Fire Research Report

Social media and fire safety communication: Towards a Strategy for Reaching Young Adult New Zealanders

Canterbury University

May 2012

This researched studied the uses of social media for public good information by marginalised groups in society and how the NZFS could focus on leveraging off people's social media use to communicate fire safety messages to them. The report focuses on individuals within four demographics groups: young single mothers, young people of Pasifika background, young people of Asian background, and students living in rented accommodation.

The research asked respondents about their fire safety knowledge and on how they used social media. The implications of these findings for the NZFS's strategic communication around fire safety are discussed as well as, the respondents' views on how the NZFS might use social media.

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Social media and fire safety communication

Towards a Strategy for Reaching Young Adult New Zealanders

A report commissioned by the New Zealand Fire Service Commission

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Chapter 1: Introduction

After devastating flash floods in the Towoomba Valley in Queensland in January 2011, the state police service used the social media platform, Facebook, to provide quick and targeted information to people affected by the disaster and to answer their questions and put them in touch with others able to help them. Individuals could ask questions, share useful information and find connection and support. The 'likes' on the Queensland Police Service Facebook profile rise from 20,000 to 160,000 in a matter of a few days as residents found this social platform – originally designed to link up students at a university – the most amenable and useful way of communicating around a natural disaster, and found the police able to respond in finding ways to richly fulfil its public service to them there (Taylor et al 2011).

The potential of social media at these moments, and the onus on authorities and services to make use of them, is becoming widely recognised through such examples. The harder question for those organisations is what role emerging media such as these can play for them in assisting people before disaster strikes, that is, in educating the public, establishing relationships with communities and helping people to reduce risks for themselves. This research report seeks to help the New Zealand Fire Service Commission (NZFSC) in addressing this emerging problem.

Social media use has expanded rapidly in developed countries since blogging emerged at the start of the 2000s. In New Zealand, there is some evidence that blogging, Facebook, Twitter and similar platforms are now important in people's everyday activities. Statistics suggest near saturation of internet use, at 86 percent of the population (Smith et al 2011). Among younger people in particular, social media use is very high (87 percent). There is a trend towards use of a few dominant platforms when using the internet: about 1 in every 5 minutes spent online is now spent using social media (comScore 2011), and 96 percent of social media users told one survey that they used Facebook most (Smith et al 2011). There

is also a trend towards using the internet for information-seeking, eroding the newspaper's role in particular (ibid).

The report's approach is to focus on how fire safety communication might become part of people's social media use. Rather than see social media as a marketing tool or a form of publicity, it argues that a more powerful and sustainable way for the New Zealand Fire Service (NZFS) to make use of social media is to position itself alongside people in their social media spaces. To do that, it begins from first principles, given the lack of scholarly research available on how people in New Zealand use social media or on how organisations can connect with them there.

The report focuses on individuals within four demographics groups who are among those of particular interest to the Fire Service Commission because they have been identified as at greater fire risk (Chalmers 2000, CRESA 2009). The groups chosen were: young single mothers, young people of Pasifika background, young people of Asian background, and students living in rented accommodation. These groups were focused on because, as well as being at higher fire risk, they have also been identified as being high users of social media (Smith et al 2011). The researchers talked, through focus groups on Facebook and interviews, with groups of these individuals about how they used social media and how fire safety made sense to them in those places.

The research asked respondents about their fire safety knowledge (reported on in chapter 6) and on how they used social media (reported on in chapter 7). The implications of these findings for the NZFS's strategic communication around fire safety are discussed in chapter 8. The respondents' views on how the NZFS might use social media are discussed also in this chapter.

Chapter 2: NZFSC's fire safety communication

2.1 Introduction

The NZFSC states that its vision is "working with communities to protect what they value", and its mission is "to reduce the incidence and consequence of fire and to provide a professional response to other emergencies" (2011). Currently, the predominant fire safety promotion strategies comprise essentially two separate forms. The first is the more official fire safety communication material devised at the top levels of the organisation, by the strategic communications team in the NZFSC's head office in Wellington. This includes broadcast media advertisements and collateral such as pamphlets and posters that are distributed to and by fire brigades. The second form of fire safety promotion is separate to the corporate communication strategy outlined in the former, and is the type that takes place at the ground level of interactions between fire brigades and local community members. There is some cross-over between these strategies such as by the fire brigades which distribute collateral formulated by the strategic communications team, but that cross-over has been found to be mostly one-directional (Lloyd & Roen 2002).

Researchers conclude that "most of the easy gains in fire safety improvements have been made" (McDermott Miller 2001: 38). The 2010 NZFSC Annual Report reported that "all classes of fire incidents fell approximately 12 percent over the two years" (2010: 3). National goals set for public education in fire safety demonstrate an already high level of awareness and high percentage of households with at least one smoke alarm installed (ibid). As part of this changing landscape, where once (20 years ago) two-thirds of all incidents responded to by the Fire Service were fire related, non-fire incidents now equal these. In the NZFSC's opinion, the fire services legislation needs reform to reflect the changing reality of "its current business mix" (ibid). At present, the primary focus for the

NZFSC research remains fire-centric and as such narrows the parameters for communication strategy formation – which may well benefit from a broadening of these parameters.

2.2 Social marketing approach

Currently, "the Commission uses a social marketing approach to deliver its fire safety education to the general public and to individuals identified as being most at risk from fire" (NZFSC 2011). A social marketing approach was recommended to the NZFS in 2001 by McDermott Miller. Social marketing applies commercial marketing concepts to social campaigns for voluntary behaviour change. This requires an understanding of individuals as 'consumers', the desired behaviour changes as a 'social product', and the necessary event of a transaction whereby a 'price' must be paid for the social product (McDermott Miller 2001). In this report, McDermott Miller made the distinction between fire safe awareness and fire safe behaviour change. Awareness, they said, does not necessarily lead to behaviour change. Awareness is more effectively achieved through mass media campaigns, which at that time enjoyed a greater proportion of resources than would be likely under the implementation of a social marketing approach. They posited that a social marketing approach to fire safety communication may "result in substantial reallocation of resources within the fire-safety field. The most obvious example is a switch of resources from mass-media communication towards fire safety communication through community channels" (xi). McDermott Miller outlined guiding principles of a social marketing campaign in their report, and these included adopting an 'audience centred' orientation. They explained that "this means avoiding a normative perspective where it is felt that everyone "should" be highly concerned about fire risk (and act accordingly) and those who are not are considered seriously lax. Instead the view would be that the respondent is making a choice that is rational" (ix).

Despite these recommendations and the assertion by the NZFSC that it employs a social marketing approach to its fire safety communication, evidence suggests that the approach used by the NZFSC is not entirely consistent with a social marketing programme. The NZFSC Annual Report (2011) reported that television remains the preferred method for people to receive fire safety messages, and one of the few national goals set to evaluate fire

safety knowledge and behaviour of the public was the ability of people to recall a single fire safety message. Further, the normative perspective that McDermott Miller Ltd recommend to avoid is not apparent in many of the fire safety television commercials over the past decade that function on a guilt-based persuasion method. The purpose here is not to draw attention to limitations in the NZFSC's use of social marketing ideas, but to highlight the complexity of what it means to promote 'fire safety' and a fire-safe lifestyle to the New Zealand public. This is further complicated by the ambiguity around what 'behaviour change' looks like when the focus is primarily on fire prevention, and where many of the 'easy gains' have already been made. A social marketing approach vouches for behaviour change over awareness, yet despite little evidence demonstrating the NZFSC's use of targeted 'social products' that transact to behaviour change, the number of fire incidents attended by the Fire Service continues to decline – and while a causal link cannot be directly attributed, fire safety campaigns may be responsible for some of this success.

2.3 Call to action campaigning

However a report in 2006 by TNS stated that while television campaigns are successful in creating high levels of awareness, "overall the NZFS has had a low level of impact on fire safety behaviour. This relates to communications focusing on raising awareness of fire safety and fire risk. People are now seeking to be empowered with 'what to do' (e.g. how to handle different types of fire situations) information" (4). This led TNS to recommend an approach where the focus of fire safety communication remain via television and use "a 'call to action' for people to explore supporting communications" (5). Subsequently, clear calls to action were used in the series of television advertisements *15" Fire checks* (NZFS Television Commercials 2010) which motivated viewers to complete fire safety checks during television advertisement breaks. More recently, though, the NZFS has moved to a "consequence-based approach" (NZFSC 2010: 5) in its television commercials that dramatically demonstrate the potential consequences that may come about when fire safety practices are not followed, for example *Unattended Cooking Kills* and *Smoke Alarms Save Lives* (NZFS Television Commercials 2010). The NZFS stated in its annual report that "these commercials have generated significant awareness and, very pleasingly, a reduction

in the numbers of cooking fires and an increase in the numbers of working smoke alarms identified at house fires" (ibid).

These consequence-based advertisements work in direct opposition to call-to-action-based messages. The former show how not to behave and serve to increase awareness of dangers, while the latter demonstrate safe behaviours and are designed to increase appeal of them (Sibley & Harre 2009). Harre argues that "the kinds of ads that I really think work are ads that show clearly what to do" (*The AD Show* 2010). In discussion of road safety campaigns, she criticised fear-based advertisements, explaining that they can also serve to give the impression that the exhibited behaviour is normal, and that people have a strong self-enhancement bias with their driving that leads people to dismiss such ads as irrelevant to them (see also Sibley & Harre 2009).

2.4 Front line communication

As well as communication campaigns using mass media, fire safety education is also carried out at the front line by fire fighters. Several NZFS research reports discuss the efficacy of that work and highlight several concerns with the methods used (for example Lloyd & Roen 2001, Lloyd & Roen 2002). One concern some fire fighters have expressed is that they often felt uncomfortable with the form of fire safety communication used because they believed it was circumstantially inappropriate (Lloyd & Roen 2002). That research found some fire fighters felt uncomfortable giving people advice face to face while in uniform as authority figures, and felt there was only limited value in some situations in distributing fire safety pamphlets, both in terms of the practice of dropping them into people's mail boxes and in terms of the messages conveyed by them. They believed that a 'one size fits all' approach was ineffective but they also talked of a lack of feedback mechanisms to those who were designing the collateral in the head office. Lloyd & Roen (2002: 23) wrote:

> *A number of firefighters told stories that suggested a lack of awareness, on the part of those sending out resource materials, of the actual resource needs of each station. In the absence of functioning feedback systems, it is entirely understandable that those who distribute resources may be unaware of local stations' needs*.

Other NZFS research reports have suggested that the most effective forms of fire safety communication are done at the local community level through interpersonal contact (for example, Kaiwai et. al. 2000 and Chalmers 2000). Some of the more effective methods for successful interaction between fire fighters and the public include building rapport, using humour and drawing on personal experience and stories to help communicate their messages (Lloyd & Roen 2001). This research evidence suggests there may be a poor fit between fire safety communication created at the top level of the NZFS and the fire fighters who are working at the ground level and in touch with the day-to-day realities of the various local communities.

2.5 Social media use

The NZFS has begun using Facebook and YouTube in connection with its campaigning. The 'New Zealand Fire Service' page on Facebook has about 20,000 'likes' (as of May 2012). During a Rugby World Cup multimedia campaign, 'Word from the wise', its YouTube channel ranked 52nd most viewed New Zealand YouTube channel (for the week of 12 September 2011). These advertisements featured unscripted interviews with New Zealanders who had been out drinking and were filmed on city streets. The use of everyday New Zealanders to impart their advice suggests a strategy of involvement rather than guilt-based persuasion, which the report will argue is of particular relevance to social media fire safety communication.

There is also a widespread informal use of the internet by local fire stations and volunteer brigades to engage with local communities. For example, the Greenhithe community's Volunteer Fire Brigade and the Taradale Volunteer Fire Brigade each keep a blog. The Rolleston Volunteer Fire Brigade has its own website containing details of its history and information for community members, including a 'questions' section where a fire fighter answers the public's questions such as "what is the scariest fire you have been involved in?". A number of fire brigades also have their own, mostly static, unofficial websites (such as the Papamoa and Plimmerton Volunteer Fire Brigades, and the Tokoroa and Tauranga Fire Brigades).

In addition to their websites, the Porirua Fire Brigade and the Newlands Volunteer Fire Brigade maintain Facebook pages, Porirua with a Twitter account also. The Ngaruawahia Volunteer Fire Brigade has a Facebook page but no website. While their number of 'likes' is low, their activity has a localised focus. The Newlands and Ngaruawahia Fire Brigades post their call outs, and the Porirua Fire Brigade regularly post photos of call outs and community activity. The Porirua Facebook page is especially focused on posting content related to fire safety messages and local news involving fires. Without conducting in depth research, it is difficult to determine whether there are other local brigades that have also embarked on a social media initiative, as there is no obvious structure of how these are organised under the NZFS. Rather, it seems clear from the unpolished nature of these websites and social media accounts, and from their self-disclosed references as 'unofficial' sites that these community initiatives are independent from the NZFS's fire safety communications strategies.

2.6 Conclusion

This report aims to build on those studies and emerging web-based initiatives. It argues that the NZFSC may wish to rethink aspects of its fire safety communication strategy. Firstly, the report suggests that the social marketing framework does not describe well the current campaigning, in which a call-to-action approach predominates. Secondly, only parts of the rapidly expanding social media in New Zealand can be conceptualised in marketing terms. Thirdly, social media appear to provide many opportunities for the NZFS to draw upon the local knowledge and community status of its frontline staff, linking their fire safety work more closely into media campaigning. Fourthly, social media, as will be argued below, may provide access to some of those in society who continue to have a high fire risk. A strategy may be needed that articulates the different elements of fire safety communication together, establishes the appropriate balance between them and develops appropriate KPIs. The report proposes that social media could play a significant role in that strategy.

Chapter 3: Research approach

3.1 Qualitative approach

This qualitative research complements other work that the NZFSC has commissioned (UMR 2011), in which a survey-based research methodology was used.

The use of online focus groups and interviews allowed us to analyse how the people we spoke to relate to social media, including how they value them, how they make sense of them and what role they play in people's lives. By doing this we believe we are able to build on questions that the UMR (2011) quantitative study on the value of social media for fire safety communication asked. For example, that study asked survey respondents if they would visit an NZFS Facebook page. Among them, 44 percent of young people, 38 percent of renters and 28 percent of Asian respondents said they would do so. The current study seeks to understand rather *why* they might visit such a page, and how it would fit within the ways they valued and understood social media. As a result, the report is able to give some guidance to the NZFSC on how it might tailor its approach to using emerging media. It is hoped that this guidance will continue to be of value as the media environment changes further.

The focus group methodology also provides a different kind of evidence to surveys. A broad consensus exists within social science research that asking individuals from a particular social group about their media use in front of others from that social group is likely to provide material that will be shaped by the ways of acting and thinking prevalent among that group. The respondents will be talking about these media in front of others who use this media alongside them, and will therefore be accountable to them for their answers. They will also be responding to others with whom they share some things. To some researchers, this approach avoids the problem of 'acquiescence', in which survey respondents may be prone to agree with what they read as the researcher's preferred answer, or the problem of 'social desirability', in which respondents seek to present

themselves in a good light. Any bias that is present is likely to be bias instead towards what the individual thinks the group values, and focus group material must therefore be read as evidence of group rather than personal knowledge. This study reads the discussion about how the people who participated use social media as related to how the social networks they are part of function and the ways of thinking prevalent in those networks.

Because of the more open-ended and group-oriented talk in focus groups, the result of these studies can often be findings about how ideas develop and operate within a cultural context (Kitzinger 1994: 116) or about complex ideas and behaviours that people might not have thought a lot about before entering into the focus group discussion forum (Mitchell and Branigan 2000: 263). As a result, focus groups are particularly suited to research where the aim is less to gather specific data and more to develop ideas and new frameworks.

3.2 Research design

The focus groups were conducted online in Facebook groups created for the research. The groups were asynchronous, that is, the participants were not together at the same moment. Williams and Robson (2004) state that the strengths of asynchronous focus groups in an online environment are that participants have more time to carefully construct and consider their responses and there are no limitations on what can be said or how many comments are made.

Suitable respondents were contacted for each of the target groups and asked to participate in the research. Some potential respondents were contacted by the researchers, while others were contacted by other respondents of the same target group. Mostly, this was done online through Facebook, Trade Me forums, and SkyKiwi (a New Zealand-based Chinese community) with some offline contacts also used. This ‘snowballing’ method is common in focus group recruitment where population sampling is not random, allowing for contacts of participants to also take part (Williams and Robson 2004). Participants were given a $20 supermarket voucher after participating. Overall the research design was intended to:

a) bring the discussions as close as possible to the kind of talk that would happen in social media between these people, so as to increase the validity of the findings
b) make it easy for people to participate.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants who expressed a willingness to talk further. Focus group sizes varied slightly across the participant-types, with 12 in each of the students' and single mothers' focus groups, 10 in the young Pasifika adults' focus group, and 8 in the young Asian adults' focus group. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 4 participants from each focus group. Both the focus groups and interviews were conducted by the researcher of this thesis. These focus groups and interviews took place between November 2011 and February 2012. The focus group questions and interview topics are included in Appendix 1.

Please note that unless stated otherwise, references to participants' discussion refer to discussion in the focus group pertaining to their participant-type. All participants' names have been changed to honour confidentiality of their participation, and participant-types are sometimes referred to in short-hand as per the following:

- Tertiary student living in rental accommodation = students
- Young adults who are single mothers = single mothers
- Young Asian Adults = Asian
- Young Pasifika Adults = Pasifika

Chapter 4: Understanding social media

4.1 Changing media use

There is compelling evidence that the media environment is changing in New Zealand in a reflection of media trends across developed countries. From an advertising or marketing point of view, the key message is the fragmentation of audiences as digital television, portable media such as smartphones and web-based platforms such as Facebook, Twitter of Digg become a more significant part of individuals' media use and as advertising becomes spread across more media and the opportunities for targeted marketing clarify.

However, from a broader communication perspective, the key message is that aspects of people's use of media and their relationships with each other and the wider society are changing. Traditional media organisations, the Pew Research Center argues, are still very important to their consumers, 'but technology has scrambled every aspect of the relationship' (Purcell et al 2010: 8).

Firstly, it has become recognised that once people produce their own media, their relationship with media produced by professionals, whether that is promotional, entertainment or informational media, is altered. The World Internet Project's New Zealand survey suggests as many as a quarter of internet users in this country post comments on blogs or message boards at least weekly, and significant numbers also post images, video or audio online (Smith et al. 2011). Some researchers talk of a 'convergence culture' emerging, in which the ease and normalness of this activity combines with a weakening trust in institutions and a growing individualism in wider culture to blur the boundaries between the ideas of media producer and consumer, authority and ordinary person, professional and amateur (Jenkins 2006, Matheson 2009).

Secondly, consumption of media is still largely a matter of tuning into or reading trusted or habitually-used media outlets. But for significant numbers of individuals, particularly young adults, media such as news are received also through other people forwarding or

sharing links. In one 2009 US study, 71 percent of internet users received news through email or posts or social networks, and 50 percent said they sent links to others (Purcell et al 2010). Social networks, particularly Facebook, have risen rapidly to be a preferred way to share news. Commentators note that people tend to say they enjoy the act of sharing news and other information with each other and are highly likely to read material shared with them by those they follow as it comes from 'trusted intermediaries' (Waldman 2005).

Thirdly, as technological convergence allows a range of media to be accessed easily via smartphones and similar devices, the distinction between time spent using media and time doing other things makes less sense. Media are now, in one scholar's words, an 'ambient' presence in everyday life (Hermida 2010). Some of the time, the relationship work done through social media is not experienced by individuals who use it regularly as mediated at all, but as part of the everyday. Particularly among young adults, including those spoken to for this study, social media drift towards being invisible, apparent when the group is asked how they would get on without these tools. In planning how the strategic use of media by the NZFS can be extended into emerging media, the different status of these media in people's lives needs to be thought through.

It is important also to note that traditional media remain important in people's relationships with the world beyond their own experience and immediate acquaintances. Television use remains high, with near universal penetration of sets in New Zealand homes. Nearly everyone watches some television and people spend an average of two hours every day watching it (Statistics NZ 2011). For entertainment at least, television is most New Zealanders' preferred medium (Smith et al 2011). In addition, it is unlikely that the authority of television as the place of culturally shared and significant knowledge has been much weakened. In the following chapter, young adults frequently mention television advertisements when discussing what they know of fire safety. However, this chapter will argue that those individuals' relationship with what 'everyone else knows' is undergoing change.

4.2 Networked individuals

Communication researchers tend to understand social media as environments or spaces within which people do things rather than as vehicles for messages. That means that the focus of an organisation wanting to use social media needs to be as much on fostering certain kinds of relationships, on producing material that meets people's social expectations and on working alongside how people within those spaces are producing their own kinds of talk and visual imagery. Questions of control and comfortableness come to the fore, or in the media scholar John B. Thompson's terms, the relevance of the communication to the self (Thompson 1995: 212). In this way, social media differ quite markedly from communication forms such as television advertising or brochures, in which the environment is much more established by advertisers or content producers, and so is less of an issue in designing use of the medium. In social media, it appears that individuals play a more active role in working through the relevance of the communication for their selves, requiring organisations that want to reach them to pay close attention to how the communication makes sense to those individuals.

This does not mean that social media are focused on isolated individuals. As the term 'social media' suggests, these media are all about interaction. Communication researchers have sought terms that describe these interactions, with interactivity and then community used in earlier research as frameworks, and then more recently ideas of 'networked individualism'. This theory suggests that the measure of control that social media allow people over how they use these media to get information, talk to others or project versions of themselves to others places them primarily as individuals. They are not so much mass media audiences, who draw on broad cultural categories, such as their shared sense of national identity or prevailing ideas about what is important or enjoyable. But their individuality is still clearly shaped by cultural and social forces, and the networks that they forge amongst themselves are shaped by their age, education levels, social expectations and cultural norms. So the idea of networked individualism paints a picture of individuals taking a lead in shaping their relationships in the media environments they are operating in, but orienting towards prevailing ideas in the social context about how to act and think.

Consequently, most researchers emphasise that the relationships that people carry out in social media are closely connected to their offline relationships and environment. This

means that the power of a media content producer to create a media world, as a television drama does, is much less in social media not only because individuals have some control but also because these spaces are already part of people's real worlds. Instead, as Baym (2010) puts it, these media are embedded or 'domesticated' in people's everyday lives. So the ways that people talk are usually extensions of how they talk in other environments and the people that they talk with are often people they interact with in those environments. The difference is in the network logic that shapes how they communicate, which theorists propose will lead to different ways of leading their social lives and different ways of participating in wider cultural and public kinds of talk.

4.3 Strong and weak ties

In particular, scholars talk about how the 'ties' that link people are different in networked media such as Facebook, Twitter or blogs. We can distinguish between strong and weak ties, in which the strength of a tie arises out of a "combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterise the tie" (Granovetter 1973: 1361). On the one hand, strong ties increase people's sense of bonding and their status in their group. On the other, the more dense an individual's network is with strong ties, the more "encapsulated" he or she is within his or her own network. Conversely, the more weak ties an individual has in his or her network, the more that person is bridged into the wider world, able to connect with ideas and influences that are socially distant. Baym (2010) draws on the term 'social capital' to distinguish the different kinds of benefit that people gain from strong and weak ties: strong ties build up people's 'bonding capital' and weak ties build up their 'bridging capital'. This kind of analysis of people's communicative networks casts light on the increased freedom that individuals have to move about their network using quickly formed and then discarded weak ties (e.g. Baym 2010). Pfeil (2010) argues online support communities can thrive when people can easily join or leave, because there will be less at stake in disclosing personal details and fewer inhibitions around social status or authority. Individuals who can find their way through these networks – who are often the first to know a new piece of information or the ones who know the right person to talk to – build up bridging capital within their social circle.

If both these kinds of ties and social capital have value for people in social media, then there is both an inward tendency to media such as Facebook of reinforcing people's strongest personal networks and also an outward tendency of allowing people to connect rapidly and easily with others in the wider public space. Shirky (2009) calls this latter aspect an 'amplification' of our natural tendencies towards sociality, a feature of social media that allows sharing and chatting to merge into public activities. As these wide, loose networks become important in public talk, the boundaries between traditional public media (such as broadcasting or newspapers) and media that were traditionally for in-group or personal talk (such as the phone or letters) are blurring. Some of that blurring of boundaries creates discomfort and a breaching of institutional boundaries, sometimes spectacularly so, as, for example, when Wikileaks created software that created the weakest ties possible so whistleblowers could leak commercial and politically sensitive information without being caught. It also provides opportunities for businesses, non-governmental organisations and government bodies to perform their relationships with people across these weak ties, meeting people for public purposes in their individual networks.

4.4 Organisations and social media

The use of social media by larger organisations can be divided into three main areas: internal communication, campaigning and ongoing relationships. In all there seems to be opportunities for more communication (a McKinsey report found that transnational corporations experienced much more interaction across their units and offices) but identifying the benefits for those organisations is more of a challenge (McKinsey 2009).

Campaigning

Campaigning through individuals' networks is by far the most prominent and well understood area. Among the most prominent was the Obama 2008 presidential campaign, which inserted the president into people's interpersonal spaces. His campaign team invited people to become 'fans' of the candidate on Facebook and to subscribe to instant updates via blogs and an 'Obama app' on the iPhone. Some people who were linked up by these communication tools were more engaged in the campaign – one study suggested those contacted by campaigns by text message were 4 per cent more likely to vote (Kaid 2009: 421). A wide range of other organisations, from state to non-governmental and corporate,

have used social media successfully to run large-scale campaigns with significant results in recent years. The online social change group Avaaz boasts 15 million members worldwide whom it can mobilise for rapid campaigns against governments and corporates. Greenpeace has run large consumer campaigns in social media against corporates involved in rainforest depletion. Singer Lady Gaga has established a fan base of more than 50 million on Facebook and hundreds of thousands on her own social network platform through the projection of a persona who is values-based and who cares about her fans. The Swedish army, in a successful campaign designed to call young people enter its public service, streamed images online of a person locked in a box in central Stockholm and called on other individuals to release him by replacing him in the box. What links examples such as these is that they: 1) talk to individuals as individuals, not as an aggregate mass audience; 2) call on people through weak ties not as consumers but as moral and political beings, asking them to care or to become involved in something beyond their immediate daily lives; 3) they talk in ways that are relevant to individuals' sense of self and how they wish to present themselves to others within their networks; and 4) they make action that was hard, such as political campaigning or finding others with shared values, much easier. The digital enthusiast Shirky (2009: 16) writes:

> *We now have communications tools that are flexible enough to match our social capabilities, and we are witnessing the rise of new ways of coordinating action that take advantage of the change.*

As a result, campaign media are becoming aligned with the everyday social.

Ongoing relationships

Dramatic examples, however, risk obscuring the more enduring impacts of organisations entering into interpersonal communication networks. Stohl (2011) sees organisations as more powerful as a result of the ability to draw individuals more easily into their activities and circles of influence. She also finds organisations at the same time more porous, that is, less in control of how individuals participate. When it is experienced by people as most meaningful, as in the 2010 Queensland floods example noted at the start of this report, it appears to be a two-way interaction. The Queensland Police Service (QPS) reported that a lesson learnt was not to "use social media solely to push out information. Use it to receive

feedback and involve your online community" (QPS 2011: vii). And in fact soon after the floods, the QPS found its Facebook page inundated with negative comments about an alleged child killer that risked jeopardising a prosecution (Knight 2011).

The challenge raised here is a cultural one, of how organisations think of the purpose and nature of communication – and crucially how those they interact with think of those. A number of researchers have pointed out that there is a collective and interpersonal dimension to the knowledge that is produced in social networks. Some talk of collective intelligence (Lévy 2005), others of the wisdom of crowds (Suroweicki 2004), to describe the way that many individuals discussing a topic produce knowledge that has slightly different status to the knowledge produced by formal organisations. Rather than speak on behalf of publics, in authoritative terms, with claims to objectivity or drawing on thinking that is consensually shared in society, networked media are thought to produce a wealth of privately owned, subjective knowledge, in which personal experience, reflection and authenticity are the markers of what makes the talk valued (Matheson and Allan 2007). Working across these differences between what we could call institutional knowledge and collectively produced knowledge appears to be the biggest challenge for the NZFS in using social media to help people think about fire safety.

Chapter 5: Beyond social marketing

5.1 Introduction

As noted above, social marketing has been a dominant framework for NZFS fire safety communication since the early 2000s, although it does not describe well some of the service's more successful campaigns (e.g. 'Word from the wise') and does not translate easily into some parts of the digital media environment. This chapter proposes that, while social marketing is valuable in pointing to the need for behaviour-focused rather than awareness-focused, the NZFS needs to rethink its centrality in planning fire safety communication.

Social marketing assumes that, as with commercial marketing, people are willing to give up something – their money or their attention – to gain a benefit. The benefit may be the satisfaction that arises from doing the 'right thing' or the fulfillment of learning something that meets perceived needs. This brand-to-consumer relationship around fire safety communication is likely to make sense to individuals the more society becomes less deferential to authority, more individualist and more consumerist. As noted above, and as outlined by McDermott Miller (2001), this approach works on two assumptions: both that consumers will make a rational choice to pay attention to communication that will gain them benefits; and that the targeted social marketing campaigns will be of more use than mass media advertising in getting people's attention and in driving behavioural change.

5.2 Limitations of the social marketing framework

The social media campaigns discussed in the previous chapter, however, do not fit neatly within a rational choice transactional model. Most explicitly in the Swedish Army case, people acted altruistically and emotionally and in doing so became attracted to military service. While marketing techniques, such as billboards and mass media advertisements were used within the campaign, the content of the campaign was not a message but a sense

of connection to others in society. Critics of social marketing, such as Hastings and Saren (2003), point out that socially beneficial actions rarely work on the immediate gratification basis in the marketing model, and are often in fact benefits for a wider group rather than the individual, such as public health or safer communities. Some analysts suggest that no exchange at all happens when people make sense of communication about matters of public benefit, but that they instead share in something, whether that is the feeling of participating in a group or sharing an idea (Peattie and Peattie 2003).

The concepts of personal relevance and of social capital discussed above are of more value in talking about how people benefit in those moments of sharing and connection. Tracking social capital can show how individuals develop bonding capital by being able to lead those they care about towards more fire-safe behaviour or by being able to cement their roles as community leaders through recruiting others to act in more fire-safe ways. Social capital also identifies how individuals can build bridging capital by being the ones to reach outside their existing networks to connect with information such as resources and advice or with wider society.

5.3 Leveraging social capital and relationships

While marketing is reshaping its practices for the emerging media environment, this report provides evidence that the NZFS goal of 'working with communities to protect what they value' is likely to be advanced significantly by seeing people as networked individuals rather than audiences or consumers, by communicating in ways that are perceived as relevant to them in their everyday lives and by giving them material that will build both bridging and bonding social capital for them in those everyday situations. These ideas have particular value in the social media context where the individual is to the fore, asked to shape her or his self-presentation and to manage her or his networks.

The previous chapter noted the challenge for organisations in entering into ongoing relationships with the public using social media. Commercial organisations have, however, also found benefits from emphasising maintaining relationships over selling. For example, Ziv (2009) highlighted how advertisers can receive instant feedback as to the success of their campaign, unlike other media forms where actions cannot be tracked in the same manner. Lager (2011) saw the potential for social media in creating trust with customers,

leading to greater customer involvement and a culture of selling with, not to, customers. Song (2009) wrote that "since the internet excels in bringing together formerly disparate or marginalized groups of people, virtual communities have become an incredibly effective tool for bringing previously unreached audiences to marketers" (91). In particular, information is presented below that thinking about fire safety communication in terms of fostering relationships within people's own social spaces will be more fruitful in reaching some groups who are at high fire risk.

5.4 Reaching those at risk

There can be no direct links drawn between media use and fire safety behaviours, and particular care must be taken over claims to be able to affect those who, for many reasons, have not responded to NZFS fire safety communication in the past. The emphasis here is more on the opportunities in opening up fresh communication channels with particular groups who are both statistically high users of social media and at high fire risk.

The extent to which those two categories overlap is complex, and the report has studied four target groups without assuming they will all benefit or benefit equally from social media as a space for fire safety communication. The groups are: single mothers; tertiary students living in rental accommodation; young Pasifika adults; young Asian adults. All the participants were below the age of 30. Smith et al. (2010) found under 30s in general used the internet and social media heavily in New Zealand, regardless of social or ethnic background or other demographic criteria. Across all age groups, those of Asian descent were heavier users of the internet and rate it as more important for information. In general, socio-economic factors, as well as age and rural location, were correlated with less access to and use of the internet in the same study. Given the links between socio-economic factors and high fire risk (Chalmers 2000, CRESA 2009), some caution should be exercised in the way social media are used to communicate fire safety. However, as largely unexplored territory for the promotion of fire safety, the study of the four groups above gives the NZFS a starting point to develop a theoretical, evidence-based framework for using social media.

5.5 Relevant and comfortable communication

The report finds evidence that social media are particularly useful for some kinds of communication with individuals from the groups who were studied, and so suggests that the NZFS may be able to align itself with their relevance structures to connect with people in their networks. The report argues in particular that social media can offer a more comfortable communication environment for people to engage with fire safety. Turkle uses the analogy of "modern Goldilockses" to describe how people take comfort in the internet because it can put "people not too close and not too far, but at just the right distance" (2011: 15). The challenge for the NZFS is in finding ways to meet individuals at this comfortable level of engagement in social media. The NZFS would likely be regarded as a weak tie – if it all – in a person's network, a source of bridging social capital. To reach people, then, the NZFS would need to design communication that was personally relevant to an individual, in order to be felt in their network at all. This calls into question the types of knowledge, or messages, best suited for the NZFS to circulate as the promotion of fire safety in this setting. Unlike the mass audience of the mass media that is assumed to be 'acted upon' (McQuail, 2009), the more active role individuals play in their orientation and construction of their networks with social media requires a different approach and understanding of the acquisition of knowledge.

Social media should be thought of as complementing mass media communication by enhancing its relevance for people. Granovetter (1973: 1374) wrote that people rarely act on information from the mass media unless it is also transmitted by personal ties. This is because, without the personal connection to the information there is no particular reason to – it is not part of their relevance structure. Social media's potential to make messages more accessible and enable ideas to spread with little effort through people's social networks gives it particular value as part of a wider campaign.

Chapter 6: People's fire safety knowledge

6.1 Introduction

If relevance and comfortableness are important aspects of how social media may be used for planned communication, it is necessary to understand what individuals already know about fire safety and how they regard that information, so that additional communication can connect with and extend the ways they understand fire safety. The following chapter reports on how respondents in the study talked when asked: what fire safety knowledge they could easily recall; where they had learnt it; and why they thought they could recall this knowledge more easily than other information they may have received along the way. The purpose here was to explore the extent to which fire safety knowledge was part of the knowledge that they 'owned' and was part of their social worlds. TNS (2006) reported that advertising-led communication may give people an awareness of fire safety but not necessarily lead to changes in behaviour. We wanted to explore a number of possibilities that would open up ways for the NZFS to complement other fire safety communication. If the knowledge of fire risk and how to mitigate that risk is regarded as something external and distanced from people, then social media can be used to build more of a connection. If it is regarded as something they have some personal involvement in, social media can augment that experience and relationship. If it is recalled as something learned from other individuals, the NZFS can explore ways that social media might use other individuals to communicate fire safety.

6.2 The value of school-based and consequence-based campaigns

In the focus groups and interviews, many participants tended to remember similar items of information about fire safety, and reflected also that they remembered this for similar

reasons. Three explanations stood out as reasons why some fire safety knowledge was better remembered. These related to the 'catchiness' of a slogan, the repetition of knowledge, and education from a young age. Most knowledge tended to be recalled from primary school education and television advertisements. These trends suggest that publicly shared knowledge (through slogans, widely repeated messages and television advertisements) and involvement in the learning process (largely from primary school) are most important in information sticking in the participants' minds. Strongly visual material is also significant.

The phrase "stop, drop and roll" was the most commonly quoted piece of fire safety knowledge by all participant types. This spoke to a wider theme of learning fire safety knowledge in primary school that participants still remember today. Many participants believed this education was memorable because of the use of a catchy phrase, and repetition of the phrase from a young age. Some also reflected their recall of this phrase was helped by a New Zealand pop song of the same title (for example, Maria in the young Pasifika adult focus group). Rachel (student) wrote how *"[I] think I've remembered it because it was catchy and repeated several times during my years at primary school."* Similar reasoning was given by many participants, across all focus groups. Even in the slightly older single mothers group, many recalled their knowledge of the phrase from their own primary school days and although some identified that the phrase had changed since then as their children were learning it, their memory of the phrase learnt from their own childhood was stronger. For example, Lauren wrote: *"I also remember stop, drop and roll from when I was at school – although now that my kids are at school the catch phrase is get down, stay down, get out (or something similar to that)."*

Indeed, fire safety education at a young age was strongly remembered, and some participants even contextualised the fire safety knowledge they recalled with the experiences of learning it. For example, Christina (student) explained how *"in primary we had a fire safety demonstration thing where we all had to role play being in a fire and doing stop drop and roll… I've never forgotten it and even remember the classroom I was in when doing it!"* Similarly, Tara (Pasifika) recalled when *"some local firefighters visited our class at primary school and showed us a scorched/blackened electric blanket which almost burned down a house and burned a boy about our age (six years old). --- I have*

never ever forgotten it because it was so visual." In an interview Brett (Asian) talked of *"all the stuff I remember about fire safety like… I was young"* and reasoned that *"starting young was really good. Like going to schools because kids love fire engines, like if they see one they're real excited... stuff that seems like – I don't know, that they don't get to see every day they love it."* These examples of memories from primary school education suggest that the use of a combination of strong visual elements with active involvement contributed to fire safety knowledge making a memorable impact at a young age.

Powerful visual elements were also reported by participants as being effective in helping them remember television advertisements from the NZFS. For example a few students mentioned how the visual impact of some television advertisements was effective by triggering fear. Rachel wrote that she remembered *"things like never leave cooking unattended, from the horrifically sad firesafety ads on TV. Scare tactics work."* This provides evidence in support of effectiveness of the existing consequence-based model of television advertisements used by the NZFS. While many participants recalled fire safety knowledge from television advertisements, they more commonly attributed their ability to do so to repetition, 'catchiness' of phrases or slogans used, and recentness of the advertising campaign. Participants tended to remember slogans such as *"come on guys, get firewise"* and *"don't drink and fry"*. Shawn (young Pasifika adult) wrote *"the catchier it is the easier it is to remember."*

Many participants recalled pieces of fire safety knowledge and attributed this to television advertisements without an explanation of why they might recall these particular pieces of information. Marcus (young Pasifika adult), however, explained why this may be the case for him:

> *they have a way of engaging the audience as they pretty much do all the work for us by sending their message out in under 30 seconds while I just sit there sometimes 2-3 times a night. Although I know I have seen them, I don't remember written adverts like in magazines or billboards because I actually have to read them and even though the work I have to put in is minimal, its just so much easier to recall television adverts.*

Michael (student) and Brett (young Asian adult) both made similar observations in interviews. Michael explained: *"Where like as in TV, when ads come on you're almost*

forced to kind of watch them. You can go away if you want to but a lot of the time you'll just sit there and wait through the ad". Likewise, Brett said that: *"Like TV you have to watch it because it's in between stuff. A lot of people just have it on because you don't want to change the channel"*. This characteristic of television as a communication channel is different to social media, and it means the ways NZFS might find success in using social media to promote fire safety are likely to be distinct.

6.3 Weak collective knowledge

This report argues that the concept of collective knowledge borne through wider network engagement holds greater potential for the NZFS in using social media to promote fire safety than that of shared knowledge, which was well articulated by participants as being obtained through mass media and other authoritative institutions such as the educational system. While the recollection of shared knowledge such as the phrase *"stop, drop and roll"* pays testament to the effectiveness of communication strategies through these channels, with the exception of two single mothers sharing their stories of fire safety from personal experience, there was little evidence of participants tapping into collective knowledge to demonstrate the fire safety knowledge they had obtained.

Notably, participants rarely related their fire safety knowledge to personal experiences of their own that did not involve authoritative institutions. When probed further in interviews, some participants were hesitant about their claims of feeling equipped to deal with a fire-related incident. There was a widely shared sense of *"having a vague idea what to do"* (Shawn, Pasifika) or the supposition that *"maybe I'd instinctively know what to do"* (Allison, Pasifika). We suggest that this may be due to the absence of personal relevance ascribed to their understanding of fire safety. Indeed, it is also suggested that a degree of complacency was implicit in participants' orientation to fire safety due to the detached manner. Many of them quoted commonly understood 'shared' knowledge about fire safety and attributed their memory of this to reasons of repetition and catchiness, in ways that were absent of personally meaningful connections made to them.

Also significant was the inability of most interviewees to identify where their local fire station was. This inability was expressed with surprise, with some interviewees initially

assuming they did, but with closer thought realising they did not. For example, Patricia (Asian) said: *"I think I do. Wait, I don't know where it is – no I don't actually. No actually I don't."* The word "actually" was used by other interviewees also to communicate this lack of knowledge, suggesting that they were also clarifying and acknowledging this point with themselves at the same time. At these moments participants realised just how limited their personally relevant knowledge of the NZFS and its work was.

This highlights a gap between the ways in which participants will more readily use, or imagine to use, social media by tapping into the resource of collective knowledge, and the ways in which they have learned fire safety knowledge through shared forms of knowledge. We see an opportunity here for the NZFS to use social media to promote the circulation of collective fire safety knowledge, with social media's ability to make the knowledge more personally relevant adding richer depth to shared knowledge obtained through more traditional communication channels. As will be described later, though, this proposed framework is conceptually challenging to how participants imagine learning fire safety and is therefore not described as an easy task for the NZFS to implement.

Chapter 7: Research findings

7.1 Introduction: General trends in social media use

If the NZFS is to stand alongside communities in their social interactions online, it needs to understand the ways that people use social media and regard it as a communication environment. This chapter reports on key aspects of social media use that emerged within the focus groups and interviews, before moving on to interpret in the next chapter the implications for the NZFS's approach to social media.

Observations from the research conducted demonstrate five general trends in what participants say they do with social media. These are summarised as the following:

1. Social media enable individuals to communicate with greater ease with their social network

2. Social media induce a style of communication that is perceived as 'less awkward' than other forms of interaction

3. Social media are tentatively valued as a useful tool for practical information

4. Participants engaged differently with the social capital available through social media

5. Personal relevance to use of social media is essential.

7.2 Greater ease of social interaction

The most common articulated use of social media was to keep in touch with both friends and family, a finding that reinforces the UMR (2011) survey. For example, Lauren (single mother) wrote: *"I generally use social media to share photos and updates with family and friends who are spread all over the world."* In the young Pasifika adult focus group, Allison wrote: *"I use social media to keep in contact with family and friends on Facebook."* Comments such as these were widespread in those two groups.

Students living in rental accommodation differed slightly. They spoke more of using social media (primarily Facebook) to keep in contact with friends and acquaintances and not for family. For example, Michelle stated: *"I use it to keep up to date and communicate with friends."* Young Asian adults spoke in ways that drew from both trends. Some identified friends and family; others were less specific. For example, Monica wrote that social media are *"a great way to keep in touch with people who live afar or are travelling."*

These differences aside, a clear common theme is that participants used social media as a tool to stay in touch with people who played a pre-existing part in their lives, a finding that replicates overseas studies (e.g. boyd 2008). In this way, they implied that social media had helped them to continue their relationships with greater ease than other modes of communication. Participants often spoke of the friends and family they communicate with using social media as geographically distant, implying that using social media or Facebook specifically has helped to further break down the barrier of physical location to keeping in touch with those that are important to them. It should be noted that the way people reflect on their use may not exactly reflect that use, as some everyday practices may become relatively invisible.

Social media were also valued as a way to reconnect with those that people had lost touch with, or were unlikely to be in contact with otherwise. For example Natasha (Asian) wrote: "s*ince it has became so popular, it is easier to find some long lost friends especially high school mates"*; Christina (student) said: *"social media is also good for getting in touch with people you haven't seen in a while for example someone you went to school with years ago but haven't seen since then."* While this point was most commonly made in the

student focus group, it was not explicitly mentioned in the single mother focus group, suggesting some aspects of social media are more valuable in certain social contexts.

Other cited benefits of social media demonstrating its ease of use as a communication tool included an expectation that communication conducted through social media would more likely yield a response, and at a faster speed than through other communication channels. For example, this was expressed by some single mothers as an advantage for using social media for support purposes. Erica talked about this in relation to the Christchurch earthquakes: *"its great being able to jump on there* [Trade Me forum] *day or night especially after the large aftershocks and know that there will be others feeling the same way."* Kelly also wrote that she had *"used messageboards when I have needed to know something & was likely to get a broad range of advice/opinion relatively quickly… You can get more info quickly by this type of communication."*

In the Asian focus group, Julia explained why being part of a Facebook group for her class was useful for reasons of speed and convenience: *"Think how hard it would be to track everyone down and ask them individually! It is actually far more convenient and quicker to do so rather than emailing or seeing a lecturer and asking them in person."* In the young Pasifika adult focus group, Shawn wrote how he will use Facebook to contact someone *"if the person is notorious for not replying to txts"*, implying that Facebook could be a faster way to get in touch with someone than sending a text message.

This ease of communication can be attributed to why some participants articulated their preference for using social media to achieve some social goals. For example, organising events or contacting a large number of people via social media were seen as a time saver for reaching people *"all in the one spot rather than texts or phone calls going back and forth to one organiser"* (Christina, student). Philip also emphasised this point in the young Asian adult focus group, explaining how it *"means that you don't have to repeat yourself with everyone".* Anna (young Pasifika adult) described how she recently used social media *"aka facebook"* to organise a hen's night. She explained how it was useful *"as it is easy and I had faster responses as to whether or not people were going to attend… I did not have to waste my time leaving messages and chasing guests up."* In the student focus group, similar remarks were made by Jessica and Amanda, and Melissa detailed how she

"found it particularly helpful when I was running fundraising events because I could post up information for people to read in their own time (if they wanted to) and join in." This type of advantage was not explicitly discussed by single mothers.

The examples covered under this heading paint a picture of social media enabling communication with greater ease for participants with their family and friends. There was a pattern of participants remarking that social media is easier for communicating with larger groups of people, such as when organising an event due to expectations that a response via social media would be faster than other forms of communication, and that social media were a more reliable tool to communicate with in general.

These observations are held together by an understanding that is implicit in participants' discussion. That is, these participants regard social media as a central space for accessing their network of connections. Their answers work on their own knowledge and experience and on the belief that they are able to tap into their network via social media at their own time to attend to their own wishes and demands, and that others in their network will be doing the same, on a frequent basis. These media are an easy and efficient extension of their existing social lives.

7.3 Less awkward communication

The ease of use discussed above extended often into observations of social media's value as a tool for *"casual communication"* (Kristie, student), and this translated to a perception of social media as a 'less awkward' communication tool, reinforcing observations from other contexts that social media lower barriers particularly for those who social interaction uncomfortable (Ellison, Steinfield and Lamp 2008). Many participants noted this as something particularly useful. For example, in the Pasifika focus group, Derek compared using social media to making a phone call: *"you don't really have to commit to something like a phone call and a conversation can last for more than one day."* In the young Asian adult focus group, Monica also commented along these lines: *"You can do it in your own time and aren't 'put on the spot' so can think about what you want to communicate."* In an interview with Danielle (student), she elaborated on why she liked to use Facebook's

private messaging option specifically over other forms of communication such as email and Skype:

> *It's way more flexible and you can do it at any time of the day. Like I personally wouldn't really want to Skype anyone if it was late at night and I'm in my pajamas and not really feeling like I want to see anyone, but Facebook yeah because it does have that separation and you can choose when you want to respond and it's all up to you individually you feel like no-one's controlling what you're doing really.*

Further, the asynchronous ability of some social media to create a sense of "not actually talking" to others appeared to be a key advantage for many in terms of making it a more comfortable style of communication with people they were less familiar with. Maria (young Pasifika) explained the reasoning behind this when she said it is *"easier to use social media when it is somebody that you don't really talk to, but want to talk to, because you're not actually talking to them".* This was articulated in a range of ways, for example:

> *It is just easier to type it in a non-personal setting such as facebook* (Diana, young Asian adult).

> *I like the way you can choose who and what you respond to on facebook, and how you can choose when you respond* (Amanda, student).

In an interview, Danielle (student) explained how the distance created by social media in communication practices could also be useful for helping people that were part of her wider network: *"in terms of people knowing that they do have a support network it's easier to reach out to people when, if you otherwise wouldn't feel comfortable but with that small separation it could be a step towards at least making someone feel a little bit better."* Although single mothers did not talk along these lines when discussing how social media can be a more comfortable communication tool, their answers tended to centre on parenting advice and using message boards constructively in anonymous settings. Examples of this talk include:

> *I think with messageboards sometimes its about being able to be anonymous. sometimes theres things that ya want opinions on but asking people you know could be embarresing* (Mary).

> *its good to use messageboards for on-the-spot advice. sometimes if theres an embarrassing or personal question i don't want to take to family or friends it can be good to get an answer in a faceless environment like a messageboard. there have also been times when it feels like I have talked a topic to death with people who know me, so if i still need to talk about it, I take it to a messageboard to get more opinions/perspectives without hassling my friends any more!* (Katie).

The advantage of social media making communication less awkward was also expressed in terms of providing space to have a more reasoned discussion or debate than via communication in other means. For example, Erin (student) referenced how social media is good *"for this kind of thing"* (the focus group) because *"you are free to put responses that may be more difficult to say in real life".* In a similar sense, Christina (student) wrote how:

> *Confrontation over something is always alot easier in writing therefore if you have a problem with a friend it can sometimes be alot more civilised to discuss problems through a tool such as chat or mail on facebook. It gives you more time to react and respond to confrontation so that the problem can be resolved without the heat of a face to face argument. It can be alot easier to get your point across in this sense.*

While single mothers did not make reference to social media making communication easier for well-thought discussion, a few mentioned they liked it as a communication tool because they were shy in some situations. For example Erica wrote how *"I can be quiet shy around new people so being able to post without having to face people is great and I have met many people who I wouldnt have ever met had it not been for social media".* Similarly, Nicky explained in an interview that: *"I'm a little bit shy, so yeah no I think it's quite good because it's faceless and nameless and things* [Trade Me message boards]."

Participants consistently talked of being able to use social media to engage in activity that they might have felt less comfortable doing in another setting. In describing the benefits of using social media to communicate, Danielle explained: "*it's all up to you individually you feel like no-one's controlling what you're doing really".* It seems to be this sense of greater control over communication processes afforded by social media that contributes to making it a less awkward experience, particularly when communicating with those less familiar to the person, or when the topic is sensitive in nature. Single mothers stood out as a group that cited benefits of this through different uses of social media, such as anonymous forums for embarrassing topics, and for breaking down the barrier of shyness.

7.4 Some value for practical information

An extension of the value of social media as a central space for anytime contact with one's network was uses of social media for informational purposes. However, there were marked differences in this perception across the focus groups.

Many interviewees were asked what percentage of their social media use they would estimate was for information or knowledge-seeking purposes rather than purely social purposes. Amongst the young Asian and Pasifika adults, the responses were not uniform with some tending towards predominantly social uses, while others believed they used social media more for informational and transactional reasons. For example, Patricia and Brett (Asian) both estimated their social media use for informational or practical tasks would be 70 percent. Brett explained how "*I'd probably say like 70/30 like I suppose I do Facebook stalk a wee bit but it's usually for events, birthdays stuff like that – to set stuff up, or check when things are and things like that."* Anna (Pasifika) estimated her use of social media for informational reasons would be about 30 percent, and she explained how it was useful that *"I go on our nursing page everyday though. Just especially with the earthquake because we're right in the city and we might get moved out to Lincoln so it's good to see what's happening."* Students consistently articulated a higher level of use of social media for social reasons. Jessica said that *"including events and things probably about 10%* [informational reasons] *I'd say, so not really a hell of a lot."* Danielle's response was similar, estimating "*purely social would most likely be 85 – 90% I'd have to say."*

Different again, the use of social media for social versus informational reasons was not as easy to separate for single mothers. Katherine's response indicated that she used social media for both reasons while seemingly placing more significance on the 'social': *"I mean it's about the social as well but I do sometimes you know, look for information on there as well. It's sort of half and half really."* Nicky estimated she uses social media more for informational reasons at 75 percent, but as a means of providing information to others rather than seeking it. Andrea did not estimate a figure, but elaborated with an example of how she used social media in an information-seeking way:

> *Not long ago I asked about my three year old being such a tantrum thrower and you know what to do with her and that, and as someone said which is true – ignore the negative behaviour and praise the positive. So things like that can be very informative and very good because you have people have been there and done that you know.*

Some of the responses of social versus informational use cited above were not obviously reflected in other discussion made by the participants, and it is suggested that this may be because reasons for social media use are fluid. Participants' discussion suggests that popular uses may be in a transitional mode trending towards greater weight in informational purposes. This may not be at the cost of social purposes, but in addition to them and blurring the boundary between the two, increasing individual time spent using social media. Indeed, the differences in articulated uses demonstrate the tentativeness with which many participants regard social media's purposes. This is accentuated in their perception of social media for advice and support reasons, to be discussed in the following section.

Some interviewees who were less articulate about their use of social media for informational purposes were also asked if they have, or would consider connecting directly with a business or organisation via social media. Generally, participants answered that this was something they had not really done but that they would not have a problem doing. These responses may suggest that they had not given much consideration to using this channel of communication for such purposes. Jessica (a student) said that:

> *Um no I haven't but if it was a specific thing with a specific company then I wouldn't have a problem going and using social media through them and maybe seeing if other people had had similar things, and social media might be quite useful to see if other people had been in similar situations.*

On the flip side, a few participants reported already using social media to engage directly with businesses, causes and organisations. For example, Patricia (young Asian adult) said in an interview: *"I have done that like on Twitter. Like I think tweeting an online shopping company or something or just a music store or whatever – hey do you have this in stock today… I'm perfectly fine with that. Twitter is fine because it's more anonymous."*

Young Pasifika adults articulated a more diverse set of uses that fitted into this category in the focus group. For example, Maria wrote how she joined a Facebook page *Against Newmarket Cotton Page,* and Allison wrote how she left feedback on companies Facebook pages such as *The Warehouse* and *Mighty Ape.*

While people did not generally tend to consider social media as an obvious channel for communication between themselves and organisations, their references to other ways they used social media implied that they were already doing something close to this, but in a more social way. For example, although Jessica (student) said she had not explicitly interacted with organisations using social media, she said that she likes to engage with *The Healthy Food Guide* because she likes "*that they share their recipes and post interesting articles about food and health on Facebook: this is because it relates to my studies and main interests…"* Shawn (Pasifika) too said that he used his Facebook news feed *"almost as like an actual news feed… so like [I follow] Al Jazeera, CNN, 3 news, Stuff.co.nz so it's just interesting articles that come up."* He also stated that he likes businesses like Dick Smith on Facebook because *"usually they post deals on their Facebook and it just comes up in my news feed."*

Allison (Pasifika) and Patricia (Asian) were two participants who used social media in uncharacteristically sophisticated ways. Single mothers were also distinctive as a group in their social media use, utilising more social media platforms for social and informational

purposes. It seemed that these more sophisticated social media users were better able to articulate the differences between using social media for different means, and to identify forms of social media use that were better suited to these different purposes. For example, both Allison and Patricia were regular users of Twitter and they identified this in interviews as a more appropriate social media platform for seeking practical advice and engaging directly with businesses and organisations than Facebook. Allison said she witnessed people doing this a lot on Twitter, *"but not so much on Facebook… because you know you tweet a lot and I see people asking questions and then like you know they'll say 'is this shop open today?'… or 'where do you find this?' – and then if I know I'll help them."* Similarly, Patricia said: "*Twitter is fine because it is more anonymous."*

Single mothers seemed to blur the line more between using social media for social and informational purposes. As high frequenters of forums and message boards, they tended to engage with other mothers and this common ground provided both social interaction and informational advice when needed. For example, Andrea said this about message boards in an interview:

> *If you're asking things about your baby what's this or what's that at the time if you can't ring family or friends it's very handy because you get instant answers from a lot of other parents. So it's very good for stuff like if your kids are sick and that and you think do I take them to the doctor is it normal and stuff like that.*

This dialogue echoes what Jessica imagined might be possible when she discussed how she had not specifically sought out information from businesses or organisations through social media but that she considered that "*social media might be quite useful to see if other people had been in similar situations".* These differing perspectives and uses of social media for informational or practical reasons paint a picture of the potential held by social media to be used constructively for information seeking and collective knowledge purposes, in line with Lévy's theory of collective intelligence (2005), noted above.

7.5 Different engagement with social capital

The most pronounced differences between the groups lay in how they engaged in the social capital available through social media. Indeed, the differences to be detailed in this section may go some way to explaining those in the previous sections, such as why some participants were more willing to engage social media for informational purposes, and why single mothers talked of the value of anonymous forums and other groups did not. To gain insight into how social capital was engaged through social media, participants were asked to discuss the idea of giving and receiving advice and support through social media. The responses to this discussion point demonstrated pronounced differences across the four participant types. Broadly speaking, young Asian adults and single mothers talked positively of the merits of being able to do this with social media while young Pasifika adults and students living in rental accommodation were more hesitant about using social media for these means.

Although both spoke positively of using social media for advice and support means, there were also clear differences in how social media were used for these purposes between young Asian adults and single mothers. Young Asian adults spoke of engaging social media for practical reasons, and for their value to yield feedback from many people who collectively had a wide range of experience and knowledge to draw on. For example, Monica wrote:

> *It's like an open forum but of people you know, even if they aren't close friends. So basic questions like "who knows of a good hairdresser because mine has left town?" – you'l get answers and recommendations that are often honest and genuine (because they wouldn't respond otherwise), and of a range more vast than if you just asked friends when you saw them (which may not be very often especially when you need an answer relatively quickly).*

The responses given by single mothers suggested that their usage of social media for advice and support reasons was far more integrated into their overall habitual use of it, unlike young Asian adults who seemed to engage it for these purposes when required. A dominant theme across all participants in the single mother group was their role as a parent, and many expressed how they used social media to alleviate feelings of isolation,

and to talk to other adults while being at home with children. For example, in an interview Katie said that using social media helps her to *"feel less isolated"* from being able to connect *"with other adults, because I spend – I'm a stay home parent, and also a single Mum, and so – even though it's not talking it's interaction with adults".* In the examples provided by single mothers of ways they use social media for advice and support, most of them did so in the context of parenting support. More pronounced differences that separated single mothers from other focus groups were their engagement with people they did not previously know outside of social media, and their use of social media in anonymous settings. Using forums and message boards such as the Trade Me message board was frequently mentioned, for example Mary said: *"I have got great advice from parenting messageboards. Being a first time mum has been great getting advice from other parents, for example when my son had a bad head cold got advice on feeding & how to unblock his nose etc."*

Like young Asian adults, single mothers also recognised the merit of being able to draw on the collective experiences of a wide range of people. Nicky articulated this in an interview:

> *A lot of my friends have girls and stuff. And so boys are completely different to girls and things, it's quite you've got a wider network and that and stuff, and people that have quite often or I might have been through something that they've gone through, had to dealt with and you can sort of get advice like mental guidance and things.*

In addition to using forums and message boards, some single mothers also mentioned how they had joined support groups through social media. For example, Katherine explained how she joined a *"due January 2011"* support group that she found useful for support that went beyond parenting help. She also explained in an interview how her son was born with a heart condition and she joined an online support group specific to that condition and in doing so she *"meet[s] people from other countries like, I talk to people from America who have the same condition as my son has and you know, it's kind of different over there of how Americans and New Zealanders do stuff in regards to um heart conditions etc."*

While forums and message boards played a dominant role in how single mothers used social media, Facebook was also referenced in advice and support seeking purposes. Again, mothers mentioned being part of more private groups on Facebook – for example Katie, who said *"there's a couple of groups about breastfeeding that I've joined on Facebook… so I've posted a couple of questions in those groups to get ideas and advice from other breastfeeding Mum's."* Katherine also spoke in an interview about how her support group for mothers with babies due in January 2011 was formed on Trade Me *"but we made a Facebook group, so now we just talk on Facebook"*.

Utilising an existing network of friends was the primary perspective that students living in rental accommodation considered when addressing the focus group question relating to advice and support. Their responses tended to treat using social media for these purposes of advice and support with caution, and many detached themselves from their explanation – talking vaguely about people in general. For example, Michael said *"giving advice over social media is hard, as it more often requires the use of face to face interactions"* and Heather talked about how it can be useful for:

> *Some people [that] may feel more awkward having to chat to people face to face, especially if it's something embarrassing. With social media it enables them to ask embarrassing questions anonymously and receive advice on what to from people that have been, or are in a similar situation, and because social media helps you connect with people from all over the world you're more likely to find someone who understands what you're talking about. For example, lots of people ask questions on Yahoo stating that they're "Too embarrassed to tell anyone".*

Like the young Asian adults, Heather identified social media usefulness but did not disclose whether this related to her own experiences. Further, both she and Michael appeared to orient the question around advice and support of a personal nature rather than for practical purposes, and this was typical of many other student participants too. For example Kristie articulated that she thinks social media can be good for this *"provided the advice/support isn't too personal, otherwise I think it isn't appropriate to discuss it publicly on facebook or twitter where everyone can see who you are"*. Some also expressed opposition to the idea of using social media for advice or support. For example,

further discussion in an interview with Michael led to the following comment: *"personally I think they've just got to man up and take it… if there's a question you're too embarrassed to ask, just man up and ask it in person."*

Different again, young Pasifika adults tended to consider both personal and practical forms of advice and support when addressing the focus group question. Like students, they were generally hesitant about using social media for more personal types of support. Victoria noted that *"Sometimes statuses seeking advice or support on FB is better off being done by private messages as I've seen some nasty messages bandied about by people. Dirty laundry should be aired in private at times."*

Among some, this extended to a general discomfort at the blurred boundaries between private and public in these media, perhaps something that relates to a wider 'culture of silence' in which value is placed on people knowing when it is appropriate to keep silent or to defer to others (Tuafuti 2010). Tara said in the focus group how "*some of my friends will post status updates about how for eg. they have broken up with a partner or someone close to them has died. I feel this is personal so will send a private message rather than comment directly to the status update".* In an interview, she elaborated on why this was the case:

> *I just think social media's more of a public kind of a space. And I just only ever… yeah, I don't know I guess it's just my own personal beliefs and how I've been brought up. I've been brought up in a quite conservative household kind of thing. And my parents are like 'oh don't go putting anything you know, online' or you know even about family matters like family business is private*.

However, when it feels appropriate, the young Pasifika adults articulated many other means – that are less personal in nature – by which they use social media for support. For example, Maria wrote that *"I recently just posted a status 'what is the niuean word for flower' and got three replies back. I think social media, or FB at least, is useful for this sort of advice, or for asking people's opinions on things (twitter is also helpful for opinions)."* Anna wrote that she is part of a private group on Facebook for her nursing class:

> *at the moment we are all having trouble with choosing the best textbook for one of our courses, and through posting questions on our page, we have all come to the agreement that the "other" textbook is better. If I didn't have access to our site through social media I may have brought both books, so I find the advice and support very helpful.*

Making use of Facebook pages was also mentioned by young Pasifika adults, the only focus group to do so in answer to this question. Marcus wrote: *"receiving information during big earthquakes was quite well done over facebook I thought. After seeing some of the photos of parts of town like sumner with the rock falls on these [Facebook] pages, thats aaaaall the advice i needed not to go there!!"* Maria wrote: *"support can come from creating a facebook page, e.g. the Against Newmarket Cotton Page that somebody set up, which generated over 1000 likes. I found this page via a fb friend, and it gives support to the victims."* Finally, YouTube was also mentioned in the young Pasifika adult focus group as useful for providing practical help. For example Tara wrote that: *"Also like Allison, I do like to watch beauty videos on youtube. They give good advice on how to do make-up/hair… I also do this when I have mechanical repairs (car) to do because it is valuable both financially and in terms of overall general knowledge."*

This section has found pronounced differences across the focus groups in conceptualising using social media for advice and support purposes, and in describing current practices. Students living in rental accommodation demonstrated the most narrow use and conceptualisation of this, while young Pasifika adults demonstrated the broadest understanding of all groups – considering both personal and practical forms of support, and articulating examples from across a range of social media. We propose that different uses of social media across the participant-types, as exemplified in this and previous sections of these findings, may be visualised as in figure 1:

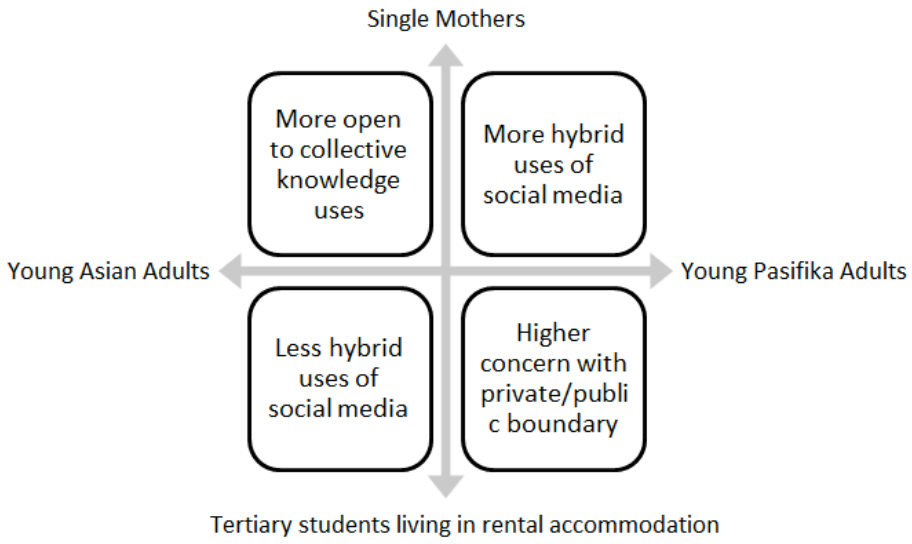

Figure 1

Implications for social capital

These nuances of social media use by group-type granted participants differential access to resources of social capital, with single mothers best positioned to access social capital through social media due to their more hybrid uses and openness to collective knowledge uses, while students are in the most difficult position due to their less hybrid uses of social media, and higher concern with a private/public boundary.

The implications of these findings are two-fold, particularly for participant-types granted less access to social capital. Firstly, participants tended to take issue with crossing a private-to-public boundary by drawing on observations of their friends who had communicated openly to their network about a topic personal in nature. Secondly, participants also envisaged communicating through the more private functions available with social media but took issue with the lack of contextual communication cues available to them in doing so. These implications point to three factors relating to the form of social media and its use:

1. the friction associated with applying social norms to the use of the medium;
2. although all connections in an individual's network are personally meaningful, they are not all regarded equally despite the equal access available to all;

3. the complexity of communication associated with negotiating a more public network in a more private environment.

These factors necessitate a closer look at conceptualising social media in terms of its affordances to make a network more open and comfortable to use.

7.6 Personal relevance of social media

A key theme driving discussion of the four previous findings is the way in which social media make participants feel that "*it's all up to you individually you feel like no-one's controlling what you're doing really"* (Danielle, student). Social media have restructured and opened up the communication environment for these young adults by affording them greater comfort and control over their communication practices within their own networks. That control seems to be used frequently to filter who is connected with and what is heard in terms of what is most personally relevant to each individual. This was most apparent in participants' discussion of accessing promotional-type content from organisations and businesses through social media.

Erin (student) wrote that she would 'like' (on Facebook) businesses or organisations that she *"already like… and I wouldn't bother with companies that I don't already have positive feelings towards"*. This was a generalised claim, most prevalent amongst the young Pasifika adult and student participants. Again, responses from the single mothers group were notably different to the other groups, with many participants stating they tended to connect more with smaller or at-home businesses, particularly those with a baby focus. For example, Angela wrote that *"I love connecting with at-home businesses*, *such as those making bibs, cloth nappies, etc."*

Other participant-types liked to engage with those who they would likely interact with offline. For example in the young Asian adult focus group, Monica wrote: *"for bars, it's great to keep updated with bands or particular occasions they may be having, or drinks specials etc."* In the young Pasifika adult focus group, Allison talked of how she engaged with businesses via social media that she had been a customer of to give them feedback, while Victoria engaged with the Red Cross and other organisations to sign up for voluntary

work. Tara liked official Facebook pages for her *"favourite musicians/artists/writers as I like to know if/when they will tour NZS so I can get tickets/book etc".* In the student focus group, Heather liked to engage with the organisations like the Court Theatre and Christchurch events because they *"post relevant updates letting you know whats comming up/whats happening",* while Rachel engaged with the Student Volunteer Army because pages like these *"can keep you in the loop about events and things that are relevant to you / are localised for better relevance".* Other reasons given that demonstrated a personal interest in the business or organisation participants connected with over social media included that they were run by friends or family (Kayla, young Pasifka adult; Katie, single mother) and that they related to participants' hobbies (such as Amanda, student, who liked the Mercury Energy Tactix Facebook page).

This tendency for participants to engage with businesses or organisations via social media that they had an established interest in appears to speak to a reluctance of participants to use this medium for more consumer or informational purposes, perhaps due to their orientation towards social media use primarily around social motivations – as detailed previously in these findings.

This preference for interaction with existing networks should not be overstated, however. Many participants recognised that they, or people they knew, were drawn to engage with businesses or organisations by incentives such as special deals or competitions. Participants held mixed views on the use of this strategy. For example in the young Asian adult group, Philip liked the online business 1day *"as they sometimes do special sales to people only on fb",* In contrast, Patricia, in an interview, was sceptical of Facebook pages that used incentives such as competitions to encourage people to 'like' their page. She believed that people should want to keep in touch with the business or organisation if they like or follow it. Competitions lead to people without a genuine interest connecting with them and this was her *"beef with social media."* The single mothers group did not stress this point, although Courtney expressed her dislike at the tactic: *"some get your attention and get you to 'like' with some fancy gimmick like a competition and then you never see them with an online presence again ie. you get the feeling they just want to get numbers to like them."* In the young Pasifika adult group, views on connecting with businesses and organisations using incentives were mixed also. Kayla wrote how *"sometimes my friends*

enter competitions and you have to 'like' the page before you can vote. After the competition I tend to 'unlike' the page". Conversely, others described how incentives successfully worked to connect them with a business or organisation. For example, Maria wrote how *"I guess I only go on business pages that offer an incentive eg. Whittakers on Twitter. They offer a free block of chocolate for tweet of the week."* No participant in the student focus group wrote anything to oppose the use of incentives by businesses and organisations to connect with them, while a couple mentioned they liked this. Kristie wrote how she likes *"engaging with new stuff that is happening, specials and competitions – like 1day and Tony Bianco shoes."*

This divergence is reduced somewhat by general agreement over how businesses and organisations might successfully sustain a connection with people in social media. Many participants felt they needed to do more than just offer an incentive for people to 'like' their page. This may be due to such organisations being viewed as only weakly relevant to participants, a connection that may soon fade when a competition has ended or the organisation invades their social media space in ways disliked by them. Courtney's criticism that *"they just want to get numbers to like them"* and other participants' accounts of businesses or organisations using social media in a heavily promotional way suggest that this mass marketing logic was a deterrent for participants from engaging with them. Students were the most vocal about this. For example, Erin wrote: *"businesses and orgs are better with social media when they don't pester you too much – otherwise I would just block them from my news feed".*

Single mothers especially were adverse to *"big businesses that seem to make posts, then log out"* (Angela), preferring smaller businesses because they felt they received a more personalised experience from them. For example Lisa wrote how smaller businesses are *"more likely to reply, (with a personal approach) not a scripted automatic type reply, or just leaving your comments/questions un answered like larger businesses or organisations seem to do".* This theme of preferring a more 'personal approach' was also present in the other focus groups. For example, in the student focus group Amanda explained how she likes *"engaging with the mercury energy tactix fb page as they treat you as an individual and are lovely… any that respond to each individual query are better than those who ignore or do not consider the clients individually important."* In the young Pasifika adults

focus group Allison and Maria both liked interacting with businesses that *"actually respond to you on their social media pages"* (Maria). Allison was detailed in her opinion of what makes some businesses and organisations using social media better than others, "*based on: interactivity, addressing issues/problems, being friendly, not posting passive aggressive status updates, posting regular and informative updates, varying content of updates – not just selling, but also sharing "fluffy/random" updates or links etc".* The value for Allison in 'fluffy/random' content speaks to the socially driven characteristic of the medium, which is of central importance to participants.

Participants held mixed views on the use of advertising in social media. Some found these easy to ignore, for example Brett (young Asian adult) in an interview explained how he does not *"really mind the ads because I don't really look at them, they don't affect me".* Kristie (student) explained how she found *"the ads down the side to be generally annoying as I find most of them are misleading".* Anna (young Pasifika adult) was the only one to describe Facebook advertising positively by explaining in an interview how she found online shops she liked through *"those wee little ads [that] come up on the side of my Facebook".* The sentiment generally expressed here is that advertisements without personal relevance will be ignored.

As has been demonstrated by these findings, there are obstacles to engaging with businesses and organisations via social media, and to creating a successful sustainable channel of communication between the two parties. This presents difficulties for the NZFS. The subtext driving many participants' views and actions on this appears to be that unlike other media, participants have more control over what they engage with in social media and currently they are primarily motivated to connect with others for social purposes on these platforms.

Chapter 8: Implications for fire safety communication

The report's initial assumptions – that social media are a significant aspect of people's media use and that they work in quite different ways to other media – were borne out by the study. The participants spend considerable time in social media but use it for quite different purposes to and understand it differently to mass media forms such as television. As the NZFS enters New Zealanders' social media spaces, it must be aware in particular that this is primarily a space in which people act as individuals, and one where ease of interaction with a close circle and control over the space are felt to be important. There is some informational and task-related use of social media, and some people feel comfortable engaging in bridging capital by acting as individuals in the more public spaces of Facebook and discussion sites. But social media appears to feel most comfortable and appealing as a place to find out information or to connect with the wider world when its personal relevance to everyday activities and to people's close social networks is highest.

There are seven main implications of these findings, in our view, for the NZFS (and other organisations that seek to connect with people for non-commercial purposes).

8.1 Reaching individuals not markets

Firstly, the concerns expressed in chapter 5 over a predominantly social marketing approach are borne out by the material. The participants were consistent in their reluctance to let marketers into their social media spaces. They wanted individual control over what happened there, regarding this medium differently in this respect to television and so seeing the intrusion of commercial voices or authorities as spam. They were not averse to being marketed to, but were averse to the intrusion, wanting relationships with organisations that were relevant to them and with which they were in established relationships already. Nor does this mean that promotional styles of communication are inappropriate. The point is more about the prominence of relationships over transactions or

mass participation and therefore the importance of control of the networks through which that material flows. Some talked, for example, of valuing the power to remove companies after a promotion.

This desire for control of their own social media spaces strikes us as important. Facebook, in particular, has been touted as a 'friction-less' environment, in which information recorded in one place can be distributed to many others, so that people's reading or game-playing preferences become part of what friends know of them, and so that businesses can promote their content through people's use of them. The sometimes negative responses to these 'frictionless apps' (Purewal 2012) finds an echo in our findings. Within the very open social media environment, where people display themselves to others in networks far wider than traditional circles of close friends, control of what appears on their profiles is important. Large organisations threaten that control when they seek to use Facebook as a channel through which to pour large amounts of information or when they call on people to do things.

These findings do not suggest that the NZFS as an organisation is likely to be regarded as a friend or strongly liked profile or is likely to stay in people's networks for long. When asked about how they might relate to the NZFS online, respondents often hedged their statements with a sense that the organisation was an unlikely
friend. They were generally in agreement that the NZFS should utilise social media because *"it's the way the world's going so I guess you've got to go with it"* (Tara, Pasifika), but many did not see the NZFS as an organisation they would have within their networks. Many were also sceptical about how much they or others like them would seek out fire safety or fire risk information. *"I wouldn't go looking for it [fire safety information on social media]"* (Brett, Asian). This suggests that participants did not see the NZFS as having personal relevance to them, and were therefore not interested in interacting with them via social media.

The NZFS, then, needs to find ways to communicate to individuals that respect the relationship-based and interactional style of various social media and link into their relevance structures. We differ from the UMR (2011) study over its argument that people are not likely to wish to 'like' or otherwise connect with the NZFS in social media. It

seems to us that there are a wide range of ways in which the organisation can find ways for its concerns over fire safety to become personally relevant to individuals. There are two dimensions to this.

Firstly, campaign messages may travel well across these networks if they are relevant to the group. Appealing videos, messages relevant to particular moments in these groups' lives and game-like media such as quizzes may be successful. But these are most likely to have some impact if they arrive at individuals through networks with which they feel comfortable. This will mean different things for different people. For some, there is fulfilment in being part of the wider interchange of material on the internet (building bridging capital), while for others the network is tighter and material would need to come through people and groups who are already trusted and cared about.

Secondly, communication that comes from individuals rather than the authoritative organisation of the NZFS may be able to create links into communities that are more enduring. These links are likely to be smaller in scale and less dramatic than the rapid transmission of a viral video across a network, but they are likely to be enduring and powerful. Consequently, as discussed in the Recommendations chapter below, the NZFS need not think in terms that foreground its institutional identity and can instead find ways in which individuals within the NZFS, local arms of the NZFS or forms of information fronted by other people similar to or already connected with people can be used to feed information and advice into people's networks on an ongoing basis.

It should be noted that, when asked for suggestions of ways in which the NZFS could use social media, the respondents frequently spoke in terms of the online marketing techniques they were aware of – but rejected as comfortable for or relevant to themselves. Suggestions included making use of the advertising slots before YouTube videos can be played, advertising in Facebook or running competitions and quizzes. These suggestions are reported here, but not given prominence because they do not seem to us to fit with how the participants used or wanted to social media themselves.

8.2 Augmenting other media

The participants remembered slogans and education given to them in schools about fire safety, and this report reinforces the value of those longstanding approaches to fire safety communication that are connected with a drop in fire risk behaviours. The role of social media should be to augment not replace these. One key area emerges.

We would reinforce the point made by TNS (2006) that there is a gap between this public knowledge (knowledge that people know others in society will have) and the personal or collectively formed knowledge that arises out of or connects strongly with people's daily lives. The concept of collective knowledge borne through wider network engagement provides the NZFS with a way to value the particular role of social media as an additional communication tool for their goals of promoting fire safety. Fire safety knowledge was well articulated by participants as being obtained through mass media and other authoritative institutions such as the educational system, however this was clearly 'shared knowledge' – for example the common repetition of catch phrases such as "stop, drop and roll". This pays testament to the effectiveness of communication strategies through these channels, because fire safety phrases were well-remembered. In the case of shared knowledge obtained through the primary education system, it is noted that the role of active involvement described by participants in their memory of this was a strong contributor for some to message endurance.

However, with the exception of two single mothers sharing their stories of fire safety from personal experience, there was little evidence of participants tapping into personal or collective knowledge to demonstrate the fire safety knowledge they had obtained. This points to a stark contrast between, on the one hand, the way participants make sense of social media to tap into the resource of collective knowledge and, on the other, the ways in which they have learned fire safety knowledge. Therefore, an opportunity exists for the NZFS to use social media to promote the circulation of collective fire safety knowledge, with social media's ability to make the knowledge more personally relevant adding richer depth to knowledge obtained through more traditional communication channels.

Notably, participants rarely related their fire safety knowledge to personal experiences of their own that did not involve authoritative institutions such has school. When probed

further in interviews, some participants were hesitant about their claims of feeling equipped to deal with a fire-related incident. As described in chapter 6, this sense of *"having a vague idea what to do"* (Shawn, Pasifika) or the notion that *"maybe I'd instinctively know what to do"* (Allison, Pasifika) may be due to the absence of personal relevance ascribed to their understanding of fire safety. Indeed, there may have been some complacency also in participants' orientation to fire safety due to the detached manner in which many of them quoted commonly understood 'shared' knowledge about fire safety and attributed their memory of this to reasons of repetition and catchiness, in ways that were absent of personally meaningful connections made to them. Even more remarkable was the inability of most interviewees to identify where their local fire station was.

The NZFS is likely to find social media most useful for fire safety communication if it uses it to bridge this gap between public knowledge and personal or collective knowledge. Conversely, it is likely to be less useful if it is used simply to reproduce communication produced in mass media, or used in ways that share a mass media logic, such as one-way communication, untargeted or broad-based campaigning or messages that allow people to position themselves as spectators (such as narrative advertisements). As noted in 8.1, some of these may be useful as part of targeted, relevant campaigns, but the ways in which they are targeted and the content of these messages may need to be different.

8.3 Variable approaches needed

Social media are used differently by different groups. The single mothers stood out in this study as being willing to share personal information with wider groups, to make new friends in social media and to build collective knowledge through advising each other. At the other end of the spectrum, the students were uncomfortable with making themselves vulnerable so as to gain from interaction outside their immediate circles of friends and used social media (largely Facebook) in quite narrow ways that reinforced their bonding social capital. While all the groups operated as networked individuals, they oriented to different kinds of social capital, and the NZFS would need to both be aware of what kind of capital its communication offered people and use a range of strategies so as to reach different groups. One size does not fit all.

8.4 Space of social-mindedness

As a relationship-centred form of communication, social media provide opportunities for organisations that want to appeal to people's sense of caring, of being responsible for others and of making a safe environment. A call on people to be socially responsible, however, is not recommended. It should be noted that the findings reinforced the framework proposed in chapter 4 that people interact on Facebook, TradeMe discussions and other platforms as individuals. It should also be noted that there is some evidence from the NZFSC's research reports that fire risk behaviours are connected with being positioned as outside the dominant social group, whether for socio-economic or other cultural reasons. These two factors work against using social media to try to call those at greatest fire risk to change their behaviour to meet society's wishes. Students, for example, are not usually oriented to reinforcing society's norms, as they are at a life moment where they are being independent and focused on other matters than domestic safety. However, they engage heavily in relationship-based, other-oriented behaviour on Facebook. As the Student Volunteer Army showed, as many as 13,000 students could be mobilised after the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes in Christchurch to help others, partly because of the social capital they built up amongst themselves by being part of the movement.

The report suggests then that calls to action using social media should be neither calls to individuals to make rational decisions about safety (as a social marketing position would suggest) or call upon them to act as responsible citizens (as traditional public service advertising did) but should appeal to the concern they have for others. Again, for some this is likely to be most powerful when focused on others within their existing networks. For others this could involve altruism towards, and building connection with, others with whom they have some broader affinity but only weak ties.

The sense of caring and the desire to be cared for by others links with the ease of communication and the reduced awkwardness of social media that the respondents expressed. We would suggest that asking people to care is less likely to be regarded as presumptive in social media and in fact is likely to give people an opportunity to build social capital and enhance their relationships, and therefore be a valued message.

8.5 Informal interaction

The comment from Allison (Pasifika group) that she would interact with organisations that were themselves interactive, that addressed problems and issues that were of interest to her and that also shared "fluffy/random" updates or links is illustrative. Much of this comment concerns the style of communication as much as the content. Many participants thought that the NZFS should avoid authoritative or one-way communication and instead foreground human-to-human interaction. Some participants imagined that this might involve a mixture of different approaches, such as *"have the tips, have the stories of fire fighters, have something fun as well"* (Shawn, Pasifika). Participants' suggestions for quizzes, competitions and a variation of material also expressed this valuing of interactive material.

The participants did not, however, see this as coming naturally for the NZFS. On the one hand, communication that is too often 'serious' or formal in nature would be unlikely to appeal to these groups. Indeed, Amanda (student) thought that *"it could be just another one of those things that people are like 'ah that's just annoying'."* On the other hand, despite this perception that the NZFS *"could take themselves less seriously"*, it was also recognised that *"if they did that they could be disrupting the whole trust thing being the fire service"* (Patricia, Asian). The NZFS is associated with high levels of trust and this must be nurtured carefully in order to use the resource of social capital to promote fire safety with social media. Embedded in this pre-existing trust associated with the NZFS is an understanding of the NZFS as an authoritative body. If they were to *"take the same approach that you would take if you were talking to your friend"* (Shawn, Pasifika) – i.e. acting less in an authoritative capacity as recommended by some participants, this could well disrupt the relationship of trust between the NZFS and the public.

Any social media strategy developed by the NZFS introducing a new way of engaging with the public would need to strike a delicate balance in order to avoid disruption of this pre-existing trust. Perhaps the suggestions from participants that best fit these circumstances were voiced most strongly by the single mothers group, who called for attentive engagement from the NZFS at a personal level. This meaning that the NZFS must honour the individualised two-way communicative culture of the medium. Using this as a baseline for the NZFS's social media presence, more specific strategies can be built on top.

8.6 Localised strategies

Chapter 2 discussed evidence from previous research of a poor fit between fire safety strategies created by NZFS's head office team and the reception of these by local fire station staff who often felt uncomfortable with the methods of disseminating these because they believed it was sometimes circumstantially inappropriate. This problem was exacerbated by a lack of feedback mechanisms available to the fire stations to help devise effective communications strategies (Lloyd & Roen 2002). Social media is here advanced as a tool that can work to relieve the problems of poor fit and lack of feedback mechanisms by integrating collective knowledge into strategy formation.

Using firefighters as communicators would ease some of the tensions discussed in 8.5. Firefighters are often trusted members of their communities. They are able to speak in a non-institutional voice. They are also in possession of stories of fire risk and safety that are likely to be of relevance to individuals living within a community. In these ways, we can see potential for professional fire fighters and stations and volunteer brigades to be valuable parts of an integrated fire safety communication strategy. Indeed, volunteer brigades have already begun doing this kind of communication on an informal basis, as discussed in chapter 2.

We would emphasise, however, that local communities do not match in any simple way with the networks that form in social media and so have limited value in connecting with groups who are not well connected with their communities and who are of most interest in this report. Among the groups studied here, perhaps the single mothers group would engage most richly with this kind of strategy. They spoken often of being stuck at home or having limited community engagement because of their young children. For them, social media reduces barriers to engaging with others.

However, if community is thought of in broader terms than towns and neighbourhoods, and if social media are thought of in combination with other communication tools, the potential for connecting with a wider range of groups opens up again. All participants strongly expressed the value of social media as primarily about their networks of friends and family, and these are often people living within the same area. A number of participants talked of fire safety as something that made most sense to them when

grounded in their local area and when it was hands on – the strong recollection of schools-based fire safety campaigns is one example. Some compared the NZFS unfavourably with organisations that they felt had stronger practical community involvement. One participant compared the NZFS with St John and believed that St John had a firmer community grounding because of its community training such as first aid courses. He believed the NZFS could do something similar to increase their felt presence in the community (Philip, Asian).

A localised social media strategy might, then, make sense as part of a wider localised communication strategy, using Facebook and other networks to promote or coordinate community open days at fire stations, courses and workshops or volunteers activities. The importance of the relevance of communication, discussed throughout the report, dovetails with the success of physically experienced and locally-based fire safety education and communication. The two might be fruitfully planned together.

8.7 Measuring success

These points suggests also that the NZFS should judge the success of its communication more by depth than breadth. The mass campaigns which enthusiasts for the public use of social media point to, from the Kony 2012 campaign that gathered 90 million people through social networks to watch a video calling for international intervention in Uganda to Lady Gaga's values-based relationship with her fans, should be recognised as gathering together large networks of people connected by material that has shared relevance, and not mass audiences, as traditionally understood, who come together as 'everyone' or 'the public'. As a result, the emphasis in planning and evaluating strategic communication should be on the relevance of the communication rather than on maximising the message's reach. The NZFSC may wish to move away from KPIs that ask if people remember fire safety information and look for measures of how people have used the information.

Chapter 9: Recommendations

9.1 Introduction

The study was designed to scope the potential for connecting with individuals at high fire risk using social media and therefore did not have a focus on what particular strategies might emerge. However, a number of suggestions are given below as examples of where the ways of thinking of fire safety communication discussed here might lead. Specific initiatives are discussed first and then a brief comment made about organisation-level questions that arise from those.

9.2 Campaigns

- Social media lend themselves to campaigns that place themselves alongside people, speaking in their language, focusing on matters that arise in their lives and featuring people who are like them. An example is the 2012 Rugby World Cup campaign, 'Word from the wise', which interviewed tipsy young adults at a Queen St pie cart late at night in order to communicate the longstanding 'Don't drink and fry' message. The NZFS placed these advertisements on YouTube where they were heavily watched, presumably as a result of them being shared across social networks by individuals who found them relevant (and enjoyable). The emphasis on involvement here made the campaign one that readily translated to a social media context, in a way that a guilt-based call-to-action advertisement would be much harder to take across media.
- Some of the groups studied tended to manage their networks tightly, so that 'liking' and 'friending' were only done with organisations that held high relevance to them. Communicating with these groups might work well if those groups were deployed. Rock or pop artists, preferred brands and organisations with known relationships with a target group (such as Plunket, the Red Cross or a runanga) could be asked to endorse material. The material should be consciously designed to work through the particular relationship that was being piggy-backed on and to build capital for all

involved. It should also be transparent. For example, before large concerts international artists could be asked to use social media to tell their fans to turn appliances off before coming to the concert.

- Larger organisations that individuals have more bridging-capital relationships with in social media, such as radio stations, or retailers such as The Warehouse (which already works with the NZFS on smoke alarm campaigns), could be asked to promote fire safety across their networks. The possibility that such use could be regarded as spam means that traditional advertising should be avoided and instead individuals, such as DJs, be used, and they be asked only to promote material that would be of high relevance.
- Weak ties are powerful but disappear again quickly, and may be best suited to communication at specific moments. Social media might be used to ask people celebrating the Chinese New Year to make a home evacuation plan; or to remind students during Orientation week that landlords are obliged to install and maintain smoke alarms.
- Social media use integrated with television advertisements or with localised events appear likely to have a greater impact, as people hear key messages across their social and media worlds. An call-to-action advertisement might, for example, invite people to watch the out-takes via a Facebook page or speak to the firefighter narrating the advertisement.

9.3 Ongoing communication

- The NZFS should strengthen its own networked media, so that interesting material that arises in volunteer fire brigade social media pages or retired firefighters' blogs can more quickly be passed across other networks. These might include a mappable directory of these sites on the NZFS pages, RSS and Twitter feeds that push material on and Facebook networks linking up overseas firefighters and services.
- When significant fire events happen in an area, social media could be used for fire fighters to tell their experiences, give advice and post images or video of the event. Making the NZFS part of individuals' discussion of these events would make the NZFS more relevant, approachable and visible. If this were to occur regularly, the expectations of the NZFS's media presence could be changed.

- Young individuals often have few personal experiences of fire disasters, but are likely to know others who do. A mashup comprising a map, experiences uploaded by individuals and a Facebook app that pushed the information out into those individuals' social networks would provide highly relevant, impactful information about fire risk to individuals through their social networks.

9.4 Organisational response

- For social media to perform a useful role in fire safety, planning of its use needs to be integrated into wider communication planning. This report has argued that to do that successfully social marketing needs to be seen as only one way of framing that planning.
- The report has also emphasised the value of professional and volunteer firefighters and of locally-based initiatives as part of the overall planning of fire safety communication. This is likely to involve less emphasis on control of the communication at the national level and more emphasis on coordination of material that rises up through the NZFS.

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Appendix 1: Questions used in the focus groups

1. Talk about the typical ways you use social media and why. For example, you might be a heavy content sharer, post the occasional comment or be a background 'lurker' – what do you get out of this that you wouldn't if social media weren't around?
2. Talk about the idea of giving advice or support to others using social media. If you can, draw on examples to help explain your motivations and outcomes of the situation.
3. Can you think of any situations in which you may feel more comfortable using social media to communicate with others instead of another form of communication (e.g. phone call, face-to-face, letter)? Why is this the case?
4. Many businesses and organisations are getting into social media. Talk about examples of those you like engaging with using social media and those you wouldn't bother with. Why are some better than others?
5. What fire safety knowledge can you easily recall? If you remember, share where you learned this from. Why do you think you can recall this knowledge more easily than other information you might have received along the way?
6. Based on discussion from the previous questions in this focus group, what things could the NZFS do to help them successfully use social media to engage with the public?

Appendix 2: Sample questions used in semi-structured interviews

Do you use any other forms of social media apart from Facebook?

What don't you like about social media?

How do you think your life would be different without social media?

How much of your social media use is for more informative than purely social purposes?

What motivates you to like or follow or interact with businesses and organisations on social media to begin with?

How are the businesses you engage with on Facebook better than others?

Why do you choose to deal with particular types of issues via social media rather than a different mode of communication?

Would you consider yourself well-educated in fire safety? Would you know what to do in a fire-related incident?

How effective do you think the NZFS fire safety communications is and has been for you?

Do you know where your local fire station is?

What do you think about the idea of the NZFS using a more localised approach with social media than a single nationalised presence, do you think there's any value in that?

Do you think there is a place for the NZFS to use social media effectively?