeavour where tourism experiences and stories and pictures are being crowd sourced. However further research into this case is in progress to see if an engaged online community exist, how the contributions are being used by the agency (if at all for other purposes), are these contributions being linked to other tourism sites etc.

KEY FINDINGS

Online engagement using the latest web 2.0 tools means that government agencies have the opportunity to interact and communicate in new ways, which may help to overcome barriers to engagement or create brand new methods of engagement. When defining the scope of an engagement it is important to identify both the type of use desired and the level of engagement expected from the initiative. Moreover measuring web 2.0 engagement is critical for successful implementation, yet there is lack of standard measure for such task (Chang & Kannan, 2008). They assert that there are two levels of measurement tasks: (1) measuring engagement and (2) measuring application effectiveness. Further it is important to distinguish between audience and organisational engagement to understand the level of engagement evident in an initiative. We use the term audience engagement to describe the situation where there is a high level of involvement by the user population but very little or none by the sponsoring organisation. Au (2010) states that measuring audience engagement and the effectiveness of web 2.0 tool has a high level of difficulty. In his report, Au (2010) presents a case of measuring web 2.0 engagements and effectiveness of Government Agency pages by using quantitative measures, such as the number of visitors. Au suggests content analysis of social media users' comments and discussions to further understand audience engagement. This distinction is important to articulate both audience participation with the organisation (or members of the organisation) in some process (e.g. decision making) and audience participation among themselves. For this study the former is referred to as 'organisation engagement' and the latter is 'audience engagement'. This study will use both audience and organisation engagement as a measure of level of engagement seen in the Facebook pages.

Based on Table 2 and the discussion of the four cases above, different level of engagement can be found within the Facebook pages. This clearly shows that none of the organisations are using Facebook for consultation or decision making. The Facebook pages are mostly being used for announcing (ATO), informing (all sites) and often involving (by Tourism, Army & Navy). There are differences between audience and organisaiton engagement among the sites, with Tourism Australia performing best with high level of audience engagement, but no contributions from the organisation or its staff except at the very beginning. In spite of this, this site could be viewed as a form of collaboration, in which the audience is, in effect, building a resource for the organisation, although the only contribution for the organisation is the platform being used.

Web 2.0 tools are better for participation rather than collaboration (Colazzo et al 2009). We are yet to see good examples of Facebook sites for collaboration (except in cases like Obama presidential campaign, fund raising for natural calamity like Queensland floods, the Egypt revolution etc). Further if we take cooperation, coordination and collaboration as collective activities and they are in a continuum, then we can conclude that to some extent these sites show evidence of some form of co-operation. For example, the Tourism site is trying to encourage people to come to Australia by promoting potential destinations and giving users advice about what they might find and what do, including alerting them to potential problems and how to deal with them. It is addressing this in a collaborative manner (crowd sourcing experience), by getting other people who have visited to suggest locations, supply photographs, answer questions and give advice. Although there is no obvious structure to this, and nothing is "official", it is clearly a valuable resource and is achieving the department's aim. The Defence discussion areas fill a similar role in giving advice on what recruits can expect when they turn up.

Interestingly all the Defence Facebook pages have guidelines for safety online which contained the same information about staying protected online, rebadged for each service. This included locking down online profile, being aware of whom you talk to, what information you are revealing and so forth. This contributes to the operational security aspects of using social media.

In their paper 'Leveraging web 2.0 in government', Chang & Kannan (2008) split the Web 2.0 environment into three categories: tools that are communication focussed, interaction focussed and service focused. Social network sites are listed as interaction focused, which should be used to "interact with citizens, to get their feedback on policies, issues, services, and plans of the government" (Chang & Kannan 2008: p.21). More suitable tools for communication, according to Chang & Kannan's framework, include blogs, RSS feeds, podcasts and vlogs. While ATO has posted some audio files on the Facebook site to give "tax tips" to fans, podcasts, perhaps YouTube may be more effective in communicating this information to the public.

Wigand (2010) identified four roles Twitter plays in government – 1. extending the reach of communication 2. updating and sharing information, 3. building relationships and 4. collaborating with stakeholders. The same framework can be applied to other social tools such as in our case the Facebook. All four cases use Facebook for extending the reach of communication and building relationships and broadcasting and sharing information through social networks. Defence, AWM and Tourism Australia are not only trying to build relationships but to some extent collaborate with stakeholders.

Wigand's (2010) also identified relationship types between audience and government. For example short term or long term, occasional or continuing and impersonal or personal relationship between audience and government. These can also be applied to FB sites. ATO is using Facebook occasionally to achieve short term goals (e.g. tax compliance end of financial year). Whereas AWM, Tourism and Defence sites show continuing relationship with both short term (e.g. promoting an event) and long term goals (e.g. promoting Australia).

In summary, the key contributions of this study are threefold. Firstly, the research contributes to gaining a better understanding of government FB phenomenon, in particular for Australian context. Secondly, the research reveals that varied audience and organisational engagement is visible within these sites. Thirdly, it applies Wigand's (2010) Twitter relationship roles and relationship types to government FB use. The key findings from the four cases thus can be summarised in the following table:

Table 3: Summary of key findings of government FB pages and online participation

Agency	Purpose	Audience engagement	Organisation engagement	Relationship type Wigand(2010)	Comment/ Recommendation
ATO	For compliance as a reminder or alert service informing citizens to comply with state laws and statutory duties such as tax returns	Little to no evidence of audience engagement	one way broadcast style relationship (Announce)	Short term, occasional, impersonal, transactional	ATO should use communication focussed tools such as YouTube for dissemination of compliance information.
Defence sites	To entice potential recruits by engaging them with discussions and responding to their queries such as the defense recruitment.	lower level of engagement	two way relationship with higher engagement (Inform & Involve)	Short term, continuing, personal.	Operational security is a key consideration for the defence sites.
Australian War memorial	Promotion of digital collections through sharing history and connecting with relevant people. Such as promoting the Australia war memorial collection and sharing Australian history	lower level of engagement	two way relationship with lower engagement (Inform & Involve)	Short term/long term, continuing, personal	Incorporate worthy audience contribution into their collection, Include a discussion forum to further discuss collections.
Australia Tourism	Crowdsourcing contributions through undefined network of people such as crowdsourcing tourism experiences.	higher level of engagement	two way relationship with higher engagement (Involve)	Long term, continuing, impersonal	A good example of crowdsourcing Australian experience for tourism.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, none of these sites show any significant level of organisational engagement. Three features are apparent:

1. One-way communication of information by the administrator, with limited or no ability to question or follow up on this.

2. Free-ranging discussions by users, which they may find useful, but there is no evidence of any visible impact on government based on the FB sites.

3. There is no evidence of substantive policy issues being opened for discussion through these sites.

For successful engagement both audience and organisation involvement and user experiences work as enablers of participation and even collaboration. The inherent social nature and the difference between virtual communities and web 2.0 mean that to achieve higher levels of online engagement (such as collaborate and empower) agencies need to employ multifaceted software deployment and online community user experience strategies. There should be increasing levels of engagement activities so that there is a ladder of participation[4] that goes from simple to more complex and deeply engaged. Once any involvement happens it is responded to by the organisation and positively reinforced. The organisations need to engage further beyond moderating role and become more participatory in the site discussions to collaborate and empower users. Designing an effective online participation can be a complex exercise. Simply selecting a single tool to support online particpation is unlikely to create an adequate solution. The online participation and engagement solution is likely to involve using a combination of different web 2. 0 tools and techniques not just one tool such as Facebook.

---

[4] http://www.forrester.com/groundswell/ladder.html

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

The study tried to ascertain alignment issues of intention with actual outcomes based on Facebook page content only. The study is yet to conduct interviews and gather evidence from the organisation to make further conclusions. The metrics for engagement used in this paper are limited and based on available online wall posts. More metrics will be included in future research such as existence of an online community manager and their role, more qualitative data about alignment, outcomes and critical success factors through interviews. The types of engagement activities have been identified based on information on Facebook pages and the respective agency web pages. This research has other limitations. The research does not take into consideration the barriers to engagement. There are data mining tools (e.g. mindmap) that can be used to gather, analyse data statistically to report more behavioural patterns seen in these sites. Future studies can also use Social Network Analysis (SNA) tools to understand audience engagement and its value and outcomes.

ACKOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

APSC, 2009. *Circular (2009/6: Protocols for online media participation*, 18 November 2009, <http://www.apsc.gov.au/circulars/circular096.htm>.

Au, Andrea, 2010. *Adoption of Web 2.0 by Tourism Businesses in NSW.*

Baltzan, P., Phillips, A., Lynch, K., & Blakey, P. 2009,. *Business Driven Information Systems*, 1st edn, McGraw-Hill Australia & New Zealand.

Backhouse, J 2007. 'e-Democracy in Australia: the Challenge of Evolving a Successful Model', pp107-116 *The Electronic Journal of e-Government,* Volume 5 Issue 2, pp95 – 224. Available online at www.ejeg.com

Bennett, W.L., Wells, C. & Rank, A. 2008. Young citizens and civic learning: two paradigms of citizenship in the digital age. Report from the Civic learning online project

Böhringer, M & Richter, A. 2009, 'Adopting Social Software to the Intranet: A Case Study on Enterprise Microblogging', *Proceedings of the 9th Mensch & Computer Conference*. (pp. 293-302).Berlin September 6-9.

Borins, S. 2009. "From online candidate to online President", *International Journal of Public Administration, vol*. 32, no. 9, pp.753-8

Boyd, D.M. & Ellison, N.B. 2007. 'Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship.', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 13, no. 1, p. article 11.

Brown, D. 2010. *52 Cool Facts About Social Media* 23 August 2010, <http://dannybrown.me/2010/07/03/cool-facts-about-social-media/>

Bruns, A. & Swift, A. 2010,' G4C2C: enabling citizen engagement at arms' length from government', *Proceedings of EDEM 2010, pp.51-59*

Buttell, A. 2010. "Taming the Social Network Beast – 6 ways to manage an effective social networking strategy", *Practice Management Solutions*, May/June 2010 pp6-7

Chang, A & Kannan, P. 2008. *Leveraging web 2.0 in Government*, Industry research paper, <http://www.businessofgovernment.org/pdfs/ChangReport2.pdf>.

Clarke, R. 2008. 'Web 2.0 as Syndication', *Journal of Theoretical and Applied electronic commerce research,* vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 30-43.

Collins, S. 2009. "Culture in the new order", Upgrading Democracy, Insight Edition, Centre for Policy Development, Sydney NSW, viewed 3 November 2009, http://cpd.org.au.

Cummings, J., Massey, A.P. & Ramesh, V. 2009. 'Web 2.0 proclivity: understanding how personal use influences organizational adoption', paper presented to Proceedings of the 27th ACM international conference on Design of communication.

Dabbagh, N & Reo, R. 2011, 'Back to the future: Tracing the roots and learning affordances of Social software', In Lee, M & McLoughlin, C. (Eds) *Web 2.0-Based E-Learning: Applying Social Informatics for Tertiary Teaching*, pp. 1-20

Dellow, J & Bartlett-Bragg, A. 2009. Online engagement guidance and Web 2.0 toolkit for Australian Government agencies: A report for Government 2.0 taskforce. Headshift Australia Pty Ltd. http://gov2.net.au/projects/project-8/

Dutton, W. 2011. 'Networking distributed public expertise: strategies for citizen sourcing advice to government', *Occasional papers in Science and Technology Policy*, [online] http://ssrn.com/abstract=1767870

Department of Finance and Deregulation (DoFD) (n.d.) *Government 2.0 Showcase,* viewed 12 Nov 2010, http://showcase.govspace.gov.au/

Department of Finance and Administration (DoFA) 2007. Australians' use of and satisfaction with e-government services - 2007, DOFA, Canberra

Department of Finance and Deregulation (DoFD) 2010a. *Government Response to the Report of the Government 2.0 Taskforce 'Engage: Getting on with Government 2.0'*, viewed 12 Nov 2010, http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/govresponse20report/index.html

Department of Finance and Deregulation (DoFD) 2010b. *Social Media 101: a beginner's guide for Finance employees*, viewed 12 Nov 2010, http://agimo.govspace.gov.au/files/2010/04/social-media-101.pdf

Department of Finance and Deregulation (DoFD) 2011. Gov2.0 Primer, viewed 1 July 2011, http://webguide.gov.au/web-2-0/gov-2-0-primer/

Eldon, E. 2009. "A Fan of Big Brother? Facebook Launches Government Page", *Inside Facebook*, Inside Network, web log post 9 Sep 2009, viewed 30 Oct 2010, fhttp://www.insidefacebook.com/2009/09/09/a-fan-of-big-brother-facebook-launches-government-page/

Experian Hitwise 2010. Government Online, March 2010, viewed 21 April 2010, http://www.ami.org.au/events/downloads/act_event_papers.asp

Gordon-Murnane, L, 2009 "Changing the way government works with web 2.0 tools", Searcher, vol. 17, no. 7, pp.26-33.

Gov 2.0 Australia, Google groups site, viewed 16 September 2009, http://groups.google.com.au/group/gov20canberra?hl=en-GB.

Griffiths, M. 2010. 'e-democracy design: citizen consultation on contentious Issues', Proceedings of EDEM 201, pp.51-59

James, J. and Clarke, R. 2010. 'Transforming the relationship between citizens and local councils using Web 2.0 technologies', Chapter 12 of The SInet 2010 eBook, Sinet University of Wollongong, http://ro.uow.edu.au/sinet/1

Janson Communications 2010. *Military Facebook Study*, Manassas, VA

Klapper, E. 2009a. "Facebook Pages and Government: Best Practices", *Social Government*, web log post, 17 Mar 2009, viewed 12 Nov 2010, http://www.socialgovernment.com/2009/03/17/facebook-pages-and-government-best-practices/

Klapper, E. 2009b. "Facebook Launches Government Best Practices Page", Social Media Today, web log post, 10 Sep 2009, viewed 12 Nov 2010, http://www.socialmediatoday.com/SMC/123270[accessed

Luke, K. 2009. "Marketing the New-Fashioned Way", *Practice Management Solutions*, Nov/Dec 2009

McLoughlin, C. & Lee, M. J. W. 2007. Social software and participatory learning: Pedagogical choices with technology affordances in the Web 2.0 era. In ICT: Providing choices for learners and learning. Proceedings ascilite Singapore 2007. http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/singapore07/procs/mcloughlin.pdf

Ministry of Defence (MoD) 2009. *Online engagement guidelines*, viewed 10 Nov 2010, http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/CorporatePublications/MediaandPublicCommunicationPublications/OnlineEngagementGuidelines.htm

Mintz, D. 2007. 'Government 2.0-Fact or Fiction?', Public *Manager*, vol. 36, no. 4, pp. 21-4.

Nielsen Company 2010, "Social Networks/Blogs Now Account for One in Every Four and a Half Minutes Online", *NielsenWire*, web log post 15 Jun 2010, viewed 12 Nov 2010, http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/online_mobile/social-media-accounts-for-22-percent-of-time-online/

O'Brien, J. 2008. Are we preparing young people for 21st-century citizenship with 20th century thinking? A case for a virtual laboratory of democracy. Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher

O'Reilly, T. 2005. What is Web 2.0? Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next generation of software [Online] edn, September, O'Reilly 29/3/2010, <http://www.oreillynet.com/lpt/a/6228>.

Osimo, D. 2008. 'Web 2.0 in government: why and how', Institute for Prospectice Technological Studies (IPTS), JRC, European Commission, EUR, vol. 23358.

PewResearchCenter 2010 *Government online*, Pew Internet & American life project, viewed on 7 April 2011 <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Government-Online.aspx>

Pingdom, R. 2009. *Internet 2009 in numbers*, viewed 3 July 2010 <http://royal.pingdom.com/2010/01/22/internet-2--9-in-numbers/>.

Richter, D., Riemer, K., Brocke, V. & Grobe Bockmann, S. 2009. Internet social networking – distinguishing phenomenon and practical manifestation, *In Proceedings of 17th European Conference on Information Systems,* Verona, pp. 2603-2614

Richter, D, Riemer, K & Brocke, J. 2011. Internet Social Netwowrking: research state of the art and implications for enterprise 2.0", *Business & Information Systems Engineering,* 2, 2011

Samuel, A. 2009. "Waiting for Government 2.0: why do public agencies take so long to embrace social media?" In Gotz & Pederson (ed.) *State of the* eUnion: Gov2.0 and onwards, pp. 109-122, 21Gov.net, viewed 20 Oct 2010, http://21gov.net/wp-content/uploads/e-book.pdf

Smith, A. 2010. Government Online: The internet gives citizens new paths to government services and information, Pew Research Centre, April 27, 2010, http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Government-Online.aspx

State Government of Victoria 2010. *eGov: e-government resource centre*, viewed 12 Nov 2010, http://www.egov.vic.gov.au/index.html

Tapscott, D., Williams, A.D. & Herman, D. 2007. *Government 2.0: Transforming Government and Governance for the 21st Century*, New Paradigm's Government 2.0: Wikinomics, Government and Democracy Program.

Thomler, C. 2010. *eGov AU*. Viewed 1 November 2010, <http://egovau.blogspot.com/2010/04/what-are-top-australian-facebook-pages.html>

Thomler, C. 2010a. "What are the top Australian Facebook pages (and how many are government-run)?" *eGovAU*, web log post, 9 April 2010, viewed 12 Nov 2010, http://egovau.blogspot.com/2010/04/what-are-top-australian-facebook-pages.html

Thomler, C. 2010b. "Listing Australia's government-run Facebook and YouTube pages - I need your help", eGovAU, web log post, 29 Sep 2010, viewed 12 Nov 2010, http://egovau.blogspot.com/2010/09/listing-australias-government-run.html

Wakeman, S. 2009. "Why local government shouldn't be on Facebook", Simon Wakeman, web log post 25 Feb 2009, accessed 12 Nov 2010, http://www.simonwakeman.com/2009/02/25/why-local-government-shouldnt-be-on-facebook/

Wigand, D. 2010, 'Twitter takes wing in government: diffusion, roles, and management', 1*1th Annual International Conference on Digital Government Research* May 17-20.

Facebook pages

Australian Taxation Office (ATO) 2008b. 'Lodge your Australian tax return online using e-Tax', Facebook site, viewed 17 September 2009, http://www.facebook.com/home.php?ref=home#/ATOetax.

Australian War Memorial 2011. Viewed February 2011, http://www.facebook.com/AWMemorial

Ministry of Defence (MoD) 2010a, *British Army Facebook page*, viewed 12 Nov 2010, http://www.facebook.com/britisharmy

Ministry of Defence (MoD) 2010b. *Royal Air Force Facebook page*, viewed 12 Nov 2010, http://www.facebook.com/royalairforce

Ministry of Defence (MoD) 2010c. *Royal Navy Facebook page*, viewed 12 Nov 2010, http://www.facebook.com/royalnavy

Tourism Australia (2010), viewed October 22, 2010, http://www.facebook.com/SeeAustralia

COPYRIGHT