



The impact of social media on services delivery and community engagement: An eThekweni

Municipality perspective

By

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June 2022

DECLARATION

DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

Firstly, I dedicate this project to the Almighty God for the gift of life and wisdom and the strength to embark on this journey.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of social media on service delivery and community engagement in the eThekweni Municipality Electricity Cluster. eThekweni Municipality Electricity Cluster has had many challenges and complexities not only in delivery, but also in providing services to residents. The study therefore, explores the diagnostic potential of social media to improving service delivery. This is done through determining the perceptions of customer services agents within the electricity cluster of the eThekweni Municipality on the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery and community engagement.

The study is premised on the fact that social media has become an integral part of people's lives because of the role it plays in how people collaborate, interact, and communicate. The study used a quantitative survey in an exploratory research design. Questionnaires were the data collection instrument. These were administered to a sample of 53 eThekweni municipality employees from the electricity unit. The study found that there is significant inter-correlation among the key dimensions (the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery and community engagement) of the study relating to eThekweni municipality electricity cluster employees' perspectives. It was also shown that there is a significant difference in the perception of eThekweni municipality employees varying in biographical profiles (age, race gender, employment statuses and number of years employed) regarding the key dimensions of the study (the effectiveness of social media platforms on public services delivery and community engagement).

The findings of this study show that employees believe that social media platforms positively impact public service delivery and community engagement. The study concludes by recommending further research for the researcher to conduct further research within this area.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| ICT | : Information Communication Technology |
| RMS | : Revenue Management System |
| EM | : eThekweni Municipality |
| IDP | : Integrated Development Plan |
| WC | : Ward Committee |
| SMP | : Social Media Platform |
| SMA | : Social media Application |
| CM | : City Manager |
| DCM | : Deputy City Manager |
| UKZN | : University of KwaZulu-Natal |
| KZN | : KwaZulu-Natal |
| E-government | : Electronic Governance |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Studies on both development and service delivery in South Africa have had blind spots on how social media can be harnessed to improve service delivery to citizens and also improve community engagement. While significant efforts have been observed in the past twenty-eight years of democracy, the South African local government has worked toward the transformation of the lives and livelihoods of its citizens who, for many years had been under the yoke of colonialism and apartheid, the embrace of contemporary technologies has been minimal. The focus was placed on the development and implementation of new pieces of legislations meant to improve public service delivery and community engagement. A ward communities and community meetings were the only available tools for the municipality and community to communicate and enhance public services and community engagement. Ward committee is described as the independent structure and medium of communication and interaction between the municipality and citizens (Feeney & Welch, 2016).

This study therefore, explores the impact of social media on service delivery and community engagement using the eThekweni Municipality Electricity Cluster as the case study. Social media application has become an integral part of people's lives because of the important role it plays on how people collaborate, interact, and communicate.

The study posits that social media platforms strategically present numerous opportunities for the local government to enhance service delivery and encourage citizen engagement. In the contemporary world, the internet and smart devices play a crucial role in the public service delivery process and encourage engagement between the parties (Mdlalose, 2016).

Social media platforms have opened up opportunities for progress in local government (Roengtam, 2020). The restructuring of the eThekweni municipality from different levels has marked the need to engage the community in service delivery. The local government is now tapping into a new era

of online platforms (e-service) that improve public service delivery and community engagement and enhance the provision and quality of government services (Mdlalose, 2016). There is a strong belief that the internet and social media platforms are effective and aim to keep pace with the global economy while improving service delivery and community engagement. The eThekwini municipality has citizens who encounter poverty, lack of service delivery, and unemployment. This creates a need for interaction community participation and engagement as the best strategy to address community needs (Cho & Melisa, 2021). The importance of community engagement in all facets of public service and the municipality integration development plan and other initiatives that aim to deliver or improve services delivery have become the main focus of the South African government over the past years (Reddy & Govender, 2019).

Local government is responsible for ensuring that all community members are provided with public services to satisfy their basic needs. This study examines the customer services agents' perception of the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery and community engagement within the Electricity Cluster of the eThekwini municipality. It identifies effective ways that social media platforms can be utilised to improve service delivery and community engagement.

1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Conceivably, eThekwini municipality is one of the most productive metropolitans in the provinces of South Africa (Reddy & Govender, 2019). However, it experiences challenges in finding an innovative solution and strategy to enhance public services due to a limited budget and resources (Mdlalose, 2016). The influx of people to settle in the city for different reasons leaves the municipality constrained in discharging services, as well as actively engaging with the community (Reddy & Govender, 2019).

Many municipalities find it difficult to modify their operations to include social media platforms as the key tool to enhance service delivery (Fashoro & Barnard, 2021). Despite the strong belief that social media can improve service delivery to communities, municipalities still fail, unlike the private sector, to adopt social media tools (Reddy & Govender, 2019).

There is, however, much potential in the utilisation of social media, not only to cut costs, but also to improve service delivery and actively engage citizens in general. Social media adoption can

significantly define how citizens perceive local government (Bolat, Kooli, & Wright, 2016). As technology levels continue to increase, local government has not been able to timely adapt to the change as its private-sector counterpart has. The local government faces a daunting task, not only of delivering the required standard of public service while meeting a fast-growing number of citizens, but also of designing a compelling and convincing strategy for citizens to gain access to, be informed about, and comprehend information (Manoharan & Ingrams, 2018).

Social media applications are internet-based applications that are built on the conceptual and industrial foundation of Web 2.0. They allow the formation of generated content and the exchange of users. Social media encompasses all the various activities that integrate technology, content creation, and social interaction. It encourages collaboration among internet users and effective information sharing (Bonsón, Royo, & Ratkai, 2015). Social media platforms are one of the most popular online applications across the world. Social media has more than 4,14 billion users and 36,54 users in South Africa and continues to grow (Miniwatts, 2020). According to Miniwatts (2020) the number of internet users was 2,400,000 in 2020 and this was an increase from 32615165 in the previous year. There was an increase in internet use by 8615165 from September 2020 to December 31 (Miniwatts, 2020). Facebook is the most used social media platform with more than 21,280,000 subscribers in December 2020 (Miniwatts, 2020).

In this arena, social media has become a technological phenomenon. The internet and social media platforms are the most effective mobile-based applications that allow the creation, engagement, participation, and exchange of interactive dialogue. Local government, therefore, needs to adopt the most effective ways to implement digital channels such as social media (Miniwatts, 2020).

As social media usage continues to grow, there is a need to analyse the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery and community engagement within eThekweni municipality. It is legislated that the local government must encourage community participation and activity involvement in the decision-making process related to their well-being. The study identifies the challenges faced by the municipality in delivering public service, lack of community engagement. It then proposes ways through which those challenges can be resolved.

1.3. STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Like other municipalities, the eThekwini municipality is mandated to provide services to its citizens while meeting its fast-growing needs. Municipalities are assigned to adhere to Batho Pele principles (people come first) when serving citizens. Social media has become a tool that ensures that public service is accessible by everyone and tailored to community needs (Mdlalose, 2016).

In recent years, local government has failed to provide public services and improve existing infrastructure (Reddy & Govender, 2019). There is a lack of public service delivery and an effective way to communicate with the community. In another study, of Nyuswa (2015), the grievances submitted by striking communities were similar, ranging from the shortages of water, electricity supply, road maintenance to access to information, and vibrant communication. All the above challenges show that the community is not engaged in the integrated development plans process. It also shows that the municipality is not adopting a strategy to mobilise citizens to engage in the community development process. To achieve good governance and realise efficiency in public services delivery, public participation and engagement becomes necessary for the eThekwini municipality (Fashoro & Barnard, 2021).

The high number of violent protests by the eThekwini municipality community clearly shows that there is insufficient communication between government officials and citizens while the community depends on government services for their basic needs. When the communities are adequately consulted and engaged in the municipality projects and a proposal for new services development, they will be unlikely to protest for poor service delivery or delay regardless of their socioeconomic status. This happens because communities keep informed and engage in an integrated development plan (Mdlalose, 2016).

There have been studies conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of social media platforms within the city of eThekwini in public service and community engagement (Reddy & Govender, 2019). This study is inspired by a lack of an innovative ways to enhance service delivery and encourage community engagement. The study is based on eThekwini municipality electricity cluster employees' perceptions to evaluate whether the adoption of social media by local government will be valuable to both citizens and the municipality. The study's findings could help local

governments develop an effective way of communicating with the community while improving public services.

1.4. CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

As mentioned earlier, few studies such as (Reddy & Govender, 2019) are directed to evaluate the effectiveness of social media within the government sector. The study contributes essential information to evaluate the effectiveness of social media platforms within the government sector.

This study recommends how social media platforms impact public service processes and citizen engagement or whether local government would harvest the full benefit of the remarkable fourth industrial revolution.

This research could be more valuable to the city manager, senior managers, managers and the citizens who oversee service delivery on behalf of the local government. The findings of this study could enable the eThekwini municipality, decision-makers, policymakers, and other relevant stakeholders to develop measures and effective ways to improve service delivery and encourage active engagement with the communities.

1.5. AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to investigate customer service agents' perceptions within the eThekwini municipality's electricity cluster on the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery and community engagement.

1.6. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study objectives are:

- To determine the perceptions of customer services agents within the electricity cluster of the eThekwini municipality on the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery;
- To determine the perceptions of customer service agents within the electricity cluster of the eThekwini municipality on the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement; and

- To formulate creative strategies that the municipality can adopt to use social media platforms to improve service delivery and enhance community engagement.

1.7. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are customer services agents' perceptions within the eThekweni municipality's electricity cluster on the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery?
- What are the perceptions of customer services agents within the electricity cluster of the eThekweni municipality on the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement?
- What creative strategies can the municipality adopt to use social media platforms to improve service delivery and enhance community engagement?

1.8. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

This study used inferential statistics to measure the two hypotheses. The hypotheses are presented below:

Hypothesis 1:

There exists a significant intercorrelation among key dimensions (the effectiveness of current social media platforms on services delivery and the effectiveness of current social media platforms on community engagement) of the study relating to eThekweni municipality (Electricity Cluster) employees' perspectives.

Hypothesis 2:

There is a significant difference in the perceptions of respondents, depending on biographical profiles (gender, age, race, employment status, and number of years employed) regarding each dimension of the study (effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery and community engagement) of the study relating to eThekweni municipality (Electricity Cluster) employees' perspective.

1.9. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

This study is motivated by the absence of innovative ways to enhance public services and proper ways to engage the community in Integrated Development Plan. It provides a solution to some of the problems which local governments face in delivering, improving public services, and creating new platforms of communication and participation to improve the lives of its residents. There is a need for a study on how local governments can identify and deploy new innovative ways to effectively deliver public services to communities so that they have access to adequate services.

1.10. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the large sample size and the nature of the data, the researcher did not cover various geographical areas, therefore, the study's findings cannot be generalised. The study collected data from the closest range of samples due to financial constraints. Another limitation is that the study was based on the Electricity Cluster customer service centers. Due to unrest and vandalism, some centers were closed, resulting in a minimal response rate.

1.11. SUMMARY OUTLINE PER CHAPTER

Chapter 1: Introduction of the study

Chapter one is the introduction of the study. It highlights the introduction and background information, the aim and the objective of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter two reviews existing literature on social media platforms' impact on local government public services delivery and community engagement. The views of different authors on how effective social media is and how local government can use to improve service delivery while cultivating community engagement.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Chapter three outlines the research methodology used and discusses the research design, the method used to nominate the participant, the data collection process and analysis, and the ethical consideration of the study.

Chapter 4: Presentation and analysis of data

Chapter four presents the research findings gathered from this study and an analysis of statically methods that were used to analyse data and were presented in tables and graphs to illustrate the study's findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion of findings

The data gathered in the previous chapter will be discussed and interpreted against the study objectives and the findings will be compared to, and contracted with the finding of different academics in the area.

Chapter 6: Recommendations and conclusion

Chapter five presents the recommendation, summary and conclusion of the research findings and highlights the area for further research.

1.12. CONCLUSION

The above chapter outlined the overview of the study, presented underlying background information and identified the research objectives and questions that the study requires to address. It also stressed the limitation of the study and the summary structure of the dissertation. The next chapter discusses different authors' views on the impact of social media platforms in local government in improving public service and encouraging community engagement.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW: ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ON SERVICES DELIVERY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the existing literature on the effectiveness of social media platforms on local government. This chapter delves into literature and theory on the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery and community engagement, emergency and disaster management, informing and empowering the community, and the benefits that come with the embracing of social media.

Social media has become a platform accessible almost to everyone who has an internet connection. It has become the most favourable communication channel for people (Lovari & Valentini, 2020). Bolat, Kooli, and Wright (2016) view social media as the most used platform to convey and communicate with wide and broader audiences at once. Androutopoulou, Karacapilidis, Loukis, and Charalabidis (2019) define social media as the umbrella of all social networking – it's classified in terms of public profile within a defined system and the capability to reach a broader target audience at once. Gao and Lee (2017) defined social media as the group of technology that allows the local government to foster participation and engagement with the community and other organisations through Web 2.0 philosophy. As the level of social media adoption continues to grow worldwide, the South African local government has also contemplated the use of social media tools to provide public service and engage with the community.

The benefits of social media vary. It may enhance public participation; encourage involvement in the municipal dealings and projects; open two-way communication channels between the sender; and the receiver and make or break the organization (Eom, Hwang, & Kim, 2018). Government institutions should tread very carefully when engaging with the public or its target audience through social media. Every inclination and everything said can go viral in minutes (Olivier & Murenzi, 2017).

Social media has a critical feedback mechanism in which one can post or update informative content and respond to what has been shared. Throughout the years, it has demonstrated the power

to shift people from being the reader to becoming generators and publishers of content (Guillamón, Ríos, Gesuele, & Metallo, 2016).

Various social media tools have attractive functions that organisations can use to get attention and appeal to people to join their handles, pages, and sites. Facebook is one of the best social media podiums to post information in various formats, including videos, live, and photos (Verkijika & De Wet, 2018). Twitter is very much similar; however, it provides a set of limitations when publishing information. All those social media tools are designed to connect people through online networking, and communities can be widely reached (Gao & Lee, 2017).

2.2. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN PUBLIC SERVICES DELIVERY

Social media plays an essential role in transforming South African local government as it provides a two-way process that is open for negotiation, interaction, suggestion, and debate about many outcomes of public services (Woods, 2016). Guillamón, Ríos, Gesuele, and Metallo (2016), mention that the South African local government must understand and determine what services can be offered in conjunction with social media platforms. The South African government's primary objective is to adopt social media to distribute information, reach out to the community, reduce government costs, and improve public service efficiency (Fashoro & Barnard, 2021).

Social Media applications could allow the government to overcome the limitation of budget cuts and other resources. Using social media in conjunction with Web 2.0 technology, the community could improve the services delivery process and also enable the municipality to find solutions to problems that hinder service delivery (Fashoro & Barnard, 2021).

Social media could provide the government with many benefits such as openness and transparency, community participation, collaboration, comfort and efficiency.

- **Openness and transparency:** Social media platforms help the South African government make information a public asset and disclose government activities and functions. Transparency is defined as the willingness of the government to publicize information and activities to the member of the community (Mawela, Ochara, & Twinomurinzi, 2017).

- **Community participation:** Community participation is the core determinant of the success or failure of the South African government. The South African government website is known as the information provider with no feedback mechanisms (Fashoro & Barnard, 2021). Social media platforms have two-way communication mechanisms where government officials post to blast breaking news and updates. Communities directly respond, comment, and share, the officials will encourage the discussion, sharing of opinions, provide feedback and updates (Dominic & Gisip, 2021).
- **Collaborations:** Collaboration is regarded as one of the highest levels in participation with its ability to co-create and co-design the process. Through collaboration, the government benefits from the community and stakeholders' experience, knowledge, and opinions. Social media allows online participation between government and society and partners in decision-making, problem identification, and solution-finding (Olivier & Murenzi, 2017).
- **Comfort:** the South African government uses social media platforms to communicate with the community and stakeholders, publicise information, update services, and attain feedback. Municipalities that use well-established channels make communication smoother and more comfortable than forcing the community to physically visit government premises whenever they want to get a service or information (Gao & Lee, 2017).
- **Efficiency:** Social media could provide the government with many benefits and opportunities to improve efficiency through automated collaboration tools to engage and respond to citizen needs and demands timeously. Social media enables the government to engage with citizens in real-time, trace service delivery, improve turnaround time, minimise processing costs and other operational costs, establish strategies for communication between government agencies, and create empowerment (Olivier & Murenzi, 2017).

2.2.1. E-government Services

Agostino, Arnaboldi, and Lema (2021) define e-government as a tool that aims to improve the government system to enhance transparency and efficiency in providing public services and increasing citizen empowerment. The adoption of e-government by the South African government

aims to improve the standards of quality services offered and increase the overall government efficiencies. South African government is adopting e-government alongside other technological programs to alleviate poverty to improve the services standards of its citizens and meet their basic needs.

The e-government system makes it easier for citizens and businesses to deal directly and engage with the government through new media channels. The vision of e-government (Batho Pele) gives individual citizens a right to access any government services and ensures that the community is informed of any government activities. E-government service is described as the application of Information and Communication Technology to efficiently promote government activities to facilitate the accessibility of government services and information (Martínez-Román, Gamero, de Loreto Delgado-González, & Tamayo, 2019).

2.2.1.1 Benefits of e-government

There are many benefits that are offered by various social media platforms on digital government services. This section will discuss the benefits of the adoption of e-government services, namely, improve efficiency and cost reduction, time-saving and access online services.

- **Improve efficiency and cost reduction**

The key benefits of e-government are cost-saving and improving the existing system's efficiency by minimising the need for paper-based work and allowing the processes to be done online or in the system (Falco & Kleinhans, 2018). It also enhances the government response rate in all online applications and increases customer service quality. The South African government has adopted e-government through centralising police services access to ensure that people have equal access to police services and can report crime anywhere around the world and choose to be anonymous (Mawela, Ochara, & Twinomurinzi, 2017).

- **Time-saving**

Through its website and other media platforms, the government's services have benefited all parties. All applications that were done manually are now made electronically; hence saving time includes accessing and downloading forms applying for services and achieving files; it saves time retrieving.

- **Online Access**

E-government makes it easier to access services online and on time. It also enables communities to communicate with the government based on the services they require without having to travel to government offices physically. The traditional way of providing service delivery and procedure is time-consuming and lacks transparency. Communities spend most of their time traveling to get services and querying and sometimes will not have the necessary documents and will be sent back (Dominic & Gisip, 2021).

The e-government initiative has put most services online to reduce the rounding clock and create accessibility and convenient transactions to fast-track services. The South African government has implemented SAConnect, which enable citizens to access all government department agencies online to ensure citizens have equal access to services and link the information across the departments. With the SAConnect initiative, the government aims to deliver widespread broadband access of 100% by 2030 to ensure the country's population has access to internet. The South African government is working together with different municipalities throughout the country to create service centers where citizens can visit to access the internet and free Wi-Fi. They partnered with various shopping malls and other public places to provide free internet access (Fashoro & Barnard, 2021).

2.2.1.2 Challenges associated with the adoption of E-government services

The South African government is faced by many challenges in implementing e-government, namely, the shortage of necessary skills, insufficient infrastructures and higher level of digital illiteracy for municipal officials and citizens to operate the e-government system.

Cummings (2017) asserts that the current South African education system cannot provide the required technical management skills that the system needs. The South African government is still struggling to connect with different government department agencies, including creating access to crucial information amongst departments, internal efficiency, and human resource development (Fashoro & Barnard, 2021).

E-government development in South Africa remains low due to insufficient infrastructure and a higher level of digital illiteracy. There is a still massive gap between the rich and poor that results

from those in the low-income class are unable to benefit from the use of ICT, and those who live in rural had no infrastructure to access the internet (Olivier & Murenzi, 2017).

Despite different online services that municipalities can use to improve public services, they can use e-government platforms to disseminate information, online transactions, community engagement, and policy search and adoption. Some activities can be done online, such as providing information services, downloading forms, services applications, permits or driver's license renewal, paying fines, tariffs, and taxes, processing, applying and disconnecting of services, changing ownership, streaming meetings live, and others (Fashoro & Barnard, 2021).

The South African government adopts social media platforms to build and change the relationship with the citizen and create a platform for engagement and interaction (Tajudeen, Jaafar, & Sulaiman, 2016). E-government has gone beyond sharing and disseminating information connecting to the citizen. It includes integrating core business operations like service delivery e-services, emergency and disaster management, and online innovation healthy emergency initiatives (Verkijika & De Wet, 2018).

There is a slight difference in the way social media tools are used. In most cases, information posted on Facebook and Twitter is replicated except the live streaming conferences and meetings. Ekurhuleni and The City of Cape Town Metropolitan municipalities have devoted Twitter pages mainly to report issues and updates on service delivery. They post information about service delivery issues such as shortages and interruption of water supply and electricity interruption schedules on outages (Reddy & Govender, 2019).

Fashoro and Barnard (2021) analysed the social media accounts of 17 provincial and local government organizations in South Africa. The findings stated that, out of those 17 social media accounts, the most commonly used platforms were Facebook and Twitter from 2017 to 2020. A few inactive accounts have already been revived to be more active and productive. The number of followers and posts has significantly increased ten times more from 2017 to 2020. Their content focuses more on disseminating information, ongoing municipality projects, events, link to access services, employment services, disaster emergency and management, issues or delay of services, and an invitation to public participation meetings. All those posters are in the form of links, live video streaming, photographs, press release and video (Cho & Melisa, 2021).

eThekwini municipality is steadily implementing technology innovation, and it is one of the two South African municipalities that has successfully developed and implemented an open data portal. It uses a geography information system to map up service delivery and infrastructure information. It collects data through community participation and engagement (Reddy & Govender, 2019).

eThekwini municipality has successfully moved toward technology transformation in some of its departments. It provides various online services such as online clearance certificates, electronic billing systems and online transactions. Citizens can use multiple online media platforms to report faults and access bills. However, some processes are delayed because of system failure, backlogged migration of data, and insufficient staff skills and training. eThekwini municipality spent approximately R1 billion implementing a Management Revenue System, billing system intended to reduce cost, time, and high rate of wrongful billing. RMS system has a lot of confusion in the Revenue Department as they cannot trace and monitor expenditure as a result, customers are wrongfully billed (Shibambu & Marutha, 2021).

2.3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE PUBLIC SERVICES SECTOR

South African local governments are recently embarking on redefining how public services can be delivered while cultivating community engagement. In the past years, social media has been penetrating the internet and it has developed the channel in which the world collaborates and communicates between government and citizen (Pariso & Marino, 2020). Social media has changed the way communities source information worldwide, interaction and collaboration that provides unique prospects for citizen leaders and government officials (Mahajan-Cusack, 2016).

South African local governments are slowly grabbing this opportunity to enhance community engagement in both political affairs and public services delivery (Allen, Tamindael, Bickerton, & Cho, 2020). In conjunction with the fast growth of technology innovation and social media applications, local governments have understood the need for community engagement and participation. In the past years, there has been an increase in the need for the community to participate in government matters for the local government to better respond to community needs and opinions (Mdlalose, 2016).

The usage of social media technology and internet is necessity for South African local government and a lot needs to be done to adopt social media by the South African government and there are many concerns and questions about the future progress of e-government (Chipeta, 2018). Community engagement can help South African local governments to ensure that the delivery of public services is tailored to community needs. The ongoing engagements and feedback ensure that services meet the community's needs and provide the level of improvement that the community can appreciate (Fashoro & Barnard, 2021).

Social media technology enables the South African government to achieve more productivity through employment capabilities so as, to effectively locate resources and knowledge, link customers to required services and to develop a social network that enables the customer to create and share contents knowledge and interact with the community and government agency with innovative potentialities (Shibambu & Marutha, 2021). Social media platforms focus on the co-production of public services and foster engagement and participation with public authorities (Shibambu & Marutha, 2021).

Mawela, Ochara, and Twinomurinzi (2017) posit that social media improves the diversity of suggestions and opinions through the flow of information and freedom of expression. All those tools can be utilised to engage the community in exchanging opinions and suggestions, debates, public decision-making, and information about public services and political problems.

Social media platforms and social network applications have become a crucial instrument for communication, change, and leisure. Social media is a participatory and collaborative instrument by its nature that is desirable as social interaction. It can connect users, form communication to share information, interact, socialise, and achieve common goals or interests (Feeney & Porumbescu, 2021).

Social media is an empowerment tool that can give users a platform to speak, access, and publish information. It can promote a positive government perception by distributing and providing information related to service delivery (Silva, Tavares, Silva, & Lameiras, 2019).

Fashoro and Barnard (2021) argue that social media and the internet will never be the solution for the local government if it does not adopt the changing time as the traditional method of government activity has limited constraints in disseminating information and delivering public services. Italy's

government has successfully embraced social media initiatives for online communication and participation (Lameiras, Silva, & Tavares, 2018). They design online communication that allows a community to actively participate in economic development projects to improve public service delivery and promote openness and transparency.

Since its inception and introduction, social media has played an integral role in encouraging interaction between municipal officials and the public (Tajudeen, Jaafar, & Ainin, 2018). According to research of Song and Lee (2016) with its numbers growing every day, the leading social media platform, Facebook, has rewritten the script to communicate effectively through all levels (Bolat, Kooli, & Wright, 2016). The South African local governments can utilise such platforms to adequately connect with the community to formulate public policy discussion, design, and testing of public services, not just comment on the proposal (Zolkepli & Kamarulzaman, 2015).

Asongu and Odhiambo (2019) asserted that a local government's well-applied social media strategy or plan would improve community engagement and build confidence. The existence of interactive contribution by the community through social media is highly reliant on the role played by the local government, which will initially foster communication and create a dialogue to recover community engagement and commitment.

Sadly, with the continuous change and need for more innovative technical creations, many local government establishments fail to correctly utilise their electronic media platforms - forgetting that the main objective is to keep the public knowledgeable about the information pertaining to service delivery. These podiums offer municipalities a rare chance to develop and improve the quality of service delivery while encouraging community engagement and participation. Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter are the most well-known social media platforms that are familiar to the citizen. They are better positioned to integrate government websites to nurture community engagement and participation (Cho & Melisa, 2021).

Social media creates free-flowing two-way communication and active participation between the local government and citizens. Newly developed technology like the internet and portable smartphones provide many opportunities for municipalities to determine the overall population's geographic location and encourage democratic involvement (Woods, 2016).

The importance of opening up and encouraging two-way communication cannot be further emphasised. Social networks have created the opportunity for local government institutions through group chats and open-ended answer sessions. Various platforms have ensured that the public sees the information being shared and are granted the opportunity to engage and provide further input. The city administrator will coordinate conversations according to organisation guidelines and instructions to avoid offensive interactions and unfriendly posts (Manda & Ben Dhaou, 2019).

The rise of critical messages is imperative. Online communication throughout the study has been continuously encouraged and prioritised. Correctly conveyed, these key messages can alter any negative perception the public may have on municipality, operations, or even its officials. A poorly developed and crafted social media strategy has the potential to damage the municipality's overall image (Taylor, 2016).

If the strategy is well crafted, planned, and implemented, it can encourage community dwellers to participate more. If communities inputs are considered and presented positively, municipalities and officials could gain more support from the public. Building a good and long-lasting relationship with the citizen's places municipalities in better positions to respond to service delivery interruptions. Cummings (2017) asserts that community engagement gives South African local government a strong voice in IDP planning and implementation. It gives both government and citizens a better understanding of what is needed in the future.

2.4. THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Government agencies, stakeholders, and businesses have successfully embraced a paperless digital approach in the changing world characterized by Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). The use of 4IR technologies has amplified public services and ensured unrestricted interaction and engagement between government, stakeholders, business and community (Reddy & Govender, 2019).

Joshi and Islam (2018) defined social media as an application with essential communication functions that affect how individuals interact, connect, and communicate. It provides an easy way to access information. Social networks became widespread because they were more attractive to the entire community in terms of interaction with and amongst the citizens and provided active engagement

in well-established social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Twitter and others (Gao & Lee, 2017).

South African local governments use social media platforms in various ways such as to distribute information and engage the public and its effective when used correctly. There is no particular method/mode of using social media in local government. However, a major red tape and a no-go area is for personal use (Lanin & Hermanto, 2018). The South African government primarily uses social media platforms for emergency and disaster management response; reinforce the relationship with the community; improve access to public services; inform and empower the community.

2.4.1. Emergency and disaster response

Social media has also contributed to the diffusion of information on the institution's emergency and disaster management systems. While acknowledging the importance that can be played by social media, it is important to acknowledge that not everyone has admission to these media platforms. As such, emergencies and disasters need to make exceptions (Mahajan-Cusack, 2016).

The use of all media platforms should be extremely important. Traditional and digital media should be used parallel in reaching the public. This is more important in transmitting information related to emergencies to the public and collecting information about the epidemiology of disasters has been reported (Lachlan, Spence, Lin, Najarian, & Del Greco, 2016). A community can post, discuss, and update information timeously using social media. Some of the concerns conveyed online can be quickly addressed or attended to by public safety officials without generating problems or terror (Guillamón, Ríos, Gesuele, & Metallo, 2016).

Social media is valuable in reporting community issues such as crime in progress and other related community matters. Its discretion ensures that the public reports anonymously and privately without being identified. Woods (2016) supports that that social media tools present rare opportunities in broadcasting and responding to crises. South African citizens can now report emergencies by taking pictures and sending them to the disaster site for rapid response. In emergencies and disasters, South African government institutions rely on social media to gain crucial information and updates and utilise those platforms to avoid significant impact within those identified areas (Mahajan-Cusack, 2016).

Social media applications play a crucial role in the emergence and disaster response to ensure that South African citizens receive important information or updates about the anticipated emergency or any life-threatening situation such as floods, wildfires, and earthquakes. During the 2019 floods, the Durban South African government used social media to locate a badly affected community and seek help for the affected family with temporary accommodation, food, and other staff that could help. Radio stations set out the relief fund that allowed citizens to donate whatever they had that could assist. Local DJs also pledged to donate and raised funding from their supporters and stakeholders (Reddy & Govender, 2019).

The South African government uses various social media platforms to update the nation on the Covid-19 pandemic and the adjusted levels with their restrictions. Each day, they provide statistics of new recorded cases, death toll, and encourage the nation to vaccinate. eThekweni and Johannesburg municipalities designed an initiative that educates citizens about vaccines and strategies meant to curb the spread of the virus, open a vaccine stations, and provide counseling (Cho & Melisa, 2021).

2.4.2. Social media strengthens relations within/amongst the community

Social media applications are an appropriate platform for whistle-blowing. Societies can connect to each other, fight against crime and misconduct, and develop better plans and solutions to prevent crime. South African citizens can post or update the details of a stolen car on different platforms like car registration number, model, description, and the place where the car was last seen. Anyone who has information or has seen the car can contact the relevant person or report it to the police. Social media platforms make it easier for community members to come together and form an online community group to create an unqualified community development plan. Local governments can use those online community groups to actively engage with the community and form action plans for delivering service (Valle-Cruz, 2019).

2.4.3. Improve access to public services

The South African local government has embarked on various technological innovations to effectively improve service delivery. In this 21st century, governments worldwide are under pressure to successfully deliver public services to achieve their goals and targets. Municipalities

need to change and find ground-breaking ways in which their bureaucracies are related to the community (Adrees, Sheta, Omer, Stiawan, & Budiarto, 2019).

The speed of social media and other online tools is remarkable. It reduces the time for a citizen to travel to municipality premises and stand in long queues for consultation. It also reduces costs for both government and citizens; with just one click, the community can access some other services and reach the municipality at no time (Dayanand, 2019).

The social media platform can effectively pull information from the community to monitor government services and facilities and report when and where public infrastructure needs repair or maintenance. Municipalities can use several social media tools to deliver effective service distribution with their mobile phones (Mahajan-Cusack, 2016). Social media tools are used in conjunction with the traditional methods to create an additional channel for local government to improve service delivery and interact with citizens (Kayembe & Nel, 2019).

South African communities can use e-government services as a self-help mechanism to minimise time waiting for municipality's personnel to allocate staff to investigate a particular problem. They can utilise those identified social networks to upload pictures and track relevant information. City administrators can utilise the information provided on e-government services to address glitches and deliver immediate progress reports. Access to municipality information, notices, updates, and meetings can have a positive and lasting impact through social network tools. Visuals such as live recorded videos allow citizens to watch and hear discussions they did not join (Hu, Yan, Pan, Chohan, & Liu, 2019).

2.4.4. Informing and empower the community

The South African government is mandated to be transparent in every duty and routine and to apply *Bantu Pele* Principles (people come first). *Batho Pele* Principles encourage the government to be transparent by informing and disclosing how the municipality functions, its budget allocation, contracting systems, and tenders bidding process. Social media presents opportunities for communities in newsfeeds, citizen updates, and progress. The benefit of present social media tools is that there is no need for local governments to reinvent what is already obtainable and ready to use (Mahajan-Cusack, 2016).

South African government is obligated by law to consult and engage with its citizens in their daily duties. Social media applications complement the existing traditional system such as face-to-face participation and consultation. eThekweni, Cape Town, and City of Johannesburg municipalities have successfully implemented the transparency strategy to invite citizens to participate in their budget adoption, drafting rates, tariffs, and bylaws (Reddy, 2016). Their citizens read comments and participate in the live streaming meetings held on various social media platforms, and their comments or input are all considered by the municipality administrator.

South Africa government has already established its presence on various social media platforms. eThekweni municipality is the only metropolitan municipality in KZN with the highest social media followers compared to other metropolitans. There is positive feedback about citizens who have access to the internet and mobile devices (Cho & Melisa, 2021).

The 2021 South Africa report indicates that the South African government usually posts and updates service delivery information such as power outages, economic recovery programmers, and announcements (Dominic & Gisip, 2021). Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal municipalities post information pertaining to COVID19 updates such as daily statistical updates, vaccination progress, opening the stations to vaccinate, waste removal backlogs, warnings on illegal connections, mayoral communities, debt relief programmers, and invitations to participate in virtual council meetings (Andersson, Hallin, & Ivory, 2021).

2.4.5. Social media as a medium of Communication

Social media is the most commonly used platform by South African local governments to communicate with citizens. Social media has successfully changed how South African local governments interact with the community and stakeholders (Dwivedi, Kelly, Janssen, Rana, Slade, & Clement, 2018). At first, local government websites or internet sites were known for one-way communication processes that disseminated information only. Technological developments create a two-way flow of information using internet features such as online services, electronic forms and emails. Technology innovation has made it easy for a community to access services without traveling to municipality offices (Cummings, 2017).

South African governments are increasing the usage of social media platforms while communities become more digitally-orientated citizens. Various scholars (Michaelidou, Siamagka, &

Christodoulides, 2011; Sharma, Metri, Dwivedi, & Rana, 2021) state that social media is fast becoming a measuring platform for communication that allows the government to be more reachable and transparent. Social media has altered the way many communities communicate with each other and participate in government matters. South African citizens can now communicate with government officials using various means of communication such as textual conversation, video, pictures, and other forms of communication provided by local government. One of the reasons South African local government adopts social media is to encourage interaction and collaboration between government and citizens while challenging negative perceptions and building trust (Rosario, Martin, & Caba-Perez, 2018).

Social media sites are the most visited site across the world. Acceptance of social media tools by local governments is the best way of meeting the citizens in a space where they are familiar with and able to navigate. The importance of social media in public engagement and participation has been essential due to Covid-19 pandemic. The government uses more social media platforms to provide information and online working.

South African local governments generally use internet websites to disseminate information. However, they struggle to create a dialogue communication with the citizen. It also uses social media platforms to complement the existing engagement model, not changing them but reinforcing them (Feeney & Porumbescu, 2021).

Social media tools can help South African local governments to improve transparency and accountability while increasing trust and interaction. It provides governments with an opportunity to minimise information asymmetry between municipalities and citizens by providing information-sharing platforms (Dominic & Gisip, 2021). Transparency and accountability have become at the forefront of South African government issues in fighting corruption and restoring government dignity, confidence, and trust in its citizens. In a bid to fight and curb corruption and build trust, the South African government has taken a stance to public post information related to its operation such as budgets, spending, and other activities for the community to monitor government spending.

Social media can reach wider communities at once because of the built-in social media technology that enables recommendations, suggestions, and referrals to increase the chances of the information getting a wider audience. When citizens do not subscribe or follow the social media page, but their friends follow the page, they can share the post or comment, and it will

automatically be visible to other friends. Social media allows a post to be reached through friends and group members within the network (Ramodibe, 2014).

Social media platforms have presented a significant change in communication with organisations, governments, businesses, and communities. Dayanand (2019) asserts that government uses social media for social interaction, communication, collaboration, and improving services. Social media allow communities to express opinions regarding service delivery and provide feedback when they do not meet their expectations.

The management and governance of local government makes it crucial to use social media platforms strategically and digitalisation to communicate with citizens and engage them in the decision-making process. Different levels of government collaboration must be created to ensure that the 4IR is implemented through collaborative efforts in all aspects of government rather than a single department (Reddy & Govender, 2019).

2.5. CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

The adoption of social media by the South African government presents challenges such as skills challenges, lack of necessary infrastructure, lack of equality in public access to the internet and issues concerning privacy and security.

- **Skills challenges**

The skills challenges such as mismatches and skills redundancy have been cited as hindering South African government transformation toward innovative societies (Manda & Ben Dhaou, 2019). The adoption of social media by the South African government is often slow and centered around urban metros, while not available in rural areas.

The isolation of the rural regions is due to a lack of readiness and necessary tools to implement social media initiatives. Unfortunately, South Africa has a shortage of ICT skills and training, and yet these skills are needed to implement social media applications to deliver public services (Dominic & Gisip, 2021). The scarcity of ICT skills resulted from government staff members being underqualified and unable to cope with the ICT challenges. The South African government cannot provide the skills, training, and infrastructure required to carry out these initiatives. The

insufficient ICT skills and underqualified South African officials result from the gap between salaries paid within the private sector (Mawela, Ochara, & Twinomurinzi, 2017).

South African government has developed a strategic plan to build skills capacity over time (Feeney & Porumbescu, 2021). The bursary program for scarce skills and internship programs could allow students to obtain qualifications in scarce skills and work experiences with the options to employ or adopt students in the future (Manda & Ben Dhaou, 2019).

- **Infrastructure challenges**

South Africa is confronted with technological and infrastructural challenges (Mdlalose, 2016). The South African government has identified challenges surrounding introducing and adopting new technology innovations, such as expanding networks and smart devices. Insufficient infrastructure is one of the critical factors likely to challenge the South African government in implementing broadband. South Africa was found by the study of Reddy and Govender (2019) to have poor broadband penetration. It hinders the adoption of a smart society driven by digital connectivity skills, knowledge, and innovative technology (Olivier & Murenzi, 2017).

- **Lack of equality in public access to the internet**

The lack of internet access negatively impacts the usability of social media and e-government, especially in rural areas when the network is a significant problem. Senior South African citizens do not know how to read and write. They rely on an assistant or travel to customer services centers for assistance. The disadvantage of social media adoption it excludes communities and businesses that do not have access to technology (Joseph, 2015).

- **Privacy and Security**

Privacy and security remains an issue in the South African government even though their website has higher security. However, there is still concern over the state of privacy and security, the fear of spam, scammer when providing personal details, and government retention of transaction or interaction history. Despite the efforts the South African government to ensure the safety of personal data on their website, there is still room for attackers and hackers. The citizen's personal data can be easily exposed. The adoption of social media by the South African government needs

a new development mechanism of security and protection features to be a more flexible collaboration value network and smart creation system (Manda & Ben Dhaou, 2019).

2.6. CONCLUSION

Social media has been regarded as an essential platform for improving communication, public services, and engagement with the community due to its ability to reach a larger audience while nurturing the relationship between citizens and government. Local governments have to use social media to their advantage in emergency and disaster response to issued warning and provide early updates and response plan. Social media has proven its ability in strengthening the relation amongst the community, inform and empower community. However, social media has its challenges especially in rural areas the access to internet is still a major challenge and the lack of infrastructure to successfully implement social media. The next chapter outlines and discusses the research methodology for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter reviewed the available discourses on social media. The current chapter outline the research methodology followed in the study. This study was undertaken to determine customer service agents' perceptions within the eThekweni municipality's electricity cluster of the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery and community engagement. This chapter details the research design that was followed; the research approach that guided the study; the sampling procedures; data collection and analysis strategies and ethical aspects.

3.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In recent years, local government has fallen behind in providing public services and improving existing infrastructure (Reddy & Govender, 2019). This is because of public protest. One significant concern that holds the local government back is a lack of public service delivery and an effective way to communicate with the community. The grievances submitted by the striking community were similar, ranging from the shortages of water, electricity supply, road maintenance, access to information, and vibrant communication (Mdlalose, 2016). All the above challenges reflect that the community is not engaged in the integrated development plans process. The municipality is not adopting a strategy to mobilize citizens to engage in the community development process. To achieve good governance and efficiency quality in public services delivery, public participation and community engagement become necessary for eThekweni municipality and cannot be ignored (Fashoro & Barnard, 2021).

The community's higher number of violent protests clearly shows poor communication and understanding between the citizen and its government. In contrast, the community depends on government services for their basic needs. When the communities are adequately consulted and engaged in the municipality projects and a proposal for new services development, they will be unlikely to protest for poor service delivery or delay regardless of their socioeconomic status. This

will happen because the community keeps informed and engages in an integrated development plan (Mdlalose, 2016).

3.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study objectives are:

- To determine the perceptions of customer services agents within the electricity cluster of the eThekweni municipality on the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery.
- To determine the perceptions of customer service agents within the electricity cluster of the eThekweni municipality on the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement
- To formulate creative strategies that the municipality can adopt to use social media platforms to improve service delivery and enhance community engagement.

3.4. RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is the outline plan for the study that provides a guideline for the entire project (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2016). There are four types of research design: exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, and experimental research design. Exploratory research aims to explore the relatively unknown area to achieve new insight into the phenomenon (Mohajan, 2018). An exploratory study is appropriate when more information is required to address the research problem, and few or no studies are conducted early to reference. It aims to get insight into a problem and develop understanding rather than collecting accurate data. A descriptive study is the type of study that uses more of a statistical method to identify patterns and trends. It is more appropriate when the researcher wants to study the current situation to answer who, where, what, and where (Mohajan, 2018). Explanatory research design explores a new universe that has never been researched before. Experimental research design is a tool used to test the causal relationship in observation under a controlled situation (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2016).

The study adopted both an exploratory and descriptive research design that concentrates on people's behavior and subject matter. It helps to uncover new ideas and insights into a problem and explore unknown areas.

3.5. RESEARCH APPROACH

Three different research approaches can gather empirical data in the study: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method. The study's aim and objective and the resources the researcher has determine the research approach utilised in the study. However, the research can use the combination of both approaches in a single study called mixed methodology (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016).

3.5.1. Qualitative research approach

The qualitative research approach is primarily steeped in the exploratory research design and is mainly used to understand the underlying reasons, experiences, opinions, and motivations of people or subjects in relation to specific issues (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016). It focuses more on exploring the research problem and understanding the reasoning and inspiration behind the problem. The qualitative method provides an in-depth insight into the research problem and generates new ideas for study using non-numerical data such as video, text, and audio. The qualitative method is required when the researcher wants to examine the respondent's perception, motivation, and attitude and explore why and how the phenomenon occurs (Schabenberger & Gotway, 2017).

The qualitative method is characterised by three fundamental techniques in the data collection process: in-depth interviews, project techniques, and focus groups. In-depth interviews is when the researcher asks questions and probes for in-depth responses in an unstructured manner. In the project technique, the researcher allows participants to project their subjective opinions and beliefs on other people. Focus group interviews highly depend on researcher objectives discussion or moderations where introduce a topic or problem to a group of participants and guide the conversation in an unstructured and natural way (Schabenberger & Gotway, 2017).

3.5.2. Mixed Methodology

The mixed methodology is the practice of collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data in a single project. The purpose of mixed-method is to understand the research problem using both methods so as to better to answer the research question and objectives. The researcher uses mixed methods to understand the research problem better when a single approach is not enough to address a particular problem or answer the research question and objective. The mixed-method can be a critical technique for assessing the complex interventions depending on the resource available for the study and the research question the researcher wants to address (Akhtar, 2016). The mixed-method approach could neutralise the weaknesses of a single approach when used in isolation.

3.5.3. Quantitative Research approach

The quantitative method collects and analyses statistical, mathematical, and numeral data using questionnaires, polls, and survey methods. It focuses on gathering numerical data and generalising the finding to a large population. It seeks to understand the relationship between independent and dependent variables (Akhtar, 2016).

The quantitative method is characterised by descriptive, correlation, and causal experimental research. The descriptive study uses more statistical methods to identify patterns and trends in a problem statement. Descriptive analysis is required when the knowledge of the problem is unclear. A correlation study seeks to establish the relationship between the variables and detect trends and patterns in a data set. Experiment researchers study the cause and the effect on the relationship between the variables. The research controls the independent variable to measure the impact of dependent variables (Akhtar, 2016).

Given the nature of the issue being investigated, the study adopted a quantitative approach. This enabled the researcher to use statistical, numerical and computational instruments to derive results. The quantitative method provides distinct advantages in the research process. The obtained result can be generalises to the entire population. Quantitative data analysis data using Statistical Software such as SPSS is less time-consuming (Krosnick, 2018).

The quantitative study was suitable for the study as it deals with *inter alia*, participants' thoughts of the community involvement and engagement strategy and the delivery of public services concerning eThekweni municipality.

3.6. STUDY SITE

The study was conducted in the eThekweni Municipality electricity cluster in KwaZulu-Natal in Durban. eThekweni municipality is a metropolitan municipality covering a larger geographical area of approximately 2556 square kilometers. The population was a total of approximately 60 staff who work at Electricity cluster customer services counters.

3.7. TARGET POPULATION

Meyers, Gamst, and Guarino (2016) define a population as a group of people that can be an object of observation. The population chosen for this study is the customer services department at the eThekweni municipality electricity division that have total of 60 employees. The target population comprises six branches (Durban central, KwaMashu Bester, Phoenix, Pinetown, Isipingo, and Umhlanga branches).

3.8. SAMPLE

Sampling is the technique used to select the sample from the population (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016). There is a total of 60 members of staff working at eThekweni municipality in the electricity cluster as customer services agents. According to the (Sekaran, 2013) population-to-sample size table, the appropriate sample for this population is 52 elements.

3.8.1. Sampling Method

Two sampling techniques types, namely: probability and non-probability sampling techniques are mainly used by researcher (Tulik, Kabat, Baran, Kycia, & Tabor, 2019).

- **Probability sampling method**

In the probability sampling method, each unit of the population can be nominated to participate in the study (Tulik, Kabat, Baran, Kycia, & Tabor, 2019). The sample is randomly selected to

participate in the study in probability sampling (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016). Each population element has a positive chance of being selected in the study as the sample unit. Probability sampling is more appropriate when a large sample is required in the study, and it is a complex method that is cost-effective and time-consuming.

There are four different approaches to probability sampling methods: simple random, stratified, cluster and systematic method. In simple random sampling, each element of the target population has an unknown chance to be included in the study. In cluster sampling the researcher clusters the population based on their unique characteristics. Stratified sampling is the process of dividing the population into a small-sub group base on the same characteristics and using a simple random sample on each stratum. Systemic sampling is the procedure or structure approach to nominate a sample from a population (Schabenberger & Gotway, 2017).

- **Non-probability sampling method**

Non- probability sampling approach is used to select participation based on non-random criteria (Tulik, Kabat, Baran, Kycia, & Tabor, 2019). In this method, not every member of the population participates in the study. A non-probability method is inexpensive, less time-consuming, and more convenient than other methods to put into practice (Schabenberger & Gotway, 2017). It is more appropriate when the researcher wants to collect data related to their experience, opinions, and attitudes.

The non-probability sampling method is characterised by convenience, judgment, snowball, and quota sampling. In convenient sampling, a researcher selects readily accessible and available participants for the study. Judgment sampling involves selecting participants based on researcher existing experience and knowledge. The researcher uses judgment to select participants based on the requirements of the specific characteristics of the study. The snowball method entails selecting participants base on referrals. Quota sampling is the combination of judgment and convenience sampling methods. The researcher uses data that is available to classify the population according to relevant factors (Tulik, Kabat, Baran, Kycia, & Tabor, 2019).

This study adopts an empirical research approach and non-probability sampling approach. Non-probability sampling technique is customarily adopted when the population does not have equal chance to be nominated for the study and when the cost and time matters. It allows the researcher

to choose participants based on their unique, knowledge and characteristics. Convenience sampling was used to select participants in the eThekweni municipality electricity cluster at the customer services division. The researcher used a convenience sample because it is quick and easy to access the sample and can yield a positive result that can be generalised to a broader population.

3.8.2. Sample size

The sample size defines the total number of participants the researcher chooses from the population to participate in the project (Voleti, 2019). According to the eThekweni Municipality's employment records, 60 members of staff work as customer service agents in the six branches (Pinetown, Phoenix, KwaMashu-Bester, Umhlanga, Isipingo, Durban) of the eThekweni Municipality. The population for this study encompasses all 60 customer service agents. Regarding the population-to-sample-size table, the appropriate sample for this population is 52 elements (Zozus, 2017). The researcher visited each of the six branches to invite customer service agents to participate in this study.

3.9. DATA COLLECTION

3.9.1. Sources of Data

Primary data and secondary data are two types of data collection methods. Primary data is first-hand information that has not been previously collected (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016). It is a data that never existed and is collected to solve a particular problem. Primary data is more important when the researcher wants to address a problem involving people's characteristics, knowledge, motives, opinions, attitude, and behaviors (Krosnick, 2018). Primary data provides many benefits as it produces new data. It helps a researcher to discover new or additional information during the collection process. Primary data guarantees that the gathered data is relevant and up-to-date to enable accurate trends to be revealed (Akhtar, 2016).

Secondary data is the data that already exists and has been collected for other purposes (Akhtar, 2016). Secondary data help researchers determine whether secondary data already exist for similar studies on how to solve a similar problem. The advantage of secondary data is that it is collected more easily than primary data and improves the primary data collection process. Secondary data

is more accurate than primary data hence the data from the previous research can be obtained accurately from secondary sources.

3.9.2. Questionnaire

A questionnaire is an instrument used to collect primary data from participants that feature a series or set of questions (Krosnick, 2018). A questionnaire has either open or close ended questions or a combination of both, depending on the nature and objective of the study. Open-ended questions enable participants to answer questions in their own words while close-ended questions give the respondent a series of predetermined responses. A questionnaire is the most used method and is more effective because it is fast, inexpensive and efficient in collecting extensive data. It can be used to collect data related to participant behavior, preferences, opinion and attitude. It allows the researcher to meet participants face to face (Oosterveld, Vorst, & Smits, 2019).

The researcher used a questionnaire as the instrument to collect primary data. Closed-ended questions were formulated to collect survey data. The close-ended question is usually answered in a straightforward word which the participant can choose responses from. Close-ended questions are more appropriate for survey methods as they generate a higher response rate. Participants do not have to spend much time. Close-ended questions are much easier to analyse using the statistical methods.

The use questionnaire had a set of questions divided into sections: Section A and Section B. Section A consisted of nominal scale questions that focused on collecting participants' biographic information. Section B comprised of interval scale questions which participants had to agree to or disagreed with using a level measurement. The interval scale that was used in section B of the questionnaire was the 1-5 Point Likert scale, which gives respondents a choice to select options from strongly disagreeing with the statement on the questionnaire to strongly agreeing with the statement. The statements pertaining the first key dimension of the study, the effectiveness of social media platform on services delivery were from B1 – B15 in Section B of the questionnaire (Appendix 4). Statements B16 – B30 of Section B of the questionnaire related to for second key dimension of the study which is the effectiveness of social media platform on community engagement (Appendix 4).

The researcher administered the questionnaire manually after obtaining ethical clearance. The researcher visited the eThekweni Municipality electricity cluster customer services in all regions, namely: Durban Central, Pinetown, Phoenix, Isipingo, uMhlanga and Kwamashu Bester to hand over the questionnaire and informed consent forms on the appointment dates agreed with the customer services manager after the briefing meeting with the customer service manager and branch administrators.

3.10. DATA QUALITY CONTROL

Data quality control is defined as the essential procedure and effort that the researcher put in place to ensure the accuracy, completeness, consistency, and quality of data being gathered using a set of methodologies (Akhtar, 2016). Data quality control is a critical aspect of research; It helps control data usage for an application or process to ensure the reliability and sustainability of data collected. Data quality control is performed before and after the data quality assurance process. It helps a researcher evaluate the accuracy, consistency, reliability and validity of data (Mohajan, 2018). This study paid more attention to reliability and validity to regulate quality data as it aligned with quantitative methods.

3.10.1. Validity and Factor Analysis

Zozus (2017) describes data validity as the researcher's process to ensure that the data collected is valid and accurate. Validity measures the instrument used to accurately measure what is supposed to measure. To collect authentic and valuable results, the tool used to collect data must be valid and measure what is claimed to measure. The validity check was done on the input data to ensure data meets the software's quality standards and proper function requirements.

Factor analysis is the process of putting many variables together to make it easy to work with research data (Queirós, Faria, & Almeida, 2017). Factor analysis can be utilised to test validity (dimension reduction) to reduce data into super variables. Factor analysis is the family of statistical methods identifying latent factors during observable variables. Factor analysis provides advantages in identifying the hidden dimension or limitations that are not apparent from the direct analysis. It has the flexibility in naming and using the dimension and it is usually not expensive to give an accurate result (Bandalos & Finney, 2018). Researchers perform factor analysis to

understand the underlying factor that influences the variance among variables. The disadvantage is that it depends on the research's ability to develop a complete, accurate set of attributes. SPSS software has a factor analysis function that the researcher uses to analyse data and test validity.

3.10.2. Reliability and Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha

Edmonds and Kennedy (2016) define reliability as the extent to which the consistency of set measurements produces the same result over a period. It is the ability of the research instrument to consistently achieve the same result using the same instrument under the same circumstances (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016).

The quantitative study has three characteristics of reliability. Each type can be measured by comparing different sets of outcomes achieved by the same instrument: Test-retest, inter-rater and parallel reliability (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016). Test-retest reliability is the process of measuring the reliability of findings when the same test is conducted to the same population in different time over certain period. Test-retest reliability is used to assess how well the instrument is resisting over periods. To achieve this the researcher conducts the same test on the same sample at different times.

Inter-rater reliability measures the degree of settlement between researchers assessing the same sample using a similar instrument. The third characteristic parallel reliability it measures the correlation between the equivalent version of the test. It measures the reliability achieved by the researcher using different versions of the instrument to the same sample at different times. A pre-test of the questionnaire instrument was conducted to a similar group of representatives but with different participants to check and improve reliability (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016).

Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha is the process of measuring internal consistency on how the units in a set will closely correlate to one another (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016). Cronbach's Alpha is the convenient test to estimate the composite score's internal consistency or reliability. It provides an easier way to measure whether the score is reliable or not. It is used to assume that similar results were achieved under the same condition (Vaske, Beaman, & Sponarski, 2017). Cronbach's Alpha range between zero to 1 but can get a negative number. A negative number shows that something is wrong with data. When Cronbach's Alpha is above 70, it is regarded as good, and above 90, it is considered above the best. There are limitations in Cronbach's Alpha. Below-average number

of items are associated with the lower reliability, The sample size can be better or negatively influence the result (Hyeonah Park, 2021).

3.10.3. Pilot Testing

Voleti (2019) describes pilot testing as the process used by researchers to determine whether the research instrument can collect required data by testing it on a small sample. Five eThekweni municipality employees who work at electricity cluster customer service were selected to pilot the questionnaire. Pilot testing helped the researcher to see whether the instrument collected the required data appropriately (Basias & Pollalis, 2018).

After piloting, it was found that the questionnaire was easy to understand. The majority of respondents showed that they understood the questions; However, some changes were made to the questionnaire to be more appealing and understandable and to ensure that it was unambiguous and could collect required data.

3.11. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is described as a systematic approach of applying a statistical and logical tool to illustrate, describe and evaluate (Akhtar, 2016).

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyses the data. SPSS was used in data analysis to minimise any possible conjecture and validate the collected data's accuracy.

3.11.1. Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics is defined as the essential feature of data in the study that it describes the sample through graphs, tables, and calculations (Akhtar, 2016). The descriptive statistics method can be used to analyse data in different ways. It measures the significance, describes data, and indicates the causal relationship between the data. Descriptive statistics help a researcher describe, present, and interpret data in a way that is easy to understand using charts, tables, and graphs.

- **Frequencies and percentages**

Frequency is the extent to which the number of the time value of a certain data occurs (Oosterveld, Vorst, & Smits, 2019). It can be represented as a percentage of variables or sub-categorise, and its

uses charts and graphs to illustrate frequency and percentage. A percentage is commonly used when the researcher wants to show the importance of a figure than original data, and it is an easy way to establish the relationship between the variables. The frequency data for nominal variables such as gender and race can be separated according to female or male (Eyisi, 2016).

- **Measures of Central tendency**

The measure of central tendency attempts to describe the data set by identifying the middle position within the data set. Measures of central tendency reflect data series to a single figure or average. Central tendency is measured in mean, mode and media under various circumstances, with some measures of a central tendency more preferable to use than others (Akhtar, 2016).

Mode is the most occurring value in the data of series. In a presentation of distribution data, the highest point in the graph is always mode. The advantage of mode is that it can be found in both non-numerical and numerical data. The limitation is that some distribution mode does not reflect the central of distribution very well. The median is the middle value in the center of distribution when the value is arranged from the lowest to the highest value. Median value is determined by the arrangement of values from ascending or descending orders. Mean is the sum of all observed values divided by the number of values in the data set (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2016).

- **Measure of Dispersion**

The measure of dispersion indicates the spread of data around the central tendency. The specific data series characteristics are obtained by calculating both dispersion and central tendency. The variance, coefficient of variation, and standard deviation are measures that aim to depict dispersion. Variance and standard deviation establish the deviation around the average of observation. A measure of dispersion is the difference between the lowest and highest value in the dispersion. The coefficient of variation is utilised to compare two or more data series. It serves as the indication of the size of the deviation from the mean (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016).

3.11.2 Inferential statistics

The inferential statistic is defined as the way of making inferences about the population based on samples (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016). Inferential statistics is commonly used when the researcher wants to draw a conclusion from the sample and generalise it to a larger population. Inferential

statistics help a researcher in a situation where it is impossible to measure the whole population. The inferential statistic is the most commonly used method to analyse data together with descriptive statistics (Bandalos & Finney, 2018). The study adopted inferential statistics because of its ability to generalise the finding to a broader population and not just to determine what can happen but what tends to happen in the programs. It also helps a researcher to evaluate the strength of the causal relationship between variables (Voleti, 2019).

- **Pearson Correlation**

The Pearson correlation determines the strength of the importance bivariate relationship between two intervals. It measures the change of one variable associated with the change of another variable (Hyeonah Park, 2021). The study adopted a Chi-square correlation analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of social media tools in service delivery and community engagement (Grieshaber, 2020).

- **Kruskal-Wallis Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)**

ANOVA is a collection of statistical tools used to analyse whether there is a difference between variables (Rogers & Revesz, 2020). One-way ANOVA is considered is when the researcher compares the mean of one dependent and one independent variable. Two-way ANOVA test is the continuation of one-way ANOVA when the researcher wants to test the effect of two independent variables and a continuous variable. ANOVA was adopted to determine the difference between biographical data such as age, race, educational, experience, and the key dimension of the study (Bärnighausen, Tugwell, Röttingen, Shemilt, Rockers, Geldsetzer, Lavis, Grimshaw, Daniels, & Brown, 2017).

- **Mann-Whitney U-test**

Mann-Whitney U-Test is used to determine whether dependent and independent variables are likely to originate from the same underlying population (Karadimitriou, Marshall, & Knox, 2018). It puts all variables in a rank rather than raw values and allows data to be analysed and run in non-normally distributed data. Mann-Whitney U test is used when the researcher wants to test whether there is any difference between an ordinal variable of two binary groups. It allows a researcher to conclude based on data depending on the assumption made about data distribution. Mann-Whitney U test uses a non-parameters test to evaluate whether there is any relationship between ordinal and

nominal variables. It ranks all the dependent variables from the lowest value to the highest value and puts together ranks for each group (Oti, Olusola, & Esemokumo).

3.12. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

This section will probe in and deliver a summary of ethical deliberations. The ethical clearance was applied for and approved by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Committee. The permission (Gatekeeper Letter) to conduct the study was sought from eThekweni Municipality Head of Department and from regional manager of electricity cluster customer services centers. The objectives of the study were communicated to the head of department and, regional manager and participants. The study was conducted for academic purposes only and it was purely voluntary and no incentives were awarded. Participants were given more clarity about what is the study about and were assured and guaranteed the anonymity and confidentiality, they were free to withdraw any time without any incurring consequences.

3.13. CONCLUSION

The chapter presented the research methodology that was used in the study. The researcher discussed the instrument that was used to conduct the research. It also outlined the research strategy, design, population, sampling, ethical process, and limitations. It further expanded the tools that were utilised to collect primary data. The next chapter will deliver the presentation and discussions of the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports the results of the study. The study made use of both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse data. Narrative, tabular, and graphical formats are used to present the data. The data from the sample was first entered into Microsoft Excel 2016 and then processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 27. Pie charts and tables are used to present the data. The following is how the data is presented in relation to the research objectives and related research questions discussed in this chapter:

1. To determine the perceptions of customer services agents within the electricity cluster of the eThekweni Municipality on the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery.
2. To determine the perceptions of customer service agents within the electricity cluster of the eThekweni Municipality on the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement.
3. To formulate creative strategies that the municipality can adopt for the use of social media platforms to improve service delivery and enhance community engagement.

4.2. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Data from the questionnaires were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

4.2.1. Descriptive statistics

4.2.1.1. Biographical details of respondents

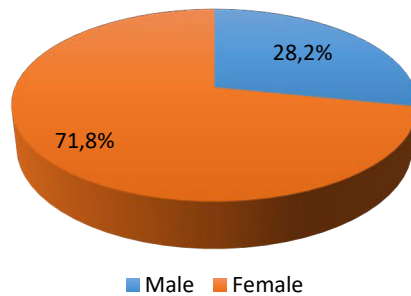
In this section, percentages and frequencies are used to outline the biographical variables from 39 participants as shown in Table 1. The table shows gender, age, race, educational level, employment status and number of years employed.

Table 4.1.**Frequency distribution of biographical variables**

| | | <i>n</i> | % |
|---------------------------------|---------------|----------|-------|
| Gender | Male | 11 | 28,2% |
| | Female | 28 | 71,8% |
| | Total | 39 | 100% |
| Age | 22-25 | 4 | 10,3% |
| | 26-29 | 14 | 35,9% |
| | 30-33 | 13 | 33,3% |
| | 34-37 | 5 | 12,8% |
| | 38 and over | 3 | 7,7% |
| | Total | 39 | 100% |
| Race | Black | 30 | 76,9% |
| | Coloured | 4 | 10,3% |
| | Indian | 4 | 10,3% |
| | White | 1 | 2,6% |
| | Total | 39 | 100% |
| Employment status | Permanent | 28 | 71,8% |
| | Contract | 11 | 28,2% |
| | Total | 39 | 100% |
| Number of years employed | 0 - 5 years | 26 | 66,7% |
| | 6 - 10 years | 9 | 23,1% |
| | 11 - 15 years | 2 | 5,1% |
| | 16 and over | 2 | 5,1% |
| | Total | 39 | 100% |

The gender proportions of the 39 respondents in this study are depicted in Figure 1 4.1.

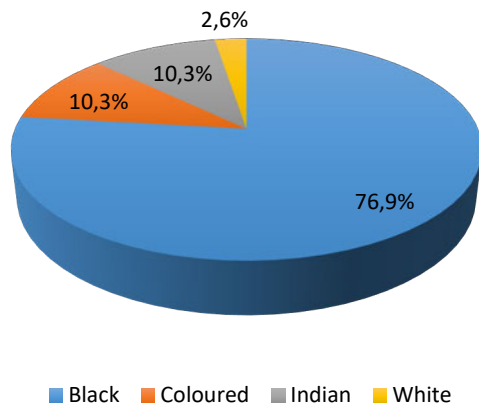
Figure 4.1.
Composition of Sample: Gender



As illustrated in Figure 4.1, most respondents were females (71.8%), whereas 28.2% were male.

Figure 4.2 provides a graphical depiction of the percentages of respondents from the various race groups of the study.

Figure 4.2.
Composition of Sample: Race



As seen in Figure 4.2, the study sample included respondents from four race groups. Black respondents constituted the highest proportion of the respondents (76.9%). The second highest group of respondents comprised of Coloured and Indians (10.3%), respectively. White respondents had the lowest percentage of respondents (2.6%).

Figure 4.3 illustrates the percentages of respondents by age categories in a graphical representation.

Figure 4.3.

Composition of Sample: Age

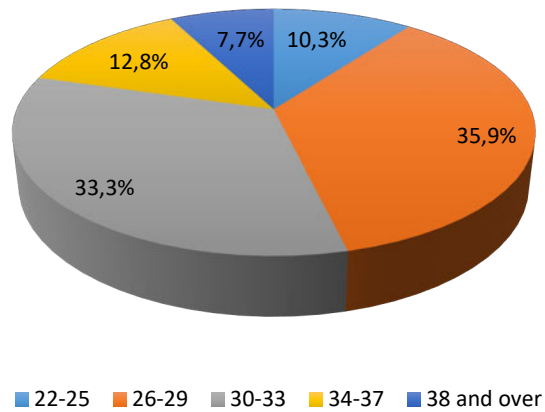
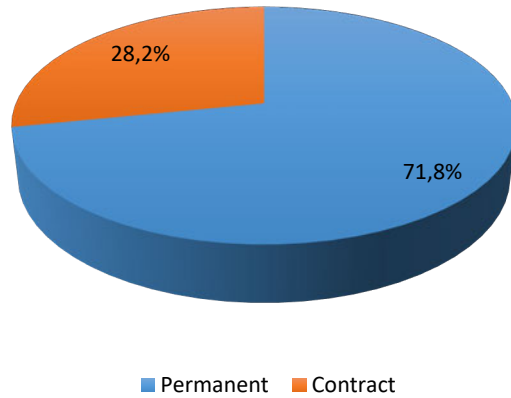


Figure 4.3 illustrates that the highest proportions of respondents were from the 26-29 years (35.9%) age category, followed by the 30-33 years (33.3%), 34-37 years (12.8%) and 22-25 years (10.3%) age categories. The 38 and above age category only represented 7.7% of the respondents.

A graphical representation of the study programme is illustrated in Figure 4.4.

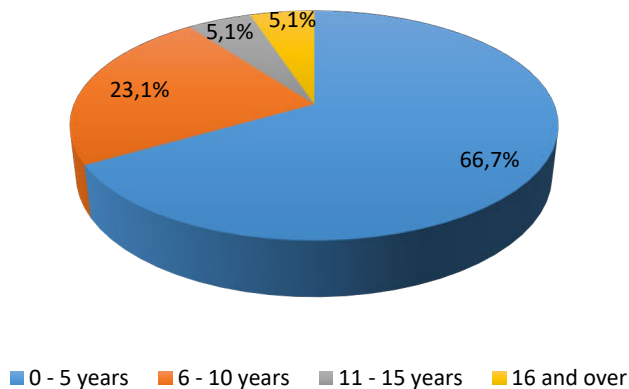
Figure 4.4.
Composition of Sample: Employment status



As seen in Figure 4, the results indicate that most (71.8%) of the respondents are employed on a permanent contract, whereas 28.2% of the respondents are employed on a contractual basis.

Figure 4.5. Depicts a graphical illustration of the respondents' years of employment.

Figure 4.5.
Composition of Sample: Number of years employed



According to Figure 4.5, most respondents (66.7%) have been employed in the company for between 0-5 years. This is followed by respondents that have been employed for the 6-10 years

(23.1%). The results further indicate that respondents employed for the past 11-15 years and 16 and over constituted 5.1%, respectively.

4.2.1.2. Importance that respondents attach to the key dimensions of the study

The findings key dimensions are presented using descriptive statistics. On a 1–5-point scale, respondents were asked to outline their perceptions of the study's key dimensions. The greater the mean score, the better the dimension is viewed (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2.

Descriptive Statistics: Key dimensions of the study

| Key Dimensions of the Study | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery | 1,000 | 5,000 | 4,331 | 0,388 |
| Effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement | 1,000 | 5,000 | 4,266 | 0,346 |

Table 4.2 indicates that respondents attach varying degrees of importance to the key dimensions of the study which, in descending level of mean score values are:

- ❖ Effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery (Mean = 4,331)
- ❖ Effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement (Mean = 4,266)

Respondents attached the greatest level of importance to the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery (Mean = 4,331) and the least level of importance to the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement (Mean = 4,266). Therefore, in order to assess as to how respondents perceived each of these dimensions, frequency analyses were conducted. This included the assessment of the frequency distribution of the scale items to determine whether or not the data was normally distributed (Appendix 5).

In terms of perceptions of the respondents on the dimension pertaining to the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery, all of the respondents affirmed that social media allowed citizens to apply for services and pay online and they believed that citizens found it easier and more convenient to transact online. In addition, the majority of respondents (97.4 %) attested that social media allowed citizens to access crucial public services online. Similar to these results, 97.4% of the respondents believed that using social media had enhanced customer satisfaction through public service delivery by the municipality. Furthermore, the results of this study revealed that 94.9% of respondents felt that public services were more accessible through the use of social media, whereas 92.4% of the respondents felt that using social media platforms had enabled the municipality to improve its service efficiency. Moreover, 92.3% of respondents were of the opinion that with the usage of social media, the municipality was now better able to process queries, issues and complaints of citizens. They also believed that social media allowed the municipality to create innovativeness and improve service delivery.

Furthermore, most (89.8%) of the respondents believed that the use of social media saved time in public service delivery, while 89.7% of respondents were of the opinion that the use of social media had enhanced the quality of service delivery by the municipality. The results of this study also reveal that 84.7% of respondents attested that the use of social media allowed the municipality to improve reliability in terms of service delivery. The results further show that 79.5% of the respondents were of the opinion that the use of social media was a cost-efficient way of public service delivery, whilst 76.9 % of respondents attested that social media allowed citizens to build confidence in the municipality in terms of service delivery.

In terms of the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement, 97.5% of the respondents affirmed that social media allowed the municipality to improve service delivery by providing timeous feedback to citizens, whilst, 94.9% of respondents admitted that social media was an effective means of sharing ideas between the municipality and its citizens. The results of this study further show that 94.8% of the respondents believed that social media was highly effective in keeping citizens informed about pertinent municipality matters. The results of the study also reveal that 92.3% of respondents, respectively, attested that social media had made it easier and more convenient for citizens to lodge complaints and seek answers to queries, felt that social media had improved communication between citizens and the municipality and felt that the use of social media allowed for better community outreach and meaningful community

engagement. In addition, the results reveal that 89.8% of respondents, respectively, believed that social media facilitated better collaboration between citizens and the municipality. Furthermore, 89.7% of the respondents affirmed that the use of social media enabled citizens to provide valuable feedback to the municipality regarding pertinent issues or concerns. Similar to these results, 89.7% of respondents attested that social media created an ideal platform for communities to share suggestions and effectively build community commitment. Furthermore, the results indicate that 87.2% of the respondents believed that social media allowed the municipality to respond faster and easier to emergencies and disasters. In addition, 87.2% of the respondents confirmed that social media allowed the municipality to respond quickly to citizens' problems or queries, whilst 84.6% of the respondents affirmed that citizens could report problems by sending locations and photographs to the municipality via social media.

4.2.2. Inferential statistics

4.2.2.1. Student perceptions on the key dimensions of the study

Hypothesis 1:

There exist significant intercorrelations amongst the key dimensions (effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery and effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement) of the study relating to customer services agents within the electricity cluster of the eThekweni Municipality, respectively.

Table 4.3.

Correlation: Key Dimensions of the Study

| | | Effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery | Effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement |
|--|---|---|--|
| Effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery | r | 1 | |
| | p | | |
| Effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement | r | 0,703 | 1 |
| | p | 0,000** | |
| * p < 0.05 | | | |
| * p < 0.01 | | | |

The results as shown in Table 4.3 show that the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery has a direct relationship with the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement, respectively, at the 1% level of significance. From the findings in Table 3, it is apparent that a direct relationship ($r = 0.703$) exists between these key dimensions. The inference of the direct and significant relationship between the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery and the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement is that respondents who are highly influenced by social media platforms on services are of the strong belief that it is highly effective.

Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

4.2.2.2. Key dimensions of the study and biographical variables

Hypothesis 2:

There is a significant difference in the perceptions of respondents, varying in biographical profiles (gender, age, race, employment status, and number of years employed) regarding each dimension of the study (effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery and effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement), respectively (Tables 4, 4 to 4, 8).

Table 4.4

Mann-Whitney U-Test: Key Dimensions of the Study and Gender

| Key Dimensions of the Study | Mann-Whitney U | Z | P value |
|---|----------------|--------|---------|
| Effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery | 113,500 | -1,269 | 0,204 |
| effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement | 119,500 | -1,081 | 0,280 |

Results in Table 4 indicate that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of male and female respondents regarding the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery and the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement. The implication of the non-significant difference indicates that male and female respondents have similar views regarding the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery and the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement.

Table 4.5.

Kruskal-Wallis One-way ANOVA: Key Dimensions of the Study and Age

| Key Dimensions of the Study | Chi-Square | P-value |
|---|------------|---------|
| Effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery | 4,552 | 0,336 |
| Effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement | 1,718 | 0,787 |

As illustrated in Tables 4, 5, there is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents varying in Age. This means that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery and the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement amongst respondents' age.

Table 4.6.

Kruskal-Wallis One-way ANOVA: Key Dimensions of the Study and Race

| Key Dimensions of the Study | Chi-Square | P-value |
|---|------------|---------|
| Effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery | 0,168 | 0,983 |
| Effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement | 3,375 | 0,337 |

The results in Table 4.6 show that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents varying in race. This means that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery and the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement amongst respondents' races.

Table 4.7.

Kruskal-Wallis One-way ANOVA: Key Dimensions of the Study and Employment status

| Key Dimensions of the Study | Chi-Square | P-value |
|---|------------|---------|
| Effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery | 0,089 | 0,766 |
| Effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement | 0,080 | 0,778 |

The results in Table 4.7 reveal that there is no significant difference in respondents' perceptions regarding employment status. This implies that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery and the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement amongst respondents' employment status.

Table 4.8.

Kruskal-Wallis One-way ANOVA: Key Dimensions of the Study and Number of years employed

| Key Dimensions of the Study | Chi-Square | P-value |
|---|------------|---------|
| Effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery | 3,390 | 0,335 |
| Effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement | 6,014 | 0,111 |

Table 4.8 reveals that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents as pertaining number of years employed. This suggests that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery and effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement amongst respondents' number of years employed.

From the results shown in Tables 4.4 to 4.8, it is evident that Hypothesis 2 may not be accepted.

4.3. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

As indicated in Table 4.9, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were computed, reflecting adequacy (0.569; Approx. Chi-Square = 565.370) and significance (df = 300; Sig. = 0.000). Statistical analysis of the questionnaire is undertaken to determine the questionnaire's validity using reliability. Therefore, Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha will be tested (4.10).

Table 4.9.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

| | | |
|--|--------------------|---------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | 0,569 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 565,370 |
| | Df | 300 |
| | Sig. | 0,000 |

4.3.1. Validity of the questionnaire

Table 1: Validity of Questionnaire – Factor analysis

| ITEM | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| Q1 | | | 0,308 | | | 0,804 | | |
| Q2 | | | | | | 0,654 | -0,320 | |
| Q3 | | | | | | 0,769 | | |
| Q4 | 0,655 | | | | | | 0,307 | |
| Q5 | 0,754 | | | | | | | |
| Q6 | 0,740 | | | | | | | |
| Q7 | 0,583 | 0,533 | | | | | | 0,428 |
| Q8 | 0,385 | 0,709 | | | | | | |
| Q9 | | | 0,534 | | 0,543 | | | |
| Q10 | | | | | | | | 0,747 |
| Q11 | | | 0,732 | | | | | |
| Q12 | 0,345 | | 0,303 | | 0,483 | | | 0,544 |
| Q13 | 0,426 | | 0,397 | 0,413 | | | | 0,459 |
| Q14 | | | 0,840 | | | | | |
| Q15 | | 0,402 | | | | | 0,705 | |
| Q16 | | 0,841 | | | | | | |
| Q17 | | 0,423 | 0,411 | 0,382 | | | | |
| Q18 | | | | 0,783 | | | | |
| Q19 | | | | 0,847 | | | | |
| Q20 | | | | | | | 0,740 | |
| Q21 | | | | | 0,525 | | 0,648 | |
| Q22 | | | | | 0,838 | | | |
| Q23 | | 0,756 | | | | | | |
| Q24 | | | | | 0,632 | | | |
| Q25 | | | -0,310 | 0,649 | | | | |
| <i>Eigenvalue</i> | 6,61 | 2,92 | 2,19 | 1,95 | 1,64 | 1,59 | 1,23 | 1,21 |
| <i>% Of Total Variance</i> | 26,45 | 11,67 | 8,75 | 7,79 | 6,55 | 6,37 | 4,92 | 4,84 |

The results in Table 10 shows that 7 items load significantly on Factor 1 and account for 26.45% of the total variance. Of the 7 items, 6 items relate to the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery, 1 item pertains to the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement. Since the majority of items relate to the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery, Factor 1 may therefore, be labelled likewise.

As indicated in Table 4.10, six items load significantly on Factor 2, accounting for 11.67% of the total variance. Results further indicate that 4 of the items relate to the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement, and the other 2 items relate to the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery. The results indicate that the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement has the highest loading of (0.841), hence Factor 2 can be labeled the same.

Table 4.10 reveals that Factor 3 has 7 items that load significantly and accounts for 8.75% of the total variance. Five items relate to the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery and two to the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement. Since the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement has the highest loading (0.841), Factor 3 can be labelled likewise.

Furthermore, Table 4.10 indicates that 5 items load significantly on Factor 4 and account for 7.79% of the total variance. Four items relate to the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement, and one item to the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery. Since the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement has the highest loading (0.847), Factor 4 can be labelled likewise.

Moreover, Table 4.10 indicates that 5 items load significantly on Factor 5 and account for 6.55% of the total variance. Three items relate to the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement, and two items relate to the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery. Since the majority of items relate to the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement, Factor 5 can be labelled likewise.

The results in Table 4.10 indicate that 3 items load significantly on Factor 6 and account for 6.37% of the total variance. All 3 items relate to the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery; hence, Factor 6 can be labelled similarly.

Table 4.10 shows that four items load significantly on Factor 7 and account for 4.92% of the total variance. Three items relate to the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement and the other one to the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery. The results indicate that the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement has the highest loading of (0.740). Therefore, Factor 7 can be labelled accordingly.

As shown in Table 4.10, four items load significantly on Factor 8 and account for 4.84 % of the total variance. The results show that all four items relate to the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery. Therefore, Factor 8 will be labelled accordingly.

From the results obtained in Table 4.10, three factors (Factor 1, 6, and 8) were labelled as the to the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery. In addition, 5 factors (Factor 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7) were labelled as the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement. All key dimensions of the study feature as factors.

4.3.2. Reliability of the questionnaire

Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha was statistically used to assess the questionnaire's reliability (Table 4.11). For the scale to be considered reliable and internally consistent in its measurement, the Cronbach Alpha should be above 0.7, a Cronbach Alpha above 0.6 is acceptable (Pallant 2013).

Table 4.11.

Overall Reliability of the Questionnaire: Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha

| Reliability Statistics | | |
|------------------------|--|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items | N of Items |
| 0,872 | 0,872 | 25 |

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed to measure the consistency of the results. The results reveal a Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha of 0.872 which demonstrates a strong level of inter-item consistency and reliability.

The reliability for individual dimensions were also computed (Table 4.12).

Table 4.12.

Overall Reliability of the Questionnaire: Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha

| Constructs | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|-------------------------|
| Effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery | 0.809 |
| Effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement | 0.762 |

As indicated in Table 4.12, all the key dimensions of the study are internally consistent in their measurement as all Cronbach's Alpha values are above 0.7. The reliability for key dimensions range from 0.762 to 0.809, thereby, indicating that the reliability per dimension range from moderate (Effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement) to good (Effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery).

4.4. CONCLUSION

The results of descriptive and inferential statistics were presented in this chapter. To test the questionnaire, its reliability and validity were also assessed. The SPSS results were provided in tabular and graphical formats for a more detailed analysis of the findings. The outcomes of this study are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the results of the study gathered in the eThekweni Municipality (electricity cluster) customer services agents' perspective as presented in the previous chapter. Most of the reviewed literature shows that social media is effective in improving and providing services while cultivating community engagements (Manoharan & Ingrams, 2018; Reddy & Govender, 2019; Sharma, Metri, Dwivedi, & Rana, 2021). Community engagement plays a crucial part in disseminating information and mobilising the community (Fashoro & Barnard, 2021). Community engagement helps the municipality to deliver services tailored to community needs. Therefore, this study sought to understand two crucial key dimensions: the effectiveness of current social media tools on service delivery and the effectiveness of social media platforms in community engagement.

The previous chapter presented the findings gathered from empirical analysis and presented them in a tabulated format. This chapter discusses the findings obtained from the study on the impact of social media platforms on service delivery and community engagements. The findings are contrasted with and compared to the findings of the studies conducted by other authors concerning the key dimension being investigated in the study.

5.2. THE PERCEPTION OF ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY (ELECTRICITY CLUSTER) CUSTOMER SERVICES AGENTS ON THE KEY DIMENSION OF THE STUDY

This section explores the results that was obtained from this study that relates to the dimension of this study (effectiveness of current social media platform on services delivery and the effectiveness of social media platform on community engagement) in order to determine the perception of customer services agents of eThekweni Municipality within electricity cluster on the impact of social media platforms.

5.2.1. The perception of eThekwini municipality (electricity cluster) customer services agents on the effectiveness of social media platforms in public service delivery

The study's first objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of the current social media tools on service delivery. The sub-dimension of the study's aspect includes the effectiveness of social media platforms on public services delivery, e-government services and the benefits of e-government services. The most critical elements were measured based on the mean value. The higher the mean score value, the greater was agent's perception of the key dimension of the study.

5.2.1.1. Effectiveness of social media platforms on public services delivery

This study's findings reveal that social media enables the municipality to improve service delivery and overcome the limitation of budget cuts and other resources. The rise in the complexity of socioeconomic issues, budget cuts and constraints have forced the government to adjust and find new innovative ways to produce and provide services to its citizen (Cho & Melisa, 2021). The majority of respondents agreed that social media can be used in conjunction with Web 2.0 technology to improve the services delivery process and solve problems that hinder service delivery. In line with this findings, Putra, Jasmi, Basiron, Huda, Maselena, Shankar, and Aminudin (2018) found that the adoption of social media by local government has strengthened the efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery and it has successfully altered how the services are delivered to citizens. Pariso and Marino (2020) agree that social media creates co-production that creates important value for local government so to as enhance service efficiency, innovation and effectiveness.

Bartik, Bertrand, Cullen, Glaeser, Luca, and Stanton (2020) affirm that social media has successfully reshaped the working environment of public services, simplifying the work process and delivery services and quality of the services being offered public services. Social media improved most aspects of government while minimizing backlog. Hyojung Park and Lee (2018) support this notion that social media tools like Twitter, Facebook, and other platforms generated content that the government uses to leverage resources to improve services delivery and communication with citizens, especially those that were previously mentioned as underrepresented. AlSharji, Ahmad, and Bakar (2018) state that it is still in the early stages to conclude that social media platforms enable co-production. Social media platforms are not used in

isolation but as an integral part of a holistic strategy to improve services and co-production. In support of this, Tajudeen, Jaafar, and Ainin (2018) state that social media tools leverage a two-way flow of communication and it offers communication and interaction from the government to citizens that focuses on informing and disseminating the information to citizens.

The findings of Gao and Lee (2017) support this study's findings that the increasing adoption of social media by local government is for information services such as downloading forms, navigating the government website, reaching out to the community, improving public service efficiency, reducing production and operational cost, offer transitional services such as applying for permits, renewing drivers licenses and others. Lovari and Valentini (2020) argue that the government adopts social media applications for political marketing and self-promotion rather than providing public services, interaction, participation, and transparency. The findings of Mergel (2012) support this argument that social media in local government has the potential risk as it is provided and administered by third parties outside the organisation.

This study's findings reveal that a fair proportion of participants believed that with the use of social media platforms, the municipality is better able to process queries, issues and attend to citizens' complaints. This finding is consistent with Roengtam (2020)'s study, which found that local government uses more social media to process online applications and information that the communities wish to access utilising government applications to convert all sub-sections. When communities access the services online through social media platforms, they do not have to change the method they use. They still use the application the same way they use it on a regular basis. Most of the activities are now done online, such as providing information services, applications, and processing.

Feeney and Welch (2016) findings are similar and state that the adoption of social media by local government enables citizens to apply and submit services online such as paying parking tickets online, renewing drives licenses, transacting online, receiving a bill and many more. In support of this finding, Reddy and Govender (2019) state that the government progressively adopted social media application to provide online clearance certificates and electronic billing system while some certain process are still immigrating data. The eThekwini municipality has successfully shifted from word processing applications to financial software that enhances the services delivery processes. Local government are engaging citizen through online platform by expressing opinion,

inquiries, suggestion, promoting event and other activities, taking responsibility, Problem solving and gaining community inputs.

The result of this study shows that the vast majority of the participants come to an understanding that social media allows the municipality to create innovations by navigating to different options that integrate the information and process to improve services, enhance reliability and be consistent in delivering services. Oliveira and Welch (2013) support this study's findings that social media helps the municipality solicit new ideas and innovative ways of processing and delivering services. The majority of respondents in this study believed that public services are more accessible through the use of social media. The community can access any services through social media without physically going to the municipality premises. The study evidence concurs with Feeney and Porumbescu (2021) findings that social media makes it easier for citizens and government agencies to share crucial information and deliver services effectively and be easily accessible by all citizens. The study evidence concurs with the findings of Falco and Kleinhans (2018) who found that social media can help local governments to be more accessible and help the community to be more informed about government services through those channels. Citizens like to go online for raw information about government operations and how they spend money (Guillamón, Ríos, Gesuele, & Metallo, 2016).

The findings of Song and Lee (2016) support that the use of social media in local government provides an opportunity for both government and citizens to be more responsible and work together more closely. It provides citizens with more access to public services and information. It serves as the link between government and citizens for information sharing, formulating policies and programs for different projects to improve government efficiency (Cho & Melisa, 2021). The findings of Agostino, Arnaboldi, and Lema (2021) emphasise that the adoption of social media platforms by local government must be complemented by other tools that are easily and widely accessible by the citizen and It shouldn't be a threat but an opportunity to access services delivery.

The findings of this study indicate that majority participants agree that social media enhance the quality of service delivery services. It improves service efficiency through automated collaboration tools to engage and respond to citizen needs and demands timeously. In support of the findings, Feeney and Porumbescu (2021) support that social media adoption by local government enhances co-production and democratic perception to improve the quality of services delivery.

The study findings indicate that a fair proportion of respondents are more satisfied by the level of services provided through social media platforms. Social media has enabled the government to engage with citizens in real-time, tracing and offering services, improving turnaround time, and minimizing costs. The findings are supported by the study of Demircioglu and Chen (2019) who found that social media platforms enhance employee responsiveness and engagement, leading to customer satisfaction. Feeney and Welch (2016) support that social media are primarily used for work collaborations to enhance work efficiencies and communication to improve and create positive perceptions.

5.2.1.2. E-government services

The majority of customer services agents believed that e-government services improved efficiency and cost reduction. It minimises the manual process and allows the process to be done electronically. The findings of this study are consistent with that of Dwivedi, Kelly, Janssen, Rana, Slade, and Clement (2018) who found that e-government services help the municipality to accelerate the public service efficiency, speed up information and process, global reach and transparency. Furthermore, municipalities have successfully overcome the cost barrier and citizens can now access services through social media at a reasonable time (Lovari & Bowen, 2020). Roengtam (2020) concurs that municipalities adopt digital technology to engage in e-services to enhance services delivery and provide broadcasting information that fosters interaction and engagement. It offers citizens some extensive means to engage and interact with the government to make services more efficient and accessible.

This study's findings reveal that most respondents receive, process, apply and access services using social media tools. It helps to reduce time consumption and create accessibility and convenient transaction to fast track the services. A community likes to apply and transact online and they find it easy with less effort and convenience. These findings are supported by Dwivedi, Kelly, Janssen, Rana, Slade, and Clement (2018) who state that the e-government system uses information communication technology to speed up the process and facilitate the transaction between government, business, community and stakeholder to achieve services efficiency and transparency.

The findings of study show that the use of e-government services saves time. All applications that were done manually are now processed electronically. These findings are supported by Dwivedi, Kelly, Janssen, Rana, Slade, and Clement (2018) who state that e-government services enhance the efficiency of larger processing tasks and collaborate administrative operations. E-government offers citizens 24-hour accessibility at any time and from anywhere. This finding is also supported by Roengtam (2020) who stated that social media saves cost and reduces time wasted for citizens to go and standing in long queues for manual applications, it also saves costs for operating budgets. Cho and Melisa (2021) concur that social media platforms have significantly reduced the cost and time of information sharing and made online social media interaction easier and less time-consuming. Citizens and local governments use this digital infrastructure close to zero marginal cost rate. However, Gao and Lee (2017) argue that social media platforms do not reduce costs as they still need a sufficient IT budget to introduce and maintain the platforms.

Social media platforms allow the municipality to improve service delivery by providing timeous feedback to its citizens. The majority of participants of this study agreed that social media enhances the government response rate in all applications submitted online and increases customer services quality by providing timeous feedback. This finding supports Elvira, Popescu, Nicolăescu, and Constantin (2014) who found that social media applications are more transformative in providing the municipality with instant feedback and generating a new perspective of workflow that creates a dialogue through an interactive form. Roengtam (2020) supports these findings by stating that social media platforms provide both the municipality and citizen with an opportunity for interaction and feedback. Government raises awareness, services issues and encourage interaction. Citizens are consistently realising that social media platforms, especially Facebook and Twitter, provide accessible forms of democratic dialogue and consistent feedback.

According to the study result, there is are significant relationships between the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery and other key dimensions of the study.

- *Intercorrelations between the effectiveness of social media platforms in public services and other key dimensions of the study.*

The findings of the study show that there is a significant relationship between the effectiveness of social media platforms on public services delivery and the effectiveness of social media platforms

on community engagement relating to eThekwini municipality customer services agent prospective.

The implication of the significant relationship is that the eThekwini municipality customer services agent emphasises the effectiveness of social media platforms on public services delivery. Social media platforms improve services delivery and service are easily accessible through e-government system and other avenues while providing consistent communication and interaction with the citizen in real-time.

- *Influence of biographical variable of the effectiveness of social media in public services delivery.*

The study results reveal that eThekwini municipality customer services agent's perceptions on the effectiveness of social media platforms in public services delivery are not influenced by any biographical variables.

The study also shows that there is no significant relationship in the perception of eThekwini municipality customer services agent varying biographical profile (gender, age, race, employment status, and a number of years employed). This indicates that customer services agents are not affected by their biographical profile regarding the effectiveness of social media platforms. The findings align with the study of Cho and Melisa (2021) who found that gender difference does not affect the effectiveness of social media platforms in local government.

5.2.2. The effectiveness of current social media platforms on community engagement

With reference to the second objective of the study which relates to discovering the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement, the results of this study show that social media allows for better community outreach and meaningful community engagement. Social media platforms have become an essential channel of online interaction, engagement and participation. This finding is supported by the study conducted by Roengtam (2020) who stated that local government uses social media to collaborate with citizens and stakeholders. Social media enables the government to engage public participation and collaborations by informing each other and strengthening public relations while citizens use social media to engage with the government and bridge the gap between government and community. Pariso and Marino (2020) also the local

government can use social media applications to distribute, manage information, and facilitate interaction to achieve wider community participation than traditional channels.

The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of DePaula and Dincelli (2018) who state that government agencies offer information and engage in dialogue communication with the citizen and businesses about services operations and events. Gao and Lee (2017) concur that the adoption of social media in government institutions increases communication and encourages participation and engagement with the citizen, yet it has nothing to do with the education and skills needed to use the application. The community does not necessarily have to have any skill to become competent in order to use social media or engage with government.

The results of the study are also supported by Neely and Collins (2018) who posit that Facebook and Twitter are more important for information and engagements as they challenge the municipality to engage with citizens. It allows municipalities to create and share information, influence the public opinion, and promote social engagement. Cho and Melisa (2021) state that digital and social media technology are critical enablers that give real-time interaction between government and communities at minimum or no cost. The capacity of the new technology creates a strong connection between citizen and government that provide co-production practices.

However, the findings of Song and Lee (2016) were that social media platforms do not offer government a transformational platforms that enable interaction and engagement. It is only more convenient for disseminating information in the traditional top-down way. The study findings of Falco and Kleinhans (2018) reinforce that social media platforms with communication and participation can foster community voluntary participation, for instance, in reporting illegal connection or dumping that could significantly minimise direct and indirect cost for the municipality. In support, the findings by Cho and Melisa (2021) stated that the government has incorporated social media technology in the workplace to effectively promote transparency and citizen engagement in order to promote the public goal that will enable citizens and stakeholders to collaborate and engage in governance. Social media platforms create a new connection to geographically dispersed citizens where it is impossible for traditional media to reach. It has created a two-way flow of information that has changed the relationship between citizens and government by allowing sharing and collaboration to encourage government responsiveness and transparency (Roengtam, 2020).

Furthermore, Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2015) found that social media is the form of technology application that facilitates the social engagement and interaction and that encourages collaboration across all parties. The findings of Roengtam (2020) identify social media platform as the push and pull strategy. Government uses push strategy to provide information and e-services to citizen while pull them their input, opinions and suggestion.

In terms of this study's respondents' perceptions of social media, it enhances communication between citizens and the municipality. The majority of customer services agents believed that social media improves communication and that the city uses various social media platforms to communicate with the citizens. Dwivedi, Kelly, Janssen, Rana, Slade, and Clement (2018) agree that social media helps municipalities disseminate information, generate publicity, create dialogue between government and citizen and receive support and advice. It enables the community to share information amongst other communities. The findings of Feeney and Welch (2016) concur that social media tools provide the municipality with a number of opportunities, including disseminating information, marketing, online records, engaging with the community in real-time, and reaching more individuals at once. Roengtam (2020) also supports this notion that social media help the local government to understand citizen needs and address complaints, raise awareness, and exchange and share information in tracing issues submitted by citizens. It helps to monitor the progress of issues submitted and provides platforms for citizens to use various chances in raising complaints and recommendations.

The majority of respondents of this study reported that social media was highly effective in keeping citizens informed about pertinent municipality matters. Municipalities are mandated to be transparent in all the daily operations and functions. Social media has successfully altered the way many citizens communicate and participate in municipality matters. They can now communicate using various means of communication such as textual conversation, video, pictures and other forms. A study conducted by Lameiras, Silva, and Tavares (2018) indicates that the usage of social media by municipalities focuses more on information and dissemination content, enhances transparency, and creates a positive perception of citizen trust towards the government.

Lameiras, Silva, and Tavares (2018) stress that social media is more effective in improving and increasing government transparency and interaction with the citizen, fostering trust in governance, minimizing corruption, and promoting accountability. AlSharji, Ahmad, and Bakar (2018) argue

that local government lacks necessary investments in infrastructure and measurements of their effectiveness on online services and interaction. There will be no significant benefits that governments can derive from social media applications. Cho and Melisa (2021) support the argument by stating that lack of necessary resources and infrastructure, financial, technical and personal capacities is the main challenge that hinders the government from adopting social media. A city with more resources could enjoy the benefits of social media while the city that has less resources could struggle to use social media and will rely heavily on informing and disseminating information (Woods, 2016).

The respondents of this study feel that social media allowed the municipality to respond and act faster and easier to emergencies and disasters. The majority of customer services agents believed that social media in local government has improved emergency disaster management. With the assistance of social media, community and government can post, discuss and update information timeously. Some concerns are conveyed online and can be addressed quickly by public safety officials. This finding is supported by Chen, Qian, and Wen (2020) who aver that municipalities could use social media accounts to disseminate relevant information, early warnings, guidance, preparedness for safety measures, and government action plan to prevent damage or losses of infrastructure. Furthermore, social media platforms are rapid and directly distribute information related to the critical storm, power outage and impacted area, evacuation plan, and more (Neely & Collins, 2018).

The findings of Cheng, Han, Zhao, and Li (2019) are consistent with this study's findings that social media platforms are essential in a municipality for disaster preparedness management. Before, during, and after a disaster, the municipality posts or updates information with early warnings within a few seconds information is obtained and shared to other platforms. During and after disasters occur, municipality uses social media to manage crises and grief and coordinate citizen base response efforts. Municipality uses social media platforms to seek assistance, donations, and volunteer services to restore the situation (Lovari & Bowen, 2020).

The study's findings show that most respondents agree that social media is ideal for citizens to share suggestions and opinions. It is an effective way of building community commitment to facilitate better collaboration. The findings of this study concur with that of DePaula and Dincelli (2018) who posit that social media provides local governments with a convenient platform for

which they can seek citizen information and input on a matter related to providing services delivery. Furthermore, social media allows users to add comments to a post, reply to those comments, and create dialogue conversations (Song & Lee, 2016). Cheng, Han, Zhao, and Li (2019) state that social media gives both the municipality and citizen an opportunity to share reliable and useful information that enhances the ability to understand the present situation and solve problems collectively.

This study's findings show that desire to use social media than the traditional method of face to face to engage with a municipality. This outcome is consistent with Dwivedi, Kelly, Janssen, Rana, Slade, and Clement (2018) who found that communities browse online on their social media accounts regularly to communicate and access services rather than a face-to-face interaction or participation with the government. A study by Lameiras, Silva, and Tavares (2018) reveals that municipalities with a higher younger population uses social media to communicate, interact, and engage with the city. A municipality with a higher population of elderly might prefer to use the traditional face-to-face method (Song & Lee, 2016). Dwivedi, Kelly, Janssen, Rana, Slade, and Clement (2018) states that citizens who own smart devices prefer to communicate with the government using social media tools rather than traditional face-to-face interactions.

This study's results indicate that the majority of respondents disagree that citizens may be reluctant to use social media due to a lack of internet access and data challenges. This study's findings are consistent with that of Roengtam (2020) who found that most people who use social media tools to interact and communicate with the government do it through WI-FI signals as they are fair cheaper. There are free WI-FI hot spots in almost every community, municipality's services center, malls, and small parish that are sufficient for public coverage. Eom, Hwang, and Kim (2018) concur that urban communities are more likely to engage and access services online than rural areas as they have higher broadband connectivity.

In this study, a fair proportion of participants reported that citizens can report problems by sending a photograph together with a location *via* social media platforms. The municipality encourages citizens to report any faults by taking a picture and sending together a live location to locate the faulty area. These findings are consistent with Elvira, Popescu, Nicolăescu, and Constantin (2014) who found that the municipality encourages the community to interact with them by reporting and sharing damaged infrastructure and building a solid online tier that will help to build proper mobile

services. The study of Lovari and Valentini (2020) concur that with social media tools citizens are more equipped to work hand in hand with the government especially to report current conditions of public services, misuse, illegal connection and faulty in the community.

According to the study's findings, there is a significant relationship between the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement and other key dimensions of the study.

- *Intercorrelations between effectiveness of social media on community engagement and other key dimension of the study.*

The study's findings reveal a significant relationship between the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement and the effectiveness of social media tools on public services delivery relating to eThekwini municipality customer services agent perceptions.

The implication of the significant relationship is that the customer service agent expects consistent dialogue with immediate feedback and engagement between government and citizens to improve the service delivery.

- *Influences of biographical variable on the effectiveness of social media platform on community engagement.*

According to the study's results, there is no significant relationship in the perception of eThekwini municipality customer services agent varying biographical profiles (gender, age, race, employment status, and a number of years employed). This indicates that customer services agents are not affected by their biographical profile when it comes to the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement.

5.3. SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF THE KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This section provides a summary of the key findings of the study

- *The effectiveness of current social media platforms on services delivery*

The findings of the study show that social media enables citizens to access services online; and they can apply and pay online. Municipality responds quickly to citizen problems and queries

through social media platforms. It also helps improve services efficiency. Social media platforms have successfully changed the way people communicate and interact with municipality officials and other communities. It has created innovative ways where citizens can have easy access to any services with immediate feedback in a cost-efficient manner while saving time. The community that uses social media platforms to access service have grow confident in the municipality and the quality of services received.

- *The effectiveness of social media on community engagement*

The majority of eThekwini municipality customer services agents believed that social media platforms are ideal for community engagement and participation. The community can share information, opinion, and suggestion with the municipality in an effective way that builds community commitment. Social media facilitates better collaboration between citizens and municipalities, allowing a better community outreach and meaningful engagement.

5.4. CONCLUSION

The emphasis of the chapter was on discussion of the findings that were interpreted in the previous chapter. The discussion was based on the important dimension of the study (effectiveness of social media platform in public services delivery and the effectiveness of social media platform on community engagement). The findings show that social media effectively improves services delivery, consumers can access services online with immediate feedback and turnaround time. Citizens like to be updated on matters pertaining to the municipality and with the level of service they are entitled to receive. The findings also show that social media facilitates interaction and engagement between municipality and citizen. It enables the community to share ideas, opinions and collaborate with the municipality. The third objective of this study is the formulation of creative strategies that the municipality can adopt for the use of social media platforms to improve service delivery and enhance community engagement. The next chapter will conclude the findings of this study and recommendations of creative strategies will be presented. The recommendations are based on the findings that were uncovered in this study.

CHAPTER SIX

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the study and makes some recommendations for the eThekwini municipality based on the findings of this study. These recommendations for the effectiveness of social media platforms on service delivery and community engagement can be used by local governments in order to improve service delivery and foster community engagement. Additionally, the recommendation for other researchers that wishes to conduct further research within this area will be presented. These recommendations will pay more attention to the limitation of this study. The chapter concludes the study and gives a conclusion statement about this study.

6.2. RECOMMENDATION BASED ON THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The recommendations are based on the eThekwini municipality (electricity cluster) employee's perception of the important dimensions of this study (perception of customer services agents on the effectiveness of social media platforms on services delivery and the effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement).

6.2.1. Social media platforms on public service delivery

In terms of the eThekwini municipality (electricity cluster) employee's perception of the effectiveness of social media platforms in public service delivery, the following recommendations are made:

In line with the findings of this study, eThekwini municipality (Electricity Cluster), customer services agents believe that social media platforms enable the municipality to improve services delivery and overcome budget cuts and other constraints. The local government focuses on finding new innovative ways of producing and providing service to its citizens. Social media has successfully reshaped the way services are delivered, simplifying the work processes and improving most aspects of government while minimizing backlog. It has leveraged the two-way

flow of communication and information where government and citizens can communicate in real-time.

It is pivotal for local governments to adopt social media platforms to improve service delivery by offering more services online, processing queries and issues, online application and information that the citizens wish to access through different social media platforms. The local government can use social media platforms to offer more services online in a single platform without navigating to different platforms for the same services. Municipalities can also create or modify the existing online service portal to incorporate a social media tool. A citizen can create a profile and log in to upload the required documents and information. Once the service portal is created, citizens will be able to communicate directly with the municipality by using an online social media portal as they did face-to-face. Citizens can access the online service portal to access municipality services by login and navigating through the portal for different options depending on what customers want to do. They can report any municipality faulty, query about bills, upload meter readings, apply for special rebates, apply for any service, link to e-recruitment, tender platforms and online transaction to keep the account up-to-date. They can choose different payment options such as direct debit, electronic payments or Masterpass. The municipality will allocate staff to that customer.

The local government can create chatbots to complement the online service portal and have staff available to attend to the customer through their portal. Once the customer has a login, they will be redirected to an available agent. The chatbots will be designed to be available and be accessible for a 24-hour service to improve turnaround time. If the customer is not satisfied with chatbot options, they will leave their queries on the portal the next available agent will attend accordingly.

The local government will have to create a standing-out self-service portal for those citizens who do not have access to social media platforms. The government can partner with those organisations and businesses that they partner in providing free WI-FI, such as a mall, community service centers, and other government agencies that provide free WI-FI.

Social media channels provide the government with many options to navigate and access the integrated information in one place and processes that improve service, enhance reliability and consistent delivery of services. Online government services are more accessible and have instant transmission of high data volume that can be shared amongst other government agencies. Citizens will no longer be required to provide documents every time they apply for service in a government

department. The government will use data that is already uploaded to the system. Local governments can make all information available online on their social media platforms and website and it can be centralized for everyone. Citizens should be able to access all the information they want on a single platform. The information that is provided will be a guide on service accessibility and addressing community concerns. It should provide pop-up updates and a reminder on the current statuses of the accounts wherever customers log in and have essential emergency contact numbers and options that they can navigate to in case of an emergency and others.

6.2.2. E-government services

According to the findings of this study, eThekweni municipality (Electricity Cluster) customer services agents believe that e-government service improves efficiency, cost reduction, more accessibility, and enhances the quality of services delivery. Therefore, it is recommended that local governments use e-government services to improve service delivery efficiency and cost reduction. Social media platforms and technology innovation can help local governments to minimize costs through digitalization. The budget that is allocated to resources and infrastructure such as storage, paper, filing cabinets, copy machine and transport are saved for other purposes. Moving to digitalization means moving away from traditional printing, filling, and physical storage methods. Local government employees can now do e-filing on shared drives that can be easily accessed in less effort and time. The government will also save costs associated with space rental and equipment such as photocopy machines. More spaces will be created as computers manage most things like filling and storage.

The online government services will improve service delivery efficiency by minimizing the time staff takes to look for customer fills on archive storage. Everything related to customer information and document will be saved and stored on the online drive and the system. Employees can navigate through the system and pull out all the customer information in a single place with less effort and quickly.

Social media platforms can help local governments to minimise work overload and manual processing by allowing the process to be done electronically and moving away from word processing to software processing. With the adoption of e-government services, the government can process applications that were put through social media tools, provide timeously feedback, and

offer online transaction services such as electronic billing systems and clearance certificates. E-government services make services more accessible to everyone anywhere and anytime, improving the quality of services delivery and turnaround time. The e-government services system has the ability to process enormous tasks and it offers citizens 24 hours accessibility that reduces the rounding clock and makes it more convenient. It minimises the time citizens take to stand in long queues for a face-to-face consultation.

Local governments' adoption of social media will accelerate public service delivery efficiency, speed up processes, and disseminate information to internal and external, even global reach. The social media platform has successfully overcome the cost and time barrier for both citizens and the government. The government can now provide services online on time while citizens can apply and access services online and get feedback timeously at minimum cost. Social media applications can enhance government response rates. All applications that were submitted through e-services are attended to timeously and with consistent feedback. Those applications are more transformational in providing instant feedback that generates a new workflow perspective that creates two-way communication processes. Local government can adopt digital technology to engage in e-service to improve service delivery and provide broad broadcasting information needs that will be tailored to the community's needs.

6.2.3. The effectiveness of social media platforms on community engagement

In line with the findings of this study, the eThekweni municipality (electricity cluster) employees believe that social media create better community outreach and meaningful engagement. The government collaborates with citizens and stakeholders to strengthen public relations and bridge the parties' gap. The findings for this study also show that social media applications encourage digital communication and increase participation and engagement with the citizens. It allows to create and share information and services in a multi-way that influences public opinion and social engagement. Social media platforms foster voluntary community participation and share information amongst other communities. It is highly effective in keeping citizens informed about municipality operations through various means of communication such as sending textual messages about the level of service delivery and reminding customers of their accounts when it is in arrears and recording live or saved videos and pictures. The local government adopted social

media to facilitate interaction distribution and management of information to achieve broader community engagement and participation than traditional channels.

Therefore, it is imperative for local governments to carefully integrate social media applications to achieve community engagement and interaction. For instance, Twitter and Facebook have different purposes regarding their primary objectives. Facebook is more appealing for building community engagement through online activities with its ability to connect and reconnect to establish a new and existing relationships. Facebook can help local governments to build, maintain and strengthen the existing relationship with the citizen. It can be adopted to complement the current government website. Twitter is more interactive with an open communication model where users can be permitted to follow others without their approval and see trending topics without logging in.

A municipality can use Twitter when want to communicate with the community and disseminate information to a group of people who have similar interest. Twitter is text-based content that allows real-time information, updates, feedback, and interaction that allow back and forth communication. It is very essential for local governments to use social media platforms based on their strength and ability to achieve dialog communication, interaction and engagement. A well-integrated or crafted social media platform will strengthen the government's relation with the public and improve services delivery because both parties will understand their responsibility in the services delivery process.

The adoption of social media by local government will improve the diversity of suggestions, decision making through the flow of information, interaction with freedom of expression. The introduction of social media plays an integral role in encouraging engagement and participation between the government and the public. Local government can use such platforms to adequately connect with the citizen to find innovative ways to improve service delivery. Community engagement gives the government a strong voice in Integrated Development Plan planning and implementation and both parties have a better understanding and responsible of what is needed in the near future.

Community engagement and interaction have proven to be the most powerful tool in disseminating information, especially in emergency and disaster management. Social media has proven its strength to reach beyond what traditional media could. Social media application has grown important in

crises and emergency disaster management due to its ability to provide widespread accessibility and collect information about the epidemiology reported in a short period. Local government can also use social media to disseminate information relevant to early warnings, guidance, preparedness for safety measures and action plans to prevent damage. Social media is more effective in building community commitment that facilitates better collaboration with its ability to connect the community and share information to achieve the common goal.

6.3. RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study focused only on the eThekweni municipality (electricity cluster) employees and not on the entire South African local government employee's perspective. Therefore, a study can be done that will focus on all municipalities' employees in South Africa. It will assist the government to better understand its employees' perceptions across South Africa than just having the result from one city.

Further research is needed to be done on the accessibility of social media platforms by citizens. The researchers in this perspective should focus on evaluating the effective ways citizens can access internet applications with strong signals or coverage.

6.4. CONCLUSION

This section concludes this study to determine the perception of eThekweni municipality (electricity cluster) employees (customer services agents) on the effectiveness of current social media platforms on public services delivery and community engagement. The chapter presented a recommendation set that local governments can use to improve service delivery and engage the community in the service delivery process. The recommendation was based on the analysis of the eThekweni municipality employees (customer services agents) perception of the key dimension of the study (the effectiveness of current social media platforms on public service delivery and community engagement). The findings of this study were met and it concluded that social media platforms have a positive impact on public services delivery and community engagement. Therefore, it becomes essential for local government to use all the recommendations presented.

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APPENDIX 1: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



ELECTRICITY UNIT

1 Jelf Taylor Crescent
Stamford Hill
Durban 4001

19 November 2021

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

Dear Sir or Madam

LETTER OF SUPPORT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN ETHEKWINI METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY ELECTRICITY DEPARTMENT

This letter serves as authorization to Nkosinathi Brian Dlamini student number 220061150 currently enrolled in master's Coursework in Marketing Management at University of KwaZulu-Natal to proceed with Research Report on the study titled "The *impact of social media on service delivery and community engagement: An eThekweni Municipality perspective*", which is a requirement to obtain the qualification.

We are glad to offer him this opportunity to conduct the research within our Electricity customer services centers:


- Durban Central Customer Services
- Pinetown Customer Services
- Umhlanga Customer Services
- Phoenix Customer Service
- Bester Customer Service
- Isiphingo Customer Service

All interviews, surveys and observation around the business and the distribution of questionnaires are approved and will be duly supervised by researcher.

We will appreciate if the student shares their findings with us upon successful completion of the studies.

Siphiso Ndlovu
Manager, Customer Services

APPENDIX 2: ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL LETTER

 UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL™
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

01 December 2021

Nkosinathi Brian Dlamini (220061150)
School Of Man Info Tech & Gov
Westville Campus

Dear NB Dlamini,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00003515/2021
Project title: The impact of social media on services delivery and community engagement. An eThekweni Municipality perspective
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 30 September 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.


Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 01 December 2022.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

APPENDIX 3: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL For research with human participants

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date: 06 December 2021

Greetings,

My name is Nkosinathi Dlamini ([REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED] / 220061150@stu.ukzn.ac.za) and I am an M Com (Marketing) student in the School of Management, Information Technology and Governance, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My supervisor is Dr Pravina Oodith (tell: 0312607340 Email: Oodithdp@ukzn.ac.za).

You are invited to consider participating in a research project entitled, *The impact of social media on service delivery and community engagement: An eThekweni Municipality perspective*. The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of social media on services delivery and community engagement at eThekweni municipality. The study is expected to include eThekweni municipality customer services employees who work within the electricity department who are above the age of 18 years. If you choose to participate and remain in the study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire, which should take you about 15 minutes to complete.

The results of this survey will be used only for academic purposes. The study will not involve any risks and/or discomforts.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number HSSREC/00003515/2021).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at the above contact details or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION
Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban 4000 KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Your participation in the study is voluntary and by participating, you are granting the researcher permission to use your responses. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in the study. Your anonymity will be maintained by the researcher and the School of Management, I.T. & Governance and your responses will not be used for any purposes outside of this study.

All data, both electronic and hard copy, will be securely stored during the study and archived for 5 years. After this time, all data will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in the study, please contact me or my research supervisor at the numbers listed above.

Sincerely

Nkosinathi Dlamini 220061150

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I (_____) have been informed about the study entitled, *The impact of social media on services delivery and community engagement: An eThekweni Municipality perspective* by Nkosinathi Dlamini (tel: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]).

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at Email: [REDACTED]@a tel: [REDACTED] or EX 14583.

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION
Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Signature of Participant

Date

**Signature of Witness
(Where applicable)**

Date

**Signature of Translator
(Where applicable)**

Date

APPENDIX 4: QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: Biographical Information

Please indicate your selection with a cross (X).

1. Gender

| | | |
|----|--------|--|
| 1. | Male | |
| 2. | Female | |

2. Age

| | | |
|----|-------------|--|
| 1. | 18-21 | |
| 2. | 22-25 | |
| 3. | 26-29 | |
| 4. | 30-33 | |
| 5. | 34-37 | |
| 6. | 38 and over | |

3. Race

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. | Black | |
| 2. | Coloured | |
| 3. | Indian | |
| 4. | White | |
| 5. | Other (Please specify _____) | |

4. What is your employment status?

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. | Permanent | |
| 2. | Contract | |
| 3. | Fixed term | |
| 4. | Part time | |
| 5. | Other (Please specify _____) | |

5. Number of years employed at the eThekweni Municipality

| | | |
|----|---------------|--|
| 1. | 0 - 5 years | |
| 2. | 6 - 10 years | |
| 3. | 11 - 15 years | |
| 4. | 16 and over | |

Section B

Please indicate with a cross (X) the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements using the scale below:

- 1- Strongly Disagree (SD)
- 2- Disagree (D)
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree (N)
- 4- Agree (A)
- 5- Strongly Agree (SA)

| No. | Statement | 1 SD | 2 D | 3 N | 4 A | 5 SA |
|-----|--|---------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| 1. | The use of social media allows citizens to access crucial public services online. | | | | | |
| 2. | Social media allows citizens to apply for service and pay online. | | | | | |
| 3. | I believe that citizens find it easier and convenient to transact online. | | | | | |
| 4. | The use of social media allows the municipality to respond quickly to citizens' problems or queries. | | | | | |
| 5. | I feel that using social media platforms has enabled the municipality to improve its service efficiency. | | | | | |
| 6. | Through the use of social media, the municipality is better able to process queries, issues and complaints of citizens. | | | | | |
| 7. | I believe that social media allows the municipality to create innovativeness and improve service delivery. | | | | | |
| 8. | The use of social media allows the municipality to improve reliability in terms of service delivery. | | | | | |
| 9. | I feel that public services are more accessible through the use of social media. | | | | | |
| 10. | The use of social media is a cost-efficient way of public service delivery. | | | | | |
| 11. | I believe that the use of social media saves time in public services delivery. | | | | | |
| 12. | The use of social media has enhanced the quality of service delivery by the municipality. | | | | | |
| 13. | I believe that using social media has enhanced customer satisfaction through public service delivery by the municipality. | | | | | |
| 14. | Social media allows citizens to build confidence in the municipality in terms of service delivery. | | | | | |
| 15. | I feel that social media has improved communication between citizens and the municipality. | | | | | |
| 16. | Social media has made it easier and more convenient for citizens to lodge complaints and seek answers to queries. | | | | | |
| 17. | The use of social media enables citizen to provide valuable feedback to the municipality regarding pertinent issues or concerns. | | | | | |
| 18. | Social media is an effective means of sharing ideas between the municipality and its citizens. | | | | | |
| 19. | Social media allows the municipality to improve service delivery by providing timeous feedback to citizens. | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 20. | Citizens are able to report problems by sending locations and photographs to the municipality via social media. | | | | | |
| 21. | I believe that social media allows the municipality to respond faster and easier to emergencies and disasters. | | | | | |
| 22. | I feel that the use of social media allows for better community outreach and meaningful community engagement. | | | | | |
| 23. | Social media facilitates better collaboration between citizens and the municipality. | | | | | |
| 24. | Social media is highly effective in keeping citizen informed about pertinent municipality matters. | | | | | |
| 25. | Social media creates an ideal platform for communities to share suggestions and is an effective means of building community commitment. | | | | | |
| 26. | I feel that citizens may be reluctant to use social media due to a lack of access to the internet. | | | | | |
| 27. | Lack of trust and privacy concerns may deter citizens from using social media to engage with the municipality. | | | | | |
| 28. | I feel that the inability to understand and use social media platforms may result in some citizens not using social media to engage with the municipality. | | | | | |
| 29. | I feel that some citizens may still prefer face-to-face interfaces as opposed to using social media to engage with the municipality. | | | | | |
| 30. | Data challenges may impede citizens from using social media to engage with the municipality. | | | | | |

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

APPENDIX 5: FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DATA - SECTION B OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

| | <i>SD</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>SA</i> |
|------------|-----------|----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| <i>B1</i> | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 1 (2, 6%) | 16(41%) | 22(56, 4%) |
| <i>B2</i> | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 16(41%) | 23(59%) |
| <i>B3</i> | 0(0%) | 1(2, 6%) | 4(10,3% | 19(48, 7%) | 20(51, 3%) |
| <i>B4</i> | 0(0%) | 1(2, 6%) | 4(10, 3%) | 14(35, 9%) | 20(51,3) |
| <i>B5</i> | 0(0%) | 2(5.1%) | 1(2, 6%) | 18(46, 2%) | 18(46,2) |
| <i>B6</i> | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 3(7, 7%) | 24(61, 5%) | 12(30, 8%) |
| <i>B7</i> | 0(0%) | 2(5, 1%) | 1(2, 6%) | 20(51,3) | 16(41%) |
| <i>B8</i> | 0(0%) | 2(5, 1%) | 4(10,3) | 18(46,2) | 15(38,5) |
| <i>B9</i> | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 2(5.1%) | 18(46, 2%) | 19(48, 7%) |
| <i>B10</i> | 0(0%) | 3(7, 7%) | 5(12, 8%) | 15(38, 5%) | 16(41%) |
| <i>B11</i> | 1(2,6) | 0(0%) | 3(7, 7%) | 18(46, 2%) | 17(43,6) |
| <i>B12</i> | 0(0%) | 1(2, 6%) | 3(7, 7%) | 25(64, 1%) | 10(25, 6%) |
| <i>B13</i> | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 1(2, 6%) | 24(61, 5%) | 14(35, 9%) |
| <i>B14</i> | 0(0%) | 2(5, 1%) | 7(17, 9%) | 20(51, 3%) | 10(25, 6%) |
| <i>B15</i> | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 3(7, 7%) | 21(53, 8%) | 15(38, 5%) |
| <i>B16</i> | 0(0%) | 3(7, 7%) | 2(5, 1%) | 21(53, 8%) | 13(33,3) |
| <i>B17</i> | 0(0%) | 1(2, 6%) | 3(7, 7%) | 21(53, 8%) | 14(35, 9%) |
| <i>B18</i> | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 2(5, 1%) | 25(64, 1%) | 12(30, 8%) |
| <i>B19</i> | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 1(2, 6%) | 20(51,3) | 18(46,2) |
| <i>B20</i> | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 6(15, 4%) | 19(48, 7%) | 14(35, 9%) |
| <i>B21</i> | 0(0%) | 1(2, 6%) | 4(10, 3%) | 17(43, 6%) | 17(43, 6%) |
| <i>B22</i> | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 3(7, 7%) | 22(56, 4%) | 14(35, 9%) |
| <i>B23</i> | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 4(10, 3%) | 26(66,7) | 9(23, 1%) |
| <i>B24</i> | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 2(5, 1%) | 16(41%) | 21(53,8) |
| <i>B25</i> | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 4(10, 3%) | 16(41%) | 19(48, 7%) |

APPENDIX 6: TURNITIN SIMILARITY INDEX

The impact of social media on services delivery and community engagement: An eThekweni Municipality perspective


ORIGINALITY REPORT

| | | | |
|------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|
| 10% | 8% | 3% | 4% |
| SIMILARITY INDEX | INTERNET SOURCES | PUBLICATIONS | STUDENT PAPERS |

PRIMARY SOURCES

| | | |
|----------|--|---------------|
| 1 | researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source | 5% |
| 2 | Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper | 1% |
| 3 | Submitted to Mancosa Student Paper | 1% |
| 4 | "Re-imagining Diffusion and Adoption of Information Technology and Systems: A Continuing Conversation", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2020 Publication | <1% |
| 5 | erepository.uonbi.ac.ke Internet Source | <1% |
| 6 | vital.seals.ac.za:8080 Internet Source | <1% |
| 7 | Submitted to University of South Africa Student Paper | <1% |
| 8 | Submitted to University of Northampton Student Paper | |

APPENDIX 7: DECLARATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDITING


LLiWO
Consulting Services
Working with you

**12 BLOCK NN
SOSHANGUVE
0152**

10 May 2022

To whom it may concern

REF: PROOF OF EDITING

This letter serves to confirm that a mini-dissertation titled "The impact of Social Media on Services Delivery and Community Engagement: An eThekweni Municipality Perspective" by Nkosinathi Brian Dlamini has been, according to my knowledge and ability, edited by the undersigned.

Should any additional information be required, please do not hesitate to contact me through phone call or Email.

Yours faithfully
[Redacted Signature]

Ndhlovu Emmanuel (Research Consultant and Editor)
matahemanu@yahoo.co.uk
[Redacted Contact Information]

BA Hons (English), BA Hons, MA, PhD Candidate (Development Studies) (UNISA)