



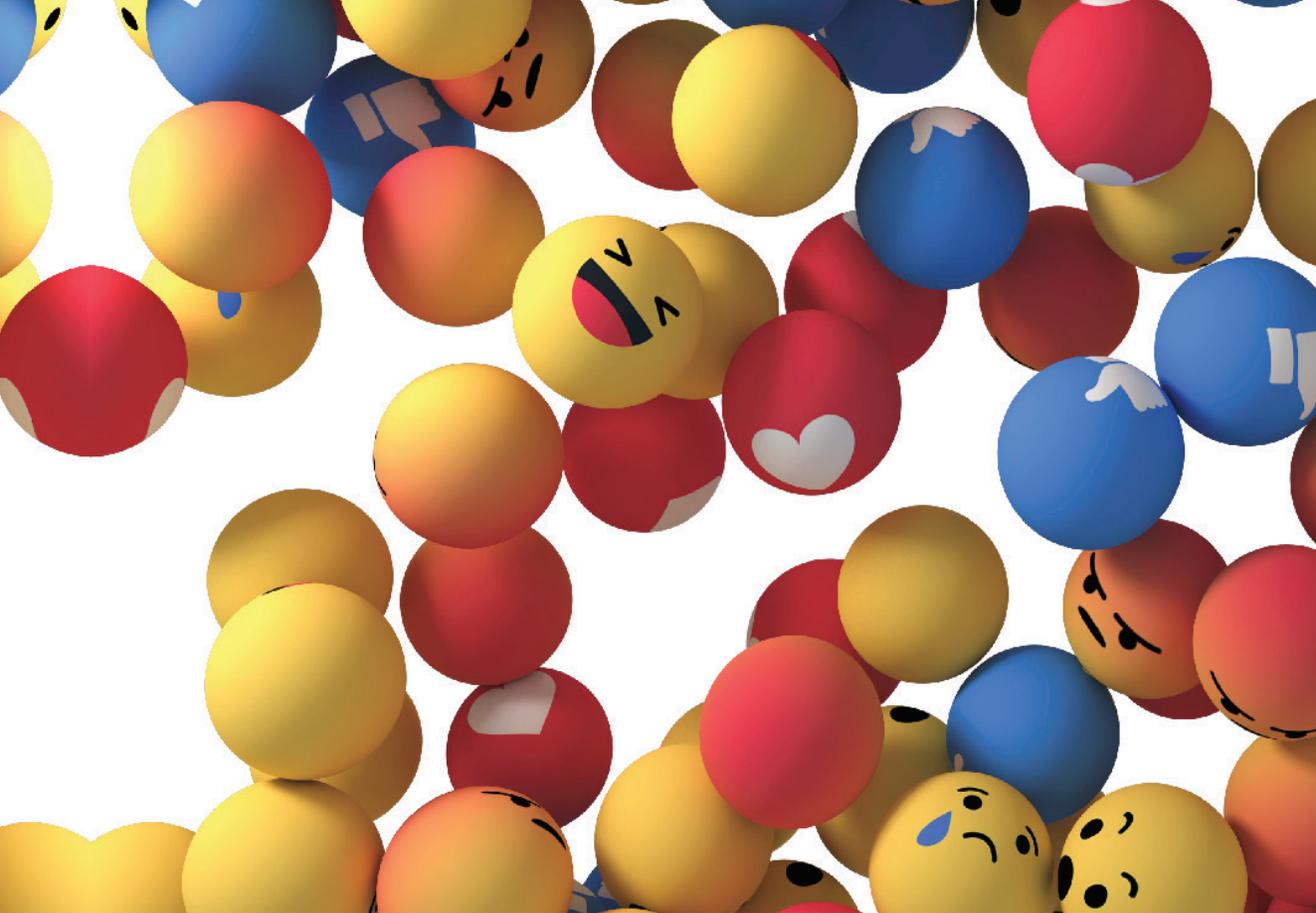
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Promoting Better Governance Through Facebook: A Pilot Study and Analysis

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- ² Prior to graduating from the University of Applied Sciences Bonn-Rhein-Sieg at the University of Bonn, Germany in 2017, **You Y Ly** worked as the Assistant Lecturer at the Department of Media and Communication at the Royal University of Phnom Penh for two years. After this she worked as a Radio and TV Production Lecturer and a Documentary Film Director and Producer in a local media production company. She has produced numerous documentaries focusing on social issues such as the Khmer Rouge Regime, environment, agriculture and poverty in Cambodia. Her latest academic publication is published in the book of Viability of Alternative Online News Media Organizations in Developing and Transformation Countries. Currently she works as a Communications Officer at Saorsa SEA Co., Ltd, a Microsoft partner company, in Cambodia.



Abstract

Facebook has become the most popular social media platform in Cambodia. This study collects primary data to examine how Facebook can give Cambodian users a chance to demand better governance in terms of public services, as well as how the government can solicit public feedback through the platform. A pilot survey of 150 respondents, mostly from Phnom Penh, shows how Facebook can enable communication between government and citizens. Most respondents in the sample use Facebook to consume or share news, but also to express their opinions and ask for more action from the government. To a certain degree, this can give citizens a means to hold their government to account, but the government currently appears not to be very responsive, probably due to the lack of decision-making from higher-level officials, and the lack of attention and interest. A potential solution could be to establish a dedicated governmental committee that gathers and addresses the concerns of the citizens. This pilot study can be used as the basis for a larger scale national survey.

Introduction

Facebook has become one of the most influential social media platforms³ and number one source of information in Cambodia,⁴ with 6.8 million users⁵ in 2018 (considering a total population of 16 million). The vast majority of Cambodians use this platform for information consumption, staying in touch with friends and family, entertainment⁶ and expressing their opinions.⁷ As Facebook allows the rapid transmission of information and allows users to express their opinions freely, some Cambodians have used this social media network to criticize government actions around social issues and public service delivery, something hardly done offline, as well as to demand accountability from the government, which is crucial to better governance.

The recent case of a dirty road in Siem Reap, which was reported on Facebook and attracted many comments, sparked a public outcry questioning the provincial governors' accountability.⁸ That resulted in a response from the

authorities who took action to clean the road.

The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), in a study of Uganda, has also argued that social media use can influence the processes of governance and increase the government's attention to citizens' comments.⁹ However, research suggests that while social media can enhance good governance there is no concrete evidence explaining how it is done.¹⁰ Diamond points out that Internet access allows users to scrutinize government and encourage political participation, but the government can still control their users' actions - China being a leading example.¹¹

Therefore, this study aims to investigate how Facebook can help hold government officials to account, and to examine what government officials do to solicit Cambodians' comments through Facebook. The motivations of users posting concerns in relation to public service delivery will also be surveyed in this research. The paper consists of a literature review, a discussion of the methodology, the data collection and its limitations, an analysis of the findings and recommendations.

Context and Literature Review

Extensive research has been done on the links between the use of social media and better

- 3 Joseph Soh, "Cambodia's 2017 Social Media & Digital Statistics," *Geeks in Cambodia*, February 9, 2017, http://geeksincambodia.com/cambodias-2017-social-media-digital-statistics/?fbclid=IwAR2F9MuL0x50j2QaBHR35K_eOpcZEh_KWS1tCYfDy9iDjDW5_CZCp2zHTBE (accessed on April 11, 2018).
- 4 Kimchhoy Phong and Javier Solá, "Mobile Phone and Internet in Cambodia 2015," (Phnom Penh, Open Institutes, Development Innovations and The Asia Foundation, November 2015), https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/MobilePhonesinCB2015.pdf?fbclid=IwAR05HdD8ChjsEQPWWgYoWGH_M9L7r75DvZlIjsY-giWuj53IMQLRmmTExHc
- 5 Joseph Soh, "Cambodia's 2017 Social Media & Digital Statistics".
- 6 Phong and Solá, "Mobile Phone and Internet in Cambodia 2015".
- 7 Menghun Kaing, "What Does Facebook Reveal About Public Opinion in Cambodia?" (The Asia Foundation, January 13, 2016) <https://asiafoundation.org/2016/01/13/what-does-facebook-reveal-about-public-opinion-in-cambodia/>
- 8 Mony Koh, "Siem Reap Provincial Governor's Response to Dirty Road." *Koh Santepheap*, February 24, 2019, <https://news.kohsantepheapdaily.com.kh/article/734612.htm?fbclid=IwAR3UYwp-7onrlgRUGGAW8QeKxkjr2RMfsl>

ztDKtU21V76Y4RGNFNtwDX8 (accessed May 5, 2019).

- 9 Mathias Kamp, ed., *Reality Check: Assessing The Impact of Social Media on Political Communication and Civic Engagement in Uganda*, (Kampala, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, January 2016), https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=95eec5bf-c11c-c4eb-f504-90a4e5a4d54d&groupId=252038
- 10 Evie Browne, "Social media and governance," *Applied Knowledge Services*, January 28, 2015, <https://gsdrc.org/publications/social-media-and-governance/> (accessed on May 5, 2019).
- 11 Larry Diamond, "Liberation Technology," *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 3 (2010): 69-83.

governance around the world. Social media can potentially become a medium for users to join different kinds of participatory activities, leverage policy engagement and demand transparency and accountability from the government. The section below outlines literature that explains the role of social media in enhancing governance, examples thereof from around the world, the negative impact of social media, the concept of governance and public service delivery, including cases of Cambodians using Facebook in this regard.

Social Media and Governance Around the World

Social media is a convenient and effective tool to interact with the government and abet the process of information flow, for example in India.¹² It can also help hold the government to account through the expression of opinions.¹³ It empowers users to speak and also allows anyone to access extensive information.¹⁴ Valenzuela, Kim and de Zúñiga claim that expressing opinions on public issues remains important for democratic society as it empowers political engagement.¹⁵ Charru contends that social media has significantly impacted citizens' mobilization and leads governments to be more citizens-centric while eliminating

and fostering transparent governance.¹⁶

Kim further claims that Facebook users who have a high level of political knowledge appear to get involved in political discussions by expressing their opinions, while those with weak and moderate knowledge are less likely to express their minority views.¹⁷ Evie lists five ways in which social media can impact governance: through political participation, transparency and accountability enhancement, peacebuilding, private sector participation, and internal governance monitoring.¹⁸ In Uganda, social media plays a crucial tool at enhancing free speech and freedom of expression without fears or censorship, which is a sign of improving governance in the country.¹⁹ Noida also claims that the current emerging and modern technology has facilitated communication between government and citizens.²⁰ The government can have two-way interactive communications with citizens by disseminating certain information and gathering useful feedback to improve their governance and to create new initiatives.²¹ Bertot et al. also point out that many countries use social media and information-communication technology (ICT) to promote government transparency and re-

12 Charru Malhotra, "Role of social media in Promoting Transparency in an Open Government Era in SAARC Countries with Special Reference to India," *Improving Public Policy in the Digital World*, Vol. 2 (2015), <http://ojs.imodev.org/index.php/RIDDN/article/view/153/228>

13 John Bertot, Paul Jaeger and Justin Grimes, "Promoting transparency and accountability through ICTs, social media, and collaborative e-government," *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 6(1), (2012): 78-91.

14 Jonathan Obar A. and Steve Wildman, "Social media definition and the governance challenge: An introduction to the special issue," *Telecommunications Policy*, 39(9), (2015):745-750.

15 Sebastián Valenzuela, Yonghwan Kim and Homero Gil De Zúñiga, "Social networks that matter: ~ Exploring the role of political discussion for online political participation," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 24 (2012): 163e184.

16 Charru Malhotra, Vol. 2 (2015).

17 Kim Mihee, "Facebook's Spiral of Silence and Participation: The Role of Political Expression on Facebook and Partisan Strength in Political Participation." *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking* 19, no. 12 (2016): 696-702.

18 Browne, "Social media and governance"

19 Maureen Agena, Donnas Ojok and Tony Achol, "Social Media, Local Governance and Development in Uganda," (Uganda and South Sudan , Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, January 2019).

20 Elets News Network, "Leveraging social media-generated content for better governance," (Egov, Jan 8, 2015), <https://egov.eletsonline.com/2015/01/leveraging-social-media-generated-content-for-better-governance/>, (accessed July 2, 2019)

21 John Bertot, Paul Jaeger and Justin Grimes, "Promoting transparency and accountability through ICTs, social media, and collaborative e-government".

duce government corruption.²² Downey and Matthew found that social media and web technologies enable users to address problems of public service system and improve it. The study claims that more young adults use online platforms for political purposes and this can contribute to inform political decision makers. They don't just influence public policy but can also uncover hidden corruption through social media.²³ Indian citizens use social media including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to exercise their freedom of expression and speech, to share their comments on politics and to reach out to politicians.²⁴ However, social media companies have the authority to delete or block any content if there is a government interruption.²⁵

Drawbacks of Social Media

Despite its positive aspects discussed above, social media also has a number of drawbacks. Lui, Rui and Cui argue that expressing political opinions on Facebook attracts judgement and possibly criticism from friends, which might impose a spiral of silence.²⁶ Some users receive threats after expressing their views on Facebook. One Cambodian opposition ac-

tivist was detained after he was accused of insulting the government.²⁷ This shows that Facebook can also affect people's lives in situations where governments tend to suppress the freedom of expression. This might frighten citizens who would otherwise voice their opinions in Cambodia.

Social media can also affect users' privacy, security and even their health. As a study suggests, negative consequences may include privacy abuse, cyberbullying and fake news.²⁸ Cyberbullying is one of the most common concerns.²⁹ This can possibly worsen anxiety, depression and sleep deprivation among young adults.³⁰ Furthermore, a report described how social media fraud has increased by 48% in 2018 on platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Whatsapp.³¹ At the same time, young adults have raised concerns about personal privacy and security when using Facebook. Evidence shows that the disclosure of personal information on social media might pose a risk to users, as many strangers can identify and

22 John Bertot, Paul Jaeger and Justin Grimes, "Promoting transparency and accountability through ICTs, social media, and collaborative e-government".

23 Seyoum Mengist Ayalew, "Roles of social media for good governance and democracy: Literature review and personal observation in Horn of Africa," *Foodsecuritysm*, April 3, 2017, <https://foodsecuritysm.wordpress.com/2017/04/03/role-of-social-media-for-good-governance-and-democracy-literature-review-and-personal-observation-in-horn-of-africa/> (accessed on May 6, 2019)

24 Dr. Guna Graciyal and Dr. Deepa Viswam, "Freedom of expression in social media: A political Perspective," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary* (03), (2018).

25 Downey, Ed, and Matthew A. Jones. "Public Service, Governance and Web 2.0 Technologies: Future Trends in Social Media." 1-369 (2012). doi:10.4018/978-1-4666-0071-3

26 Yu Liu, Jian Raymond Rui and Xi Cui, "Are People Willing to Share Their Political Opinions on Facebook? Exploring Roles of Self-presentational Concern in Spiral of Silence." *Computers in Human Behavior* 76, (2017): 294-302.

27 Joshua Lipes, "Cambodia court detains opposition activities over Facebook post," *Radio Free Asia's Khmer Service*, January 2, 2019, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/detention-02012019162641.html>, (accessed July 1, 2019).

28 Christian V. Baccarella, Timm F. Wagner, Jan H. Kietzmann, Ian P. McCarthy, "Social media? It is serious! Understanding the dark side of social media," *European Management Journal* (36), (2018)

29 McBride, Deborah L, "Risks and Benefits of Social Media for Children and Adolescents." *Journal of Pediatric Nursing* (26), (2011)

30 Levenson, Jessica C. ; Shensa, Ariel ; Sidani, Jaime E. ; Colditz, Jason B. ; Primack, Brian A. "The association between social media use and sleep disturbance among young adults," *Preventive Medicine* (85), (2016).

31 Indo-Asian News Service, "Social Media fraud increased 43% in 2018: Report," *The Economic Times*, April 29, 2019, <https://cio.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/social-media/social-media-fraud-increased-43-in-2018-report/69089585>, (accessed July 1, 2019).

contact those users directly.^{32 33} In early 2019, Facebook suffered a leak of more than 540 million records of user data³⁴ and the chief executive officer of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, is under a criminal investigation for the data breach of more than 87 million people.³⁵ A new study also finds that social media can strongly affect the mental health of adults as they get addicted and distracted by the multitude of online content.³⁶

Finally, fake news has also been a concern, especially in the USA after the 2016 election. It is suggested that people will believe fake news by their favored political candidate.³⁷ Nagi points out that social media users appear to believe fake news and share it widely across their accounts, which contributes to spreading misleading information.³⁸

32 Nosko, Amanda ; Wood, Eileen ; Molema, Seija, "All about me: Disclosure in online social networking profiles: The case of FACEBOOK," *Computers in Human Behavior* (26), (2010).

33 Taraszow, Tatjana ; Aristodemou, Elena ; Shitta, Georgina ; Laouris, Yiannis ; Arsoy, Aysu, "Disclosure of personal and contact information by young people in social networking sites: An analysis using Facebook profiles as an example," *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* (81), (2010).

34 Colin Lecher, "Facebook app developers leaked millions of user records on cloud servers, researchers say," 03 April 2019, <https://www.theverge.com/2019/4/3/18293978/facebook-app-developers-leak-user-records-data-cloud-servers>, (accessed 01 July, 2019).

35 Margi Murphy, "Millions of Facebook user records exposed in data breach," *Telegraph*, April 3, 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2019/04/03/millions-facebook-user-records-exposed-data-breach/>, (accessed 1 July, 2019).

36 Alice G. Walton, "New studies show just how bad social media is for mental health", *Forbes*, 16 November 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alicegalton/2018/11/16/new-research-shows-just-how-bad-social-media-can-be-for-mental-health/#52d97d3c7af4>, (accessed July 1, 2019).

37 Allcott, Hunt ; Gentzkow, Matthew, "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (31), (2017).

38 Kuldeep Nagi, "New Social Media and Impact of Fake News on Society" (June 6, 2018). ICSSM Proceedings, July 2018, Chaing Mai, Thailand, pp. 77-96, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3258350>, (accessed July 1, 2019).

Definitions of Governance

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines governance as "the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences".³⁹

According to the Ministry of Interior in Cambodia, governance is "a way that governmental organizations and institutions use to manage economic social work and security to serve benefits of citizens." The eight principles of governance are participation, law, transparency, consensus, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and responsiveness.⁴⁰ These principles are taken into account every time the government implements any public activities. The purpose of good governance is to manage economic and social affairs, as well as crises in a way that maximizes the benefits to the public.

The World Bank defines governance as "the method through which power is exercised in the management of a country's political, economic and social resources for development".⁴¹

39 United Nations Development Programme, "Governance for sustainable human development," (New York, UNDP policy document, 1997), https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Think%20Pieces/7_governance.pdf, (accessed May 4, 2019).

40 Ministry of Interior, "Good Governance", (Phnom Penh, Ministry of Interior, February 2013).

41 The World Bank, "Good Governance: An Overview," International Fund for Agricultural Development, (Executive Board – Sixty-Seventh Session Rome, September 8-9, 1999), https://www.ipa.government.bg/sites/default/files/pregled-dobro_upravljenje.pdf, (accessed May 4, 2019).

Canada's Institute of Governance offers another general definition: "Governance is the process whereby societies or organizations make important decisions, determine whom they involve and how they render account".⁴²

Drawing on the above literature, good governance is defined in this study as "A way that the governmental organization or officials service citizens with accountability and transparency".⁴³

Public Service in Cambodia

According to the Ministry of Interior, public service refers to "all activities implemented by governmental institutions and private, civil society, or non-governmental organizations (working under government control or governmental agencies), aiming to serve citizens".⁴⁴

There are seven types of public service:⁴⁵ (1) legal administration services, (2) social and public security, (3) justice and arbitration, (4) trade and small medium enterprises, (5) social affairs, (6) physical infrastructure, and (7) budget management. These are briefly defined below:

- Legal administration: services provided exclusively by governmental institutions or legal entity of public law.
- Social and public security: all services provided to citizens to ensure public safety including living, traveling and staying.

- Justice and arbitration: resolving disputes between citizens, or between citizens and local authorities/governmental officials, citizens and the private sector, or governmental officials and private sectors.
- Trades: small and medium enterprises, investment environment, and private sectors involving in building and maintaining infrastructure
- Social affairs: services provided to having equal access to education, equal study accessories, hygiene and health services.
- Physical infrastructure: road, bridge, water way, pot, dam, airport, public hospital, irrigation system, canal, clean water system, energy power, and so on and forth.
- Budget management: the transparent and accountable budget use for country development and also for services improvement.

This study will take into account these seven types as well as political participation and autonomous services to measure how Cambodians can promote better governance in public service delivery through Facebook.

Impacts of Facebook Use in Cambodia

Facebook is used for many different reasons: socializing, defining one's self-identity, consuming information, forming relationships⁴⁶

⁴² Institute on Governance, "What is Governance?," <https://iog.ca/what-is-governance/>, (accessed May 3, 2019).

⁴³ Institute on Governance, "What is Governance?".

⁴⁴ Ministry of Interior, "Good Governance", 6

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Adam Joinson N., "Looking at, looking up or keeping up with people? Motives and use of Facebook, In proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, April 5-10, 2018, 1027-1036.

and simply discussing.⁴⁷ According to Phong & Sola, Cambodians use Facebook to consume news and information, to keep in touch with friends and family, for entertainment⁴⁸ and, finally, to express their opinions.⁴⁹

In 2016 the Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen asked each government department to use Facebook pages to communicate and interact with citizens, especially to address citizens' complaints.⁵⁰ Since then, Facebook has been widely adopted by governmental organizations and the public to communicate with another.

Some Cambodians prefer using Facebook to voice their concerns regarding different problems such as poor governance, corruption, injustice, public service delivery and development issues. This is hardly ever done offline.

There have been several instances in which complaints started by Cambodian Facebook users by were addressed and resolved by the government after being brought to the public sphere, in addition to the case of the dirty road in Siem Reap mentioned earlier. A car accident that killed a motorcyclist caused an outcry on Facebook after a viral video of the incident was posted online. It resulted in the detention of the driver after Prime Minister Hun Sen ordered the urgent intervention of

the police chief.⁵¹

After the drug bust at the Rock nightclub in early 2019, which led to the detainment of more than 300 youths, Facebook users pressured the government to detain the owner of the establishment, tycoon Kit Theang.⁵²

The unprecedented tragedy in Sihanoukville in June 2019, when a seven-floor building collapsed and killed nearly 30 people, triggered serious criticism of the provincial governor, Youn Min, with calls to resign.⁵³ Cambodian Facebook users condemned him, which contributed to his resignation being approved by the Prime Minister Hun Sen. However, the same story circulated across Facebook again after the government reappointed him to an even higher position at the Ministry of Interior - there is no action taken by the government.⁵⁴

Based on these recent cases, it appears that the government's response to citizens' complaints on Facebook depends on the scale of the problems and the ability of the government to solve them. Problems linked to politics or the affairs of powerful governmental officials might not be resolved effectively.

47 O'Brien Deirdre and Torres Ann M., "Social networking and online privacy: Facebook users' perceptions," *Irish Journal of Management*, 31(2), (2012):63-97.

48 Phong and Solá, "Mobile Phone and Internet in Cambodia 2015".

49 Kaing, "What Does Facebook Reveal About Public Opinion in Cambodia?".

50 Ven Rathavong, "PM Says Facebook is good for Governance," *Khmer Times*, February 11, 2016, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/35661/pm-says-facebook-good-for-governance/>, (accessed May 5, 2019).

51 Taing Vida, "PM Highlights Hit-and-Run that Kill Promising Young Student," *Khmer Times*, March 28, 2019, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50591001/pm-highlights-hit-and-run-that-killed-promising-young-student/>, (accessed May 5, 2019).

52 Eugene Whong, "Cambodian Authorities Arrest Business Tycoon Kith Theang After Drug Raid at His Nightclub," *Radio Free Asia's Khmer Service*, March 11, 2019, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/kith-theang-arrested-03112019174512.html>, (accessed May 22, 2019).

53 Sun Narin, "After Cambodia's Building Collapse, More Construction Sites Found 'Without License'," *Voice of America Khmer*, June 29, 2019, <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/after-cambodia-s-building-collapse-more-construction-sites-found-without-license/4978044.html>, (accessed June 30, 2019).

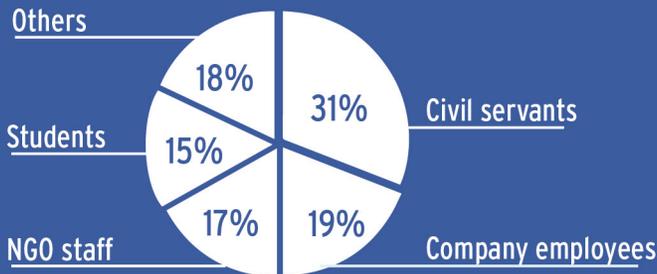
54 Joshua Lipes, "Cambodia Promotes Former Governor of Sihanoukville Who Resigned Over Fatal Building Collapse," *Radio Free Asia's Khmer Service*, June 27, 2019, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/promotion-06272019170549.html>, (accessed June 30, 2019).

Facebook: A Solution to Good Governance?

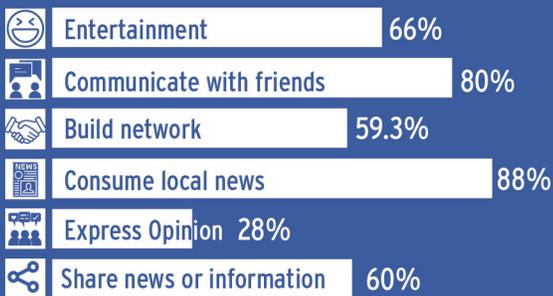
Can your voice have an impact through Facebook?

As Facebook allows the rapid transmission of information and allows users to express their opinions freely, some Cambodians have used this social media network to criticize government actions around social issues and public service delivery, something hardly done offline, as well as to demand accountability from the government, which is crucial to better governance.

Respondents background



Reasons for Facebook use



Respondents acti
public service del



Comment or criticize

43%



Share

Government resp



28%
Received
responses



6%
Didn't
res

Reasons why gov did not respond t

77%

Beyond my capacity
and responsibility

19%

It's n
to p

Respondents beli

59%

Facebook is a qui
tool to spread ide

29%

It's easier to voic
than talking to th
face-to-face.

26%

Facebook makes
powerful when m

Ways to improve service delivery



Recommendations:

- ✓ Boost awareness of officials on how to use social media outlets to foster cooperation and communication.
- ✓ Optimize government's usage of digital outlets.
- ✓ Explore and cultivate new ways of communication.
- ✓ Increase transparency and develop a modern government-citizen relationship through the use of digital outlets.

Response to respondents



Government officials' response to citizen's comments



Reasons to believe that

Facebook is quick and easy to use.

There is a concern over Facebook among citizens and local authorities.

Facebook comments are more visible than any other people see it.

73%

of respondents expressed their concerns on Facebook

facebook



Methodology

In addition to reviewing global literature and recent cases in Cambodia, this study is complemented by an online survey conducted first-hand on Cambodian Facebook users. This enables researchers to gather raw data about the way Cambodians use Facebook as a medium to demand better governance and also explores how the Cambodian government officials solicit users' requests or criticisms.

Data Collection & Study Limitations

150 respondents participated in an online survey conducted from 6th May to 12th May 2019. Its 27 questions were drafted and published using SurveyMonkey. Prior to the official launch of the survey, four respondents participated in a test run to check the interface and the questions. A few questions were changed and simplified as a result of the test run. The ability to skip questions was added to all respondents who are not governmental officials. Respondents were selected through the Facebook networks of the researchers, the wider network and Facebook groups. The responses were then extracted from SurveyMonkey and analyzed using SPSS and Excel. To ensure accuracy, the data was cross-checked together with other people working in research.

The survey data is based on a relatively small sample size and it should also be noted that the majority of respondents were Facebook connections of the researchers, mostly based in Phnom Penh. Thus, the results cannot be generalized to the country and it would be useful to repeat the survey with a much larger sample size. A source of noise may be the fact that there is no proper verification of the iden-

tity and details of the Facebook users. Finally, there were no in-depth interviews of the government officials, which may limit the information on their perspectives on the matter, especially with regards to how they perceive and respond to citizens' feedback.

Survey Findings and Analysis

Respondents Demographics

Out of the 150 respondents, 63 are female and 87 are male (see Table 1). Around 55% of respondents are from age group of 15 to 30-year-old following by nearly 40% of people age between 31 and 46-year-old. While the remaining 5% are from age group below 15-year-old, 47 to 65-year-old and above 65-year-old (graphic).

Gender	Respondents	Percentage
Female	63	42%
Male	87	58%
Grand Total	150	100%

Table 1: Total Respondents and Gender Separation

Approximately 31% of the respondents are civil servants and 19% are company employees. The remaining 50% are students, freelancers or consultants, businessmen or - women and NGO staff. The majority of respondents are based in Phnom Penh while the others are from various provinces in Cambodia or Cambodians who are currently living overseas.

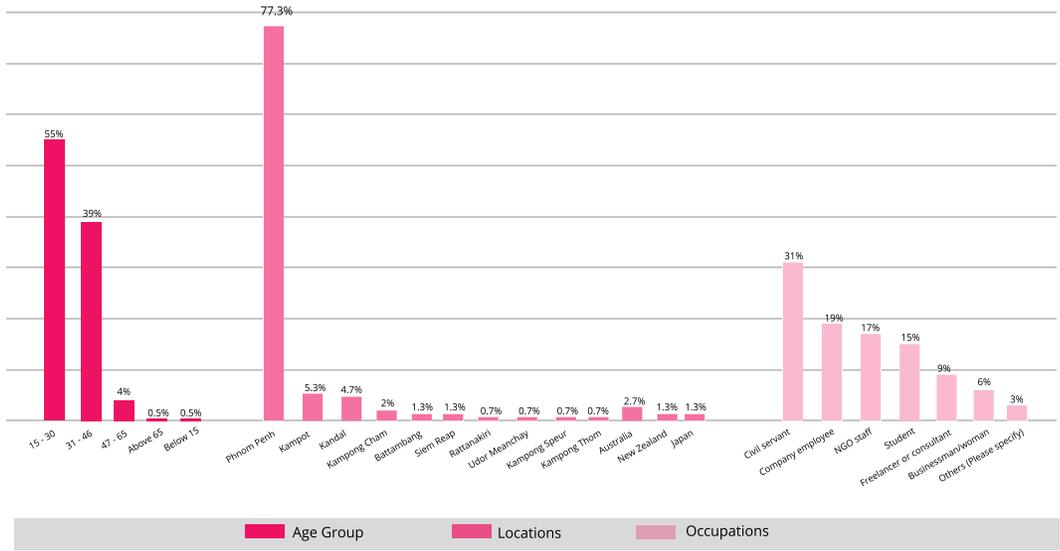


Figure 1: Age groups classification of respondents, Respondents' Locations and Respondents' Occupations

Governance and Public Service Delivery Knowledge

The majority of respondents answered correctly when asked about the definition of good governance. The figure shows that 83% of respondents answered correctly while only 17% is wrong. This seemingly reflects good knowledge in understanding the role of government in relation to good governance, but a low level of exercising citizen rights due to self-censorship or sensitive criticism.

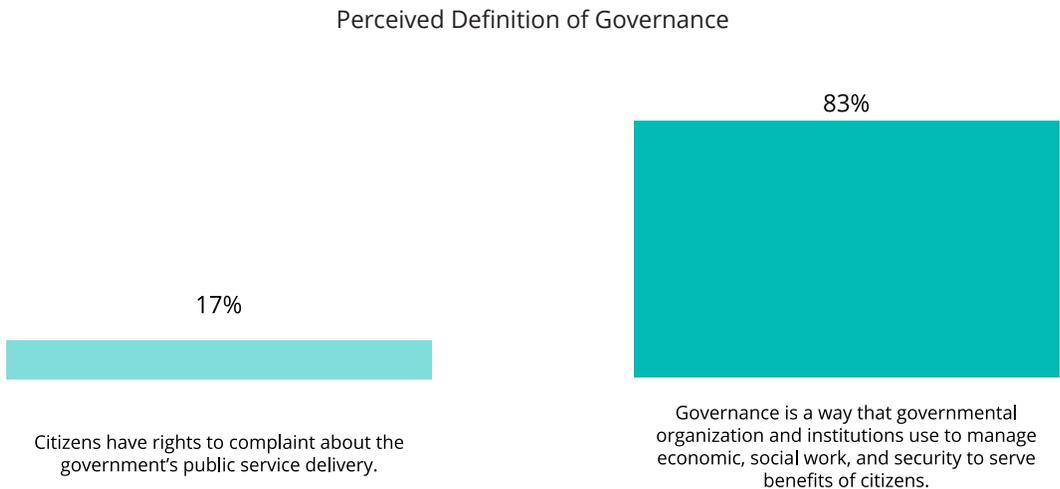


Figure 2: Perceived definition of 'Governance' by respondents

Citizens have rights to complain about the government's public service delivery. Perceived Definition of Governance

Governance is a way that governmental organization and institutions use to manage economic, social work, and security to serve benefits of citizens.

Respondents were slightly less likely to define public service delivery correctly compared to the governance concept (only 77%). Although this is lower than governance it indicates good knowledge and understanding of public services delivery.

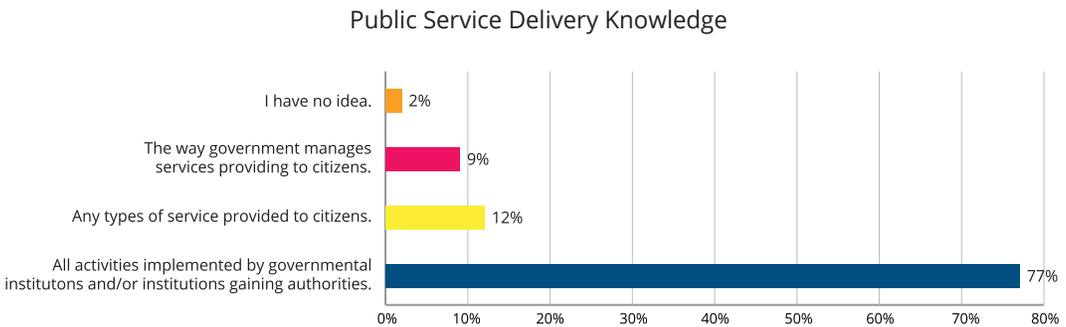


Figure 3: Perceived definition of 'Public Service Delivery' by respondents

Reasons for Using Facebook

Cambodians appear to use Facebook for various different reasons including entertainment, building family relationships, communicating with friends, building networks, sharing news and expressing their opinions. Among the selected reasons in the survey, news consumption is the leading activity for 88% of the total respondents, whereas expressing opinions and criticizing governance and demanding for better governance are each done by less than 30%.

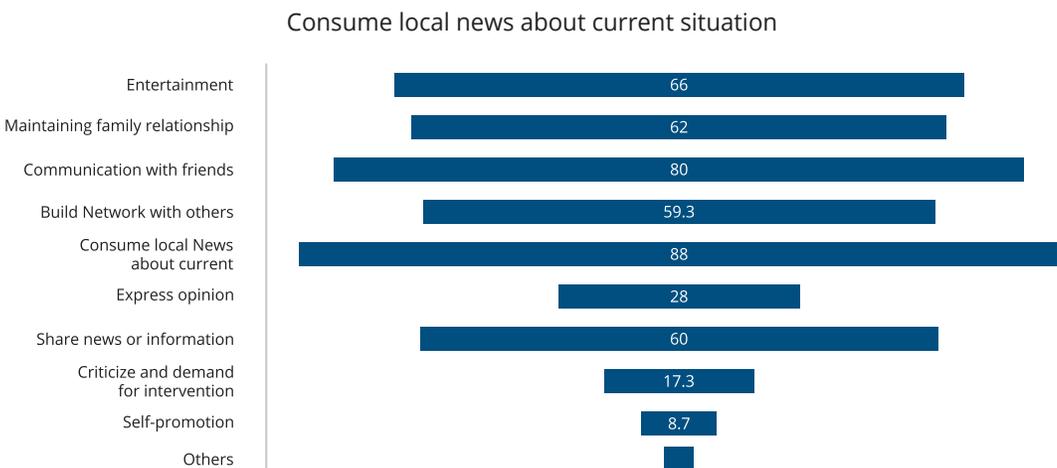


Figure 4: Consume local news about current situation

Within this sample, more than 60% of ordinary respondents are active in expressing their views on Facebook, whereas civil servants are notably less at 38%.

Express Opinion

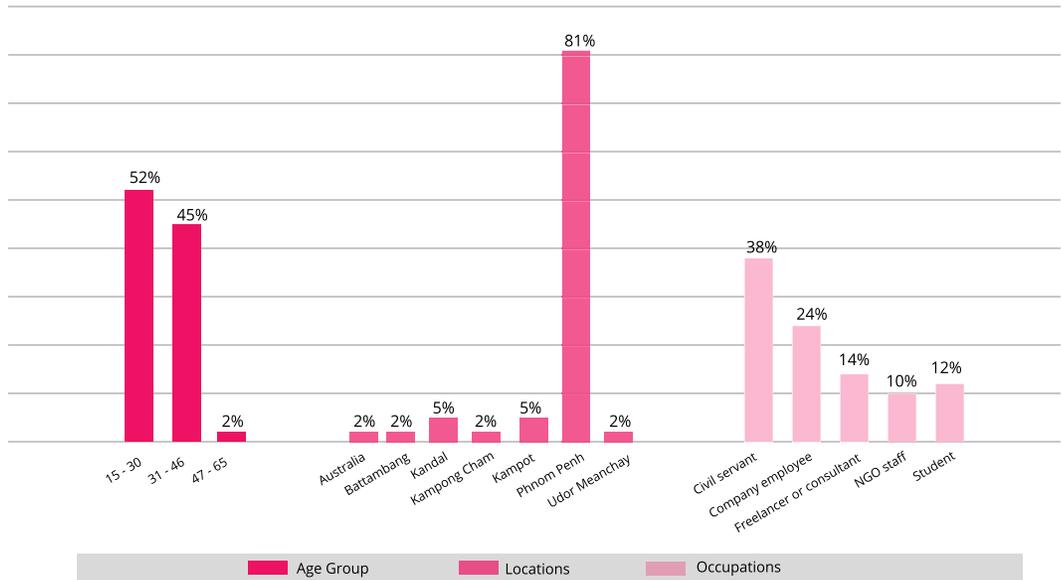


Figure 5: Demographic of Respondents who express opinion.

Criticize and demand for intervention from government officials

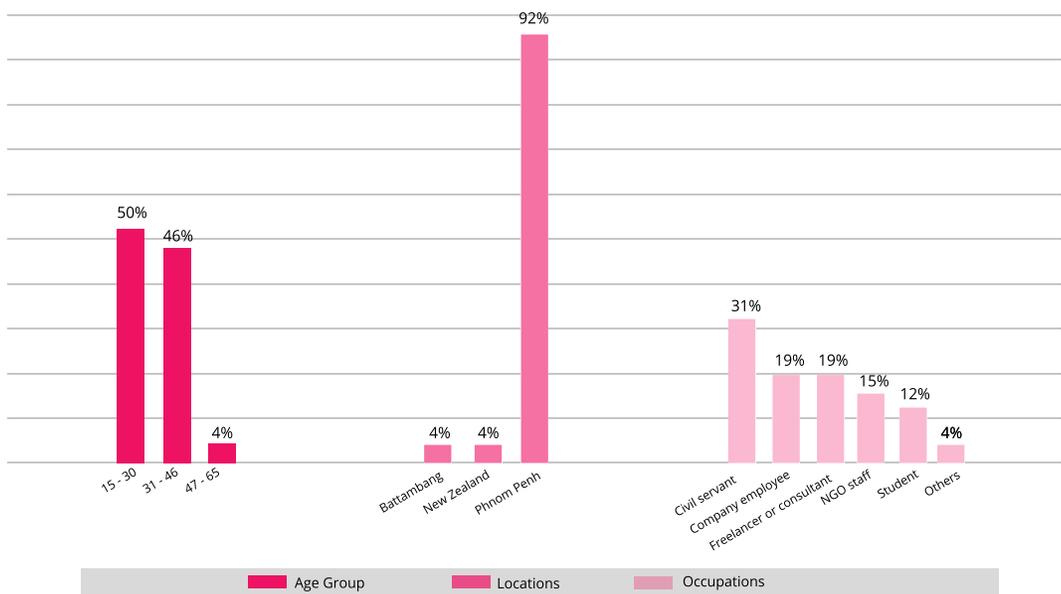


Figure 6: Respondents who criticize the government.

Reasons for Using Facebook to Express Opinions on Governance Issues

Most respondents use Facebook to voice themselves because they perceive it as a quick and easy tool to spread their ideas (59%), as well as a convenient medium for them to express concerns to local authorities (29%), or simply to share their concerns (26%).

Reasons Using Facebook to Voice	%
Facebook is a quick and easy tool to spread my ideas	59%
Facebook enable me to express my concern or opinion so it's easier than talking to the local authorities face-to-face.	29%
I want a lot of people to hear my comment on Facebook so it will make my comment even more powerful in order to pressure the government or local authorities to solve the issue.	26%
I can release stress and my unpleasant feeling on Facebook	13%
Others	6%

Table 2: Reasons to use Facebook for opinion expression

Using Facebook to Hold Government to Account on Public Service Delivery

Table 3 shows that the survey respondents appear to use Facebook to demand better public

services delivery by consuming and sharing news/information on it (71%), by participating at events (44%), and by voicing their opinions to constructively criticize the governmental officials' works and request for positive changes (43%). Some respondents also discuss with friends (39%), update their status (28%) and discuss with family (20%).

These results could indicate that Cambodians use Facebook to create a lot of visibility about the mismanagement or poor public service delivery to the wider public and other governmental officials. That would empower them to exercise their right in demanding better governance and accountability.

Actions on Facebook to improve public service delivery	%
Comment or criticize	43%
Share news or information	71%
Make a discussion with friends Facebook	39%
Discuss with family	20%
Join event or program related to public service delivery	44%
Write on my own Facebook Status	28%
I have done anything	5%
Others	2%

Table 3: Respondents' activities to demand better governance on Facebook

Expressing Opinions

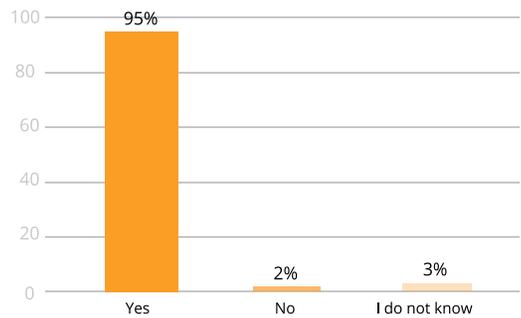
The majority of respondents underline their right to question the government and its responsibility to take into consideration their feedback. They address the importance of expressing their opinions and criticism of the government's work. They believe that citizens are the power holders and the government needs to solicit citizens' comments to improve the policy and development plan. The citizens' voice can also contribute to better decision-making because they believe that:

- Expressing opinions is a part of a democratic country's development
- Citizens hold the right to question the government and demand better services.
- Citizens' participation leads to inclusion, equality and service satisfaction
- Citizens as voters can advise the government because they are the service users

According to the survey results, 95% of respondents think that the government has to listen to its citizens' concerns and opinions, and 73% of respondents have already voiced their concerns on Facebook (see figure 4). This could imply that most Cambodians wish to see their government as a responsible institution, but also that not everyone wants to express their constructive criticism and suggestions on Facebook, perhaps due to self-censorship and security concerns.

Moreover, only 50% of respondents think that it is an effective tool for the government to solicit comments and criticism. Users still voice their concerns about any public services as it is a convenient and easy way to reach out to the wider public and the higher governmental officials.

Do you think the government should listen to citizen's concerns?



Percentage of respondents ever voiced their concerns on Facebook

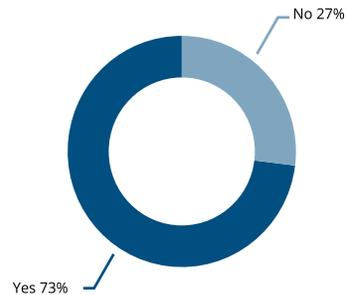


Figure 7: Expressing opinions on Facebook

Types of Public Service Issues Raised by Respondents

Public services are classified into nine categories in this study. Most respondents tend to voice their opinion on services related to social, public order, and social security (51%), followed by services related to water, electricity and waste management (47%). This data implies that the main public services that are criticized by respondents on Facebook are related to public service delivery (see table 04).

Satisfaction of the Respondents

Based on the results, most respondents rate Facebook as an effective tool to report problems or voice opinions to improve governance

Types of Public Service	N	%
Cluster Services related to social and public order and social security (Public safety, living safety (thief, robbery,) travel safety, staying safety	77	51%
Services related to Water, Electricity, and waste management...	71	47%
Cluster services related to the development of physical infrastructure	55	37%
Cluster services related to justice and arbitration: (Argument between citizens and citizens Argument between citizens and local authorities/governmental officials, Argument between citizens and private sectors, Argument between governmental officials and private sectors)	56	37%
Cluster services related to social affairs culture and women's affairs (Equal access to education, Basic right to study, Hygiene and health services, Entertainment service, Social affairs service, Disable and orphanage service, Women rights , Other services to poverty reduction)	54	36%
Service related to state sovereignty (Permission letter license wedding registration Birth registration Vehicle, cruise, plane identification card Certificate of accreditation Khmer national identification card Family book registration and legality, etc.)	45	30%
Issue related to politics (Related to each political party's policy)	41	27%
Cluster services related to promoting trade, small and medium enterprises, investment environment, and private sectors involving in building and maintaining infrastructure	32	21%
Cluster services related to revenue collection, expense and sponsor money management	32	21%
Others	9	6%

Table 4: Types of Public Service

in Cambodia (79%). This seemingly shows that Facebook allows users to report issues and voice their concerns demanding for better governance. However, the level of satisfaction remains problematic.

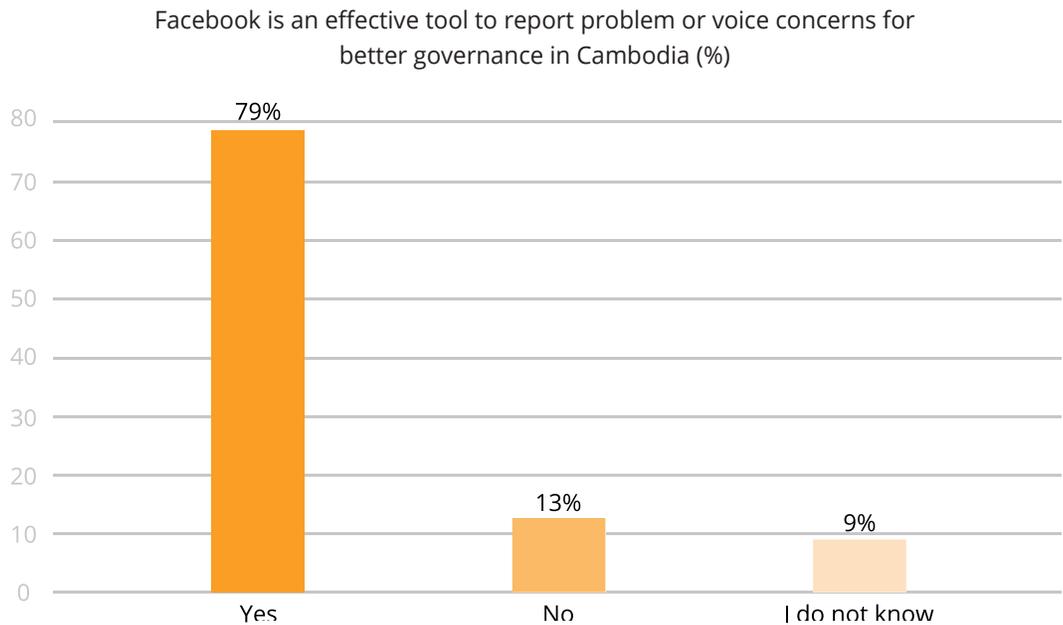


Figure 8: Perception of Respondents on the effectiveness of Facebook to voice concern for better governance

Figure 9 shows that most respondents do not get a proper response from the government. This indicates that the government may be less able or willing to respond to citizens' requests or concerns. However, the governmental officials who took this survey appear to think differently.

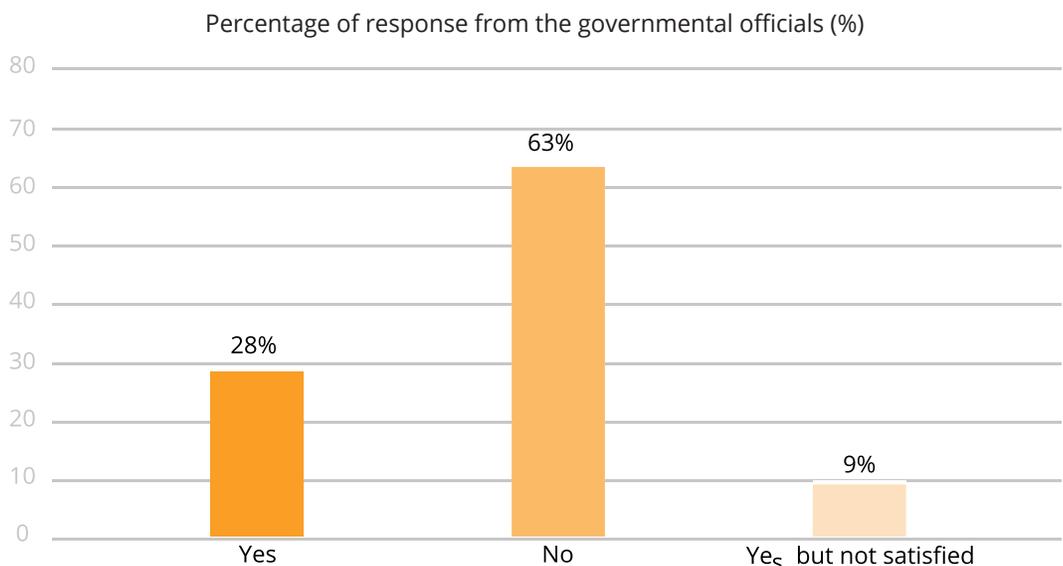


Figure 9: Percentage of responses receives from the government

When looking at the data by occupation, most survey takers are unlikely to have received a response from the government, but civil servants appear to be split, with over half of them having received a response.

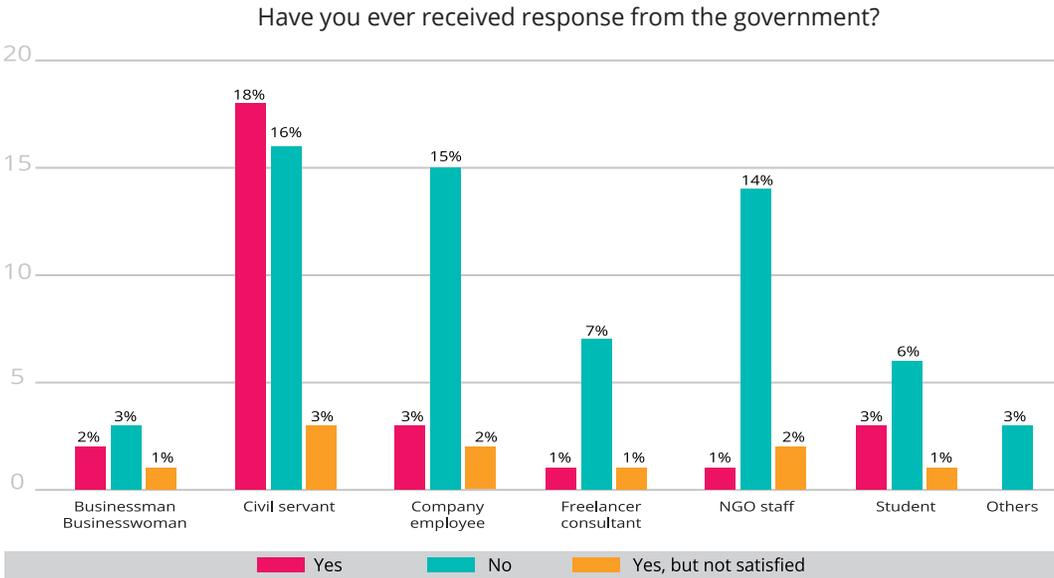


Figure 10: Demographic differences of respondents receiving responses from the government

However, the majority of respondents think that the government does not listen to their comments on Facebook and consider it as a less effective tool scoring only 5.02 out of 10. This might be due to a lack of proper responses from the government or even due to politics.

However, the majority of respondents think that the government does not listen to their comments on Facebook and consider it as a less effective tool scoring only 5.02 out of 10. This might be due to a lack of proper responses from the government or even due to politics.

Most respondents think that the government did not respond to their concerns because there is no decision from the higher-level officials, while some even think that the government even benefits from the problems raised

by citizens (26%), that the government doesn't care about citizens' concern or that it is beyond the lower-level governmental officials' responsibility. This indicates that most problems raised on Facebook cannot be resolved if there is no higher-level decision maker involved.

This also backs up the answers from government officials who claim that they have not responded because the majority of the issues flagged to them are beyond their authority or responsibility. This can be a sign of weak governance to a certain extent

Respondents suggested that the following factors might encourage the government official to react positively:

Reasons why there is no response from the government	%
Beyond their responsibilities	21%
No decision from the higher-level officials	40%
They just do not care about citizens' concerns	23%
They gain benefits from the problems, so they don't care to resolve it.	26%
Facebook is not an official way of communication yet	3%
No Concrete mechanism to respond	5%
Others	9%

Table 5: Reasons that respondents think that there is no response from the government

- Focusing on giving constructive feedback rather than complaints
- Providing sufficient evidence when raising any problems with suggestions
- Each governmental institution should establish Facebook page and monitor the comments and criticism
- Creating a law or regulation to gather feedback and respond to citizens

Government Officers' Response to Facebook Users' Comments

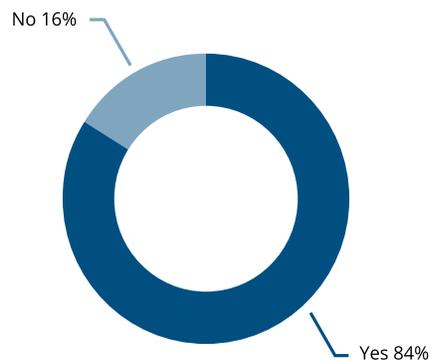
Although 46 respondents identified themselves as civil servants, only 31 of them actually answered the additional questions meant for them alone.

Against the other respondents' perception, 26 government officials (84%) claim that they managed to act on the feedback or suggestions received via Facebook. They did so because they think that it is their responsibility, they care about their citizens, and that it can improve their organization's reputation. However, they cannot respond to everything given that it is beyond their capacity and responsibility (77%), or because there is no evidence (45%), or because it is related to politics (19%).

Discussion

Data from this pilot study shows that Facebook can empower users to demand better governance, particularly in public service delivery. However, expressing opinions and criticism is not the main thing people do on so-

Have you resolved these issues?



Why do you decide to resolve those issues?

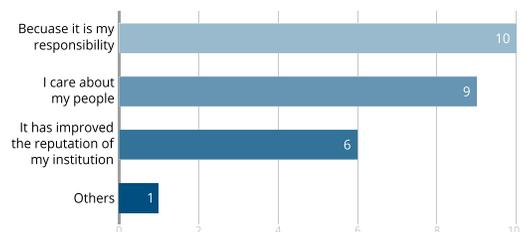


Figure 11: Positive reaction of government officials toward issues raised by public

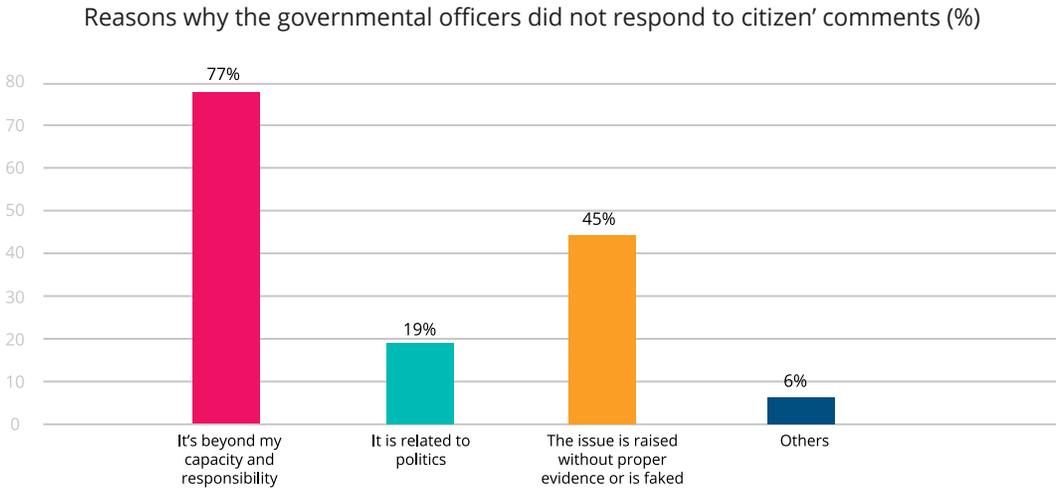


Figure 12: Reasons why the government officials did not respond to citizens' comments

cial media. Users might feel too unsure about writing about such topics in public. They might also be concerned about their safety if their views about governance are seen as insulting the government or being too political, considering that several activists in Cambodia were detained for something they posted on Facebook. The latest concerns that the Facebook platform itself is unsafe from data breaches or data leaks might also affect people's perceptions negatively, especially considering that their personal identity can be revealed by the company.

Despite these concerns, data also suggests that Facebook can be used by individuals, activists and groups to disseminate information and voice their opinions about corruption and other problems in the society. It enables Cambodian users to communicate and share their concerns with the government, creating some form of two-way communication, and it is a quick and easy way to do so – which hardly happens outside the virtual world.

Several studies argue that social media allows users to highlight their issues and pressure the government to listen to and consider their

comments, which in turn enhances public transparency and accountability.⁵⁵ A plethora of studies shows the interrelation between social media usage and better governance promotion.

However, according to this pilot study, the Cambodian government's responsiveness to citizens' complaints on Facebook is still limited. Respondents believe that there's a lack of political involvement from higher-level governmental officials and a lack of attention to citizens' complaints. Most respondents see Facebook as a moderately effective tool to demand better governance, given the fact that only 28% of those surveyed received responses from the government while the rest did not.

Social media can help promote better governance only if the government takes action on the citizens' comments. The government might not consider citizens' comments because there is no forensic evidence. It might

55 Yasir Hussain, "Social Media as a Tool for Transparency and Good Governance in the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan", (Bonn, Crossroad Asia, October 2014) https://www.academia.edu/11935850/Social_Media_as_a_Tool_for_Transparency_and_Good_Governance_in_the_Government_of_Gilgit-Baltistan_Pakistan, (accessed April 22, 2019).

also neglect comments that are too political or beyond their authority or roles. The Prime Minister Hun Sen has already announced and encouraged all governmental institutions to use Facebook to communicate with citizens and to gather their feedback. As a result, government officials have created Facebook pages for their ministries, but the level of response to citizens' comments might be questionable and not meet the citizens' satisfactions. It may be worth study how to improve the way the government can solicit and manage citizens' comments.

Conclusion and Recommendation

To a certain extent, Facebook has the potential to enable Cambodians to demand for better governance, although the government's responses are not well recognized.

This pilot study suggests that Cambodians use Facebook for news and information consumption and sharing, which can increase their knowledge and understanding of the current developmental and public service delivery issues. Using this knowledge, Cambodians can voice their opinions or comments and demand their government's accountability with regard to those issues. They perceive Facebook as a powerful platform to quickly spread their voice to the government.

However, they are not entirely satisfied with the government's responses as they believe that there is no leadership from the higher-level governmental officials to take actions on their comments on Facebook.

Governmental officials in turn claim that they manage to respond to citizens' comments, but they also raise the fact that some comments are beyond their authority.

Facebook might be an effective tool to hold the government to account only if there is a commitment from the government to solve the problems raised on the platform. The political sensitivity of the problems may affect the level of responsiveness on the government's side. This could also lead the government to filter some sensitive issues posted on Facebook, which can hinder the effectiveness of the solution.

As this is a limited pilot study, a much broader study could reveal more detailed information, more reasons of the problems found and more reasons behinds the responses of the governmental officials.

The authors recommend that the Cambodian government establishes an official committee to receive comments from Facebook users in relation to public service delivery issues, and provide citizens with proper responses or intervention. Being a democratic country, it would be a natural requirement for e-governance to enable this kind of feedback mechanism and promote citizens' participation in decision-making.

The authors would also like to recommend conducting a larger scale study with in-depth interviews with the higher-governmental officers who are involved in the issues raised by citizens.