

## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION AND FIELD OF STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

#### 1.1.1 Service delivery

All police agencies world-wide have a common purpose: To deliver effective service to the communities in which they are situated. Consequently police agency websites also aim for service delivery.

The South African Police Service (SAPS), too, in essence stands for service delivery. This is underlined by the national strategy of the SAPS (SAPS 2002a: 6), which emphasises the importance of providing service to its clients, namely the members of the South African public. This is in line with its own mission and with government strategy, which is very clear on its purpose of service delivery. This, too, is embodied in the Service Delivery Improvement Programme (SDIP) of the SAPS: “The primary goal is service to the public” (SAPS s.a.: 78). Recent research by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) at 45 of the 219 SAPS priority police stations indicates that most people who dealt directly with the police were satisfied with the services they received. This is in sharp contrast to general public perceptions of the police (ISS 2001).

The SAPS has a service delivery improvement programme (SDIP) that seeks to improve service delivery to communities at local level. The programme provides police station managers with practical tools to improve service delivery while seeking to inculcate a culture of participative management and increased community involvement. In this regard Groenewald (in North 1998:13) emphasises that an approach of ownership in development is important and that people should be empowered to take part in the process.

The SDIP also ties in with the South African government’s *Batho Pele* (“People first”) initiative to improve the delivery of public services. Improving service delivery is one of the government’s eight priorities as set out in the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (cf. Department of Public Service and Administration 2002).

The eight priorities are the following:

- **Consultation with citizens** – about the level and quality of the public services they receive

- **Service standards** – citizens should be told what level and quality of public services they will receive
- **Access** – citizens should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled
- **Courtesy** – citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration
- **Information** – citizens should be given full, accurate information about the public services they are entitled to receive
- **Openness and transparency** – citizens should be told how national and provincial departments are run, how much they cost, and who is in charge
- **Redress** – should the promised standard of service not be delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy
- **Value for money** – when the complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response; and value for money (cf. Department of Public Service and Administration 2002)

Service delivery within the SAPS includes determining and meeting the public's information needs that pertain to safety and security and crime-combating and prevention. The vision of the SAPS Information and Systems Management (ISM) Strategic Framework is "to enable the optimal use of information by the SAPS in creating a safe and secure environment for all people in South Africa" (SAPS 2002a).

In many respects, the SAPS service delivery is satisfactory. Multilingualism, for example, is regarded as important in the SAPS and the police agency endeavours to service members of the public in the language of their choice. In order to realise this, the SAPS launched a pilot project for the Telephone Interpreting Service for South Africa (TISSA) under Senior Superintendent Karen Calteaux in March 2002. The pilot project provides for immediate access to an interpreter in any of the official languages of the country via a landline and a speaker-telephone. TISSA is currently available at 70 police stations across the country (SAPS Journal 2002b: 26).

In the Communication Strategy of the government's Justice, Crime and Security (JCPS) Cluster (which includes the SAPS), circulated in June 2002, the objectives include

- promoting a sense of security and safety in communities by communicating the efforts of the SAPS and government in implementing service delivery; and
- informing and educating the public on the role, progress and campaigns of the SAPS and other departments in the JCPS cluster (JCPS Cluster 2002:7).

The SAPS website, one of the tools utilised to cater for the public's information needs, was established in 1997. It has since grown to be a sizeable online publication. In July 2002 the content of the website was printed and it amounted to almost 2 000 A4 pages.

In line with the concept of “e-Government”, which is fast gaining recognition worldwide and in South Africa, it is important for the SAPS, as a government department, to start looking into how its website could implement the relevant principles.

e-Government is defined as “the use of information technology, in particular the Internet, to deliver public services in a much more convenient, customer oriented, cost effective and altogether different and better way. It affects the Government’s dealing with its citizens, business and other public agencies as well as its internal business processes and employees” (Mwanza 2002).

e-Government is, in other words, the application of e-commerce concepts to a government department’s processes in its dealing with citizens or with other government departments. To expand on this definition, Hoekman (2002) explains that e-Government aims at transforming the existing governance systems through digital means by increasing participation, efficiency and effectiveness in order to foster democracy and economic and social development. However, “e-Government is much more about transforming relationships than about technology. There is no smooth transition from “government” to “e-Government” (Di Maio 2001).

### **1.1.2 Online presence for the SAPS**

Investigation into the establishment of the SAPS website produced few results. No documentation was recorded at the SAPS itself. The SAPS Internet Policy document (SAPS 2000) makes little mention of the SAPS website, although it does reflect indirectly on it. This document which was compiled “to ensure the correct usage of the Internet within the SAPS”, states that the Internet “aims to open a window into the SAPS for the public to establish shared trust and to enhance communication by

- promoting public involvement through sharing the responsibility of crime prevention;
- supplying information;
- supplying crime related information and education; and
- adhering to general requests from the public” (SAPS 2000).

Promoting greater involvement of the private sector in rendering assistance to the SAPS would portend well for the future. If the system of cooperation between the community and the SAPS could be made to work successfully, this could add a further vital contribution towards mobilising all available resources in the battle to prevent and combat the incidence of crime.

The Government Communication and Information Systems (GCIS), which was established in 1998, in 2000 encouraged government departments to establish an online presence in the form of

a website (GCIS 2000). The SAPS website, which was already in existence, was thus a forerunner in terms of government online communication.

In 2001 an audit undertaken by GCIS into existing government websites indicated various shortcomings in the SAPS website regarding content, organisation, navigation, design and layout (GCIS 2001). These findings are given in Chapter 2 of this study. This chapter also deals with literature findings on effective websites in general.

By 2001 various factors pointed to the need for the effectiveness of the SAPS website to be assessed; one of the main reasons being that some of the information furnished was not regularly updated. There were a number of concerned and dedicated officials who submitted information for publication from time to time. However, the task was not clearly allocated to specific staff, and various persons at different offices worked at it, when their other tasks permitted.

The task of streamlining and keeping the contents and structure of the SAPS website up to date has been and is complicated by the fact that in terms of legislation, the State Information Technology Agency (SITA) is responsible for establishing and maintaining all government websites. SITA is the IT service agency for the South African government. Its stated aim is to “develop the powerful Internet platform” (Blom & Willers 2001).

SAPS staff members are responsible for providing the content. SITA then places it on the website, and updates the design, structure and navigation. This ‘remote control’ of the website – SPS headquarters, where the content is gathered, is situated in the Pretoria CBD, while SITA is on the outskirts of Pretoria – complicates the process, especially regarding the time factor and the proximity of role-players.

Yet there can be no doubt as to the importance of the World Wide Web for the SAPS, or any police agency for that matter, in carrying out its functions and rendering service to its clients today. Commander Dave Pettinari of the Pueblo County Sheriff’s department sums it up neatly “... if you come to work without the Internet it will be like a patrolman coming to work without his patrol car. The Internet will be that critical in accomplishing our mission by virtue of more efficient and timely access to information” (in Reynecke & Fourie 2001:31).

The SAPS website must be assessed in terms of its service delivery, which is required of it as a government communication medium (cf. GCIS 2001). However, if it is to meet the information needs of its online users it must also be an effective website, and, specifically, an effective police agency website.

There is no dearth of literature on the requirements of effective websites in general. However, information as to what makes for an effective police agency website specifically could be not found in secondary sources.

Given these factors, it was decided to undertake an investigation into possible guidelines for an effective police agency website. This would be done by examining primary sources – firstly, the needs of users of the SAPS website and, secondly, other police agency websites. From this, guidelines to improve the existing SAPS website could be compiled.

## **1.2 The SAPS customer expectations measure**

An outside research company, Ask Africa, undertook a customer expectations measure in 1997 (Ask Africa 1997). The SAPS approached Ask Africa, a Pretoria-based research company, to conduct such research, with a view to determine needs that users of the proposed SAPS website would have.

Although the SAPS – according to Ask Africa – had already contacted relevant stakeholders, it was necessary for the public to be consulted (Ask Africa 1997:4). Ask Africa agreed that it was necessary for the SAPS to see the public as its customers (Ask Africa 1997:4).

The objective of the expectations measure was to provide the SAPS with guidelines to be used in deciding on initial content for its website. The aim of the research was to describe what specific information the public would like to receive from the SAPS in general and on a web page (Ask Africa 1997:6).

The research design was qualitative (Ask Africa 1997:6). A telephone survey was undertaken and the sample size was 222 respondents. For the second phase of the study 12 police stations were contacted to determine what police members regarded as important information (Ask Africa 1997:7).

According to Ask Africa, it was necessary that the following questions be asked: What were customers' needs and expectations, and which needs did they regard as the most important? (Ask Africa 1997:4).

### **1.2.1 Ask Africa methodology**

Ask Africa initially defined the objective of its research as follows:

- To provide the SAPS with guidelines to be used in deciding on the initial content for its website (Ask Africa 1997:6).

Ask Africa described the aims as follows:

- To describe what specific information the general public would like to receive from the SAPS in general and on a website
- To validate the five major categories identified at a SAPS Internet workshop held earlier (Ask Africa 1997:6)

### **1.2.2 Design and sample**

Ask Africa described the survey as qualitative: a descriptive telephonic survey undertaken to determine the policing information needs of the public. The respondents were asked to indicate what information they would like to receive from the police (Ask Africa 1997:6). However, Ask Africa did point out that as a number of respondents were not entirely familiar with Internet browsing, they were asked what information they would like to receive from the police in any medium (Ask Africa 1997:6).

A sample consisting of 222 respondents was drawn up. The sample was stratified regionally (six regions, namely Gauteng, North Eastern, Southern, Western, Central and Eastern), and the major centres in each of the regions were used from which the sample was drawn. The latest telephone directories from the major metropolitan centres were used as the sampling frame. The directory was used to randomly select the sampling elements. All regions had equal representation in that 37 telephone interviews were conducted for each region. Most of the respondents were white (171) and 139 of the interviews were conducted in English (Ask Africa 1997:8,9).

The questionnaire was designed to assess the policing information needs of the public (Ask Africa 1997:9).

A second phase of sampling was used, namely to target respondents with specific characteristics. For this phase 12 police stations were contacted in order to ascertain what information they regarded as being important.

### **1.2.3 Analysis**

Responses received from customers were, according to Ask Africa, qualitatively analysed by means of content analysis (Ask Africa 1997:9). Kerlinger (in Wimmer & Dominick 1987:166) defines content analysis as a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables.

### **1.2.4 Ask Africa final report**

In the final report submitted to the SAPS in 1997, Ask Africa summed up its findings as follows as follows:

The major categories of customer information needs were identified as follows:

- Crime statistics
- Criminals
- Missing persons
- Community policing
- Structures and strategies

Other important points to consider were listed as follows:

- Crime statistics
- Policing strategy
- Success rates
- Area specific crime rates
- Wanted criminal information
- Missing persons information
- Channels for community involvement in the fight against crime
- Safety tips (Ask Africa 1997)

The survey indicated that 50% of the respondents were familiar with the Internet, while 50% were not.

According to Ask Africa, the categories identified at the SAPS workshop and those identified by the general public coincided (Ask Africa 1997:18).

### **1.2.5 Conclusion and recommendations**

Ask Africa consequently recommended the following content for the SAPS website:

- Reports (crime statistics per area/success rate per type of crime, arrests and convictions)
- Structure of the SAPS (information on service type, quality of service/important contact numbers/judicial procedure)
- Strategies and priorities (current strategy on crime prevention/high profile crimes)
- Community policing (information on community policing/community involvement/media statements to improve SAPS public image)
- Projects (criminal information/wanted criminals/missing persons)

It further recommended that

- a facility be provided whereby visitors to the SAPS website could provide feedback in terms of content and style; and

## 1.5 Demarcation of field of study

In this study the SAPS website is regarded as a service delivery tool within the South African government and the SAPS - both of which clearly state their roles as service providers. The study is undertaken against this background.

Equally important is the fact that the SAPS website is an online publication. This positions the SAPS as an online or so-called 'New Media' publisher. In this role the SAPS faces daunting albeit exciting challenges. In this regard, North (1998:120) makes the observation, "changing technology will change a man's style, but will not change his objectives".

This specific function brings about responsibilities, as Britz (in North 1998:136) states because the publisher is working with the intellectual goods of others. "Like a librarian, the publisher is an information intermediary, and he must

- i. accept responsibility for the integrity of the content,
- ii. accept responsibility for making the information accessible to others ...".

The publisher, in general, is described as a matcher or a connector: S/He puts people and information together to achieve a certain goal. S/He is an information ecologist - who understands that the environment is constantly changing and, therefore, so are information needs. S/He is a change agent - who makes things happen that would not have happened otherwise (cf. Bailey 1970; Dessauer 1974; Ponelis & Fairer-Wessels 1998; St Claire 1995).

The publisher's objective has been and continues to be to gather and disseminate information. In the modern-day era, there is, however, an emphasis on repackaging information in such a way that value is added.

The SAPS, in its role as publisher, must also claim ownership of such characteristics.

## 1.6 Definition of concepts

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this dissertation. The definitions are based on the researcher's understanding of the terms found in the literature survey undertaken.

<i>Batho pele</i>	A Sotho term, when translated means "people first". In SA government context it is an initiative by the SA government to transform delivery of public services, with the emphasis on service delivery to the citizen.
Benchmarking	A technique for comparing an organisation's internal performance, products, and services to the external standards of excellence by quantitative and qualitative measures. This information is then used to attain and sustain the best in class performance.





Best practices	Good practices that have worked well elsewhere. They are proven and have produced successful results. Government organisations need to share best practices internally and externally. When implementing processes and systems, it pays to look at what has succeeded - and failed - in the past.
Chunking	Chunking is breaking down information into separate topics, modules or units.
Consistency	Consistency gives a web page a unified “look and feel”. A consistent design for a website is a method of providing repetition. Users know what to expect and do not need to relearn what to expect.
Democracy	Landow (1992:78-94) provides answers: “Used in the sense of textuality, it in effect means levelling the playing fields for the reader and the writer, i.e. the writer and the reader become counterparts... Anyone using electronic text can ply it to make his own interest the <i>de facto</i> principle. The point of focus depends on the reader [...] This empowers the reader and makes it possible for him to choose his way through text”.
Digital divide	The imbalance in access to information technology among diverse groups. It usually describes a lack of access to telephones, personal computers, the Internet and online resources of specific communities, compared to how widely technology is used in that country or community.
Information architecture	That which involves the design of organisation and navigation systems to help people find and manage information more successfully.
User-centric	In a user-centric approach, systems are developed in which the user needs and desires are considered paramount.

## 1.7 Organisation of dissertation

### Chapter 1 – Introduction

Introduces the objectives of the study. It introduces the principles of *Batho Pele*, the South African government’s initiative for improving service delivery in the public service. The hypotheses are followed by an exposition of the methodology. Service delivery within the SAPS is discussed as the website is one of the tools used to render service to SAPS clients. This is followed by a definition of the concepts. The chapter division discusses the document contents.

### Chapter 2 – Literature study

The literature survey includes both print and online material on website structure and content and specifically on police agencies and their websites. It analyses the requirements for a modern police agency and other public service websites as is gained from relevant consulted sources.

Further, the audit of government websites and, specifically, the SAPS website, undertaken by the GCIS in 2001 is discussed. The Gartner Group e-Government model is also introduced.

### **Chapter 3 – Requirement of the SAPS website as a service delivery tool**

This chapter deals with requirements for police agency and other government websites as gained from the following two sources:

- Relevant literature
- A survey of the response of users of the SAPS website over a period of one year

### **Chapter 4 – Website best practices – a practical application**

This chapter contains an analysis of the content and structure of and services delivered by several international police agency websites. From this an attempt was made to record the typical nature and functions of police agency websites and to derive guidelines for such websites. It further includes the results of personal and e-mail interviews with webmasters of various police agency websites. The webmasters also completed a questionnaire.

### **Chapter 5 – Development of a websites evaluation instrument**

An evaluation instrument is developed for analysing the effectiveness of a police agency website. The criteria is extracted from the following: The customer expectations measure, the literature review, the GCIS audit of government websites, the SAPS website query analysis and the evaluation of best practices of other police agency websites.

### **Chapter 6 – Evaluation of the current SAPS website**

This chapter summarises the opinion of the evaluators of the current SAPS website, using the evaluation instrument developed in Chapter 5. It is structured into the seven categories of website content, website architecture, information structure, technology, style, service delivery and e-Government.

### **Chapter 7 – Conclusion and Recommendations**

The concluding chapter shows how the study of the SAPS website has achieved the aims and confirmed the hypotheses set out in the initial chapters. It summarises the main findings and discusses the possible implementation of the recommendations. Recommendations concerning a SAPS online service delivery strategy and the migration route are also made. It further gives pointers to possible future research.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

The SAPS website must be seen within the wider context in which it functions. It is therefore essential to assess it as a tool that is used for service delivery. For this purpose, research



hypotheses are stated. Subsequently the needs of its users must also be considered. The study investigates relevant literature, it assesses users' apparent needs, investigates other police agency websites and develops a tool to assess the SAPS website. It makes recommendations regarding the development of the website and suggests possible future research.

## CHAPTER 2 – SURVEY OF LITERATURE

### 2.1 Introduction

As is stated in Chapter 1, there is no dearth of literature on principles for an effective website. Given the increasing amounts of information being generated in this era (of information), it is not surprising that in a relatively short span of time, the field of website design and content has been well analysed and documented. Author Tom Peters states (Peters 2000:5) that “the world is going through more fundamental change than it has in hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years”. He refers to it as ‘time compression’. “Where it took 37 years for the radio to get to 50 million homes, the World Wide Web got there in four”. Similarly tutoring in the do’s and don’ts of website design and content development has not lagged behind.

This chapter refers briefly to literature surveyed about this. It also mentions guidelines for an effective website. No website functions as a stand-alone. What goes for websites in general, also goes for police agency websites and for the SAPS website specifically. Therefore, guidelines for an effective website are given, but not discussed in detail in this chapter.

Supplementary to the discussion of guidelines for a successful website, this chapter deals with the principles of e-Government and the Gartner Group’s e-Government model. The GCIS audit of government websites (GCIS 2001) – which also looks into the weaknesses of the SAPS website and through that suggests ways of improvement – is set out.

In 2000 the SAPS introduced its Service Delivery Improvement Plan (SDIP). The purpose of the SDIP is to provide excellent service to all communities of South Africa. Further, the SDIP focuses upon satisfying customer needs. (SAPS s.a.:78).

The SAPS website, which aims to satisfy customer needs, could thus be regarded as an SDIP tool as well.

(Of interest here is that the SAPS is regarded as one of the biggest investors in telecommunications and information technology in Africa. Access to this type of technology is regarded as essential in service delivery and crime fighting (Intelligence 1997:34-38).)

The service that the SAPS website should and could deliver is to inform the community (and SAPS employees) about what is happening within the organisation and what the SAPS is doing, in accordance with its vision, to “create a safe and secure environment for all people of South Africa” (SAPS 2002c:39).

Further, the government's ideal of "democratic outreach" should be achieved through the SAPS website. Through this ideal the government wants its departments to reach out to communities - in this case via the Internet - and to render service to them. This would, *inter alia*, entail making online forms available to the public and creating online discussion forums and public opinion polls (GSIC 2000).

The term 'democracy' means equality and freedom. What does it mean in the context of online government publishing? Landow (1992:78-94) provides answers: "Used in the sense of textuality, it in effect means levelling the playing fields for the reader and the writer, i.e. the writer and the reader become counterparts [...] Anyone using electronic text can ply it to make his own interest the *de facto* principle. The point of focus depends on the reader [...] This empowers the reader and makes it possible for him to choose his way through text."

In addition, the SAPS website should make it possible for the community to also exchange information with the SAPS; to give opinions on how the SAPS and the SAPS website could better serve them (cf. Bosman in Reynecke & Fourie 2001:32).

Trowler (in Jones & Jones (1999:13) refers to such exchange as 'digital liberation'. He substantiates this by saying that consumers acquire more choices. Interaction can take place directly and instantaneously. Democratisation of users increases as information becomes more freely available.

Such 'liberation' in the form of exchange between the service provider and the client is part and parcel of "interactivity" as it is understood in online or web-based publishing. It includes community involvement in decision-making that focuses on specific priorities and needs of the community (in this case as far as the SAPS website is concerned).

Verwey (1990:103) points out that such feedback and exchange has an effect on interrelationships and consequently with management, and how the environment (in this case, the website) will be adapted or influenced.

Such community involvement (including the Internet community) in policing is becoming a worldwide trend. In a telephonic interview with Sir John Stevens, the London Metropolitan Police commissioner, in December 2001, he iterated that policing in partnership with the community was becoming increasingly significant in policing in the UK (telephonic interview, 22 December 2001).

In the USA so-called community policing has also been established. Reiner states “Community policing has now become an influential movement among progressive police chiefs in the United States and elsewhere” (Reiner 1992:96).

Goldstein urges police administrators to work with the communities they serve to define the problems that need addressing (Goldstein 1979:246). Bayley (1996) repeatedly expresses the view that in a give-and-take atmosphere, police officials and the public can come to understand each other’s perspectives.

Wadman and Bailey (1993:91) maintain that crime is a community problem and requires community involvement and accountability. Crime prevention is also described as a shared responsibility between law enforcement and the citizen (Ohio Crime Prevention Association 1995:49).

There is therefore a very definite rationale for involving SAPS website users – as a specific community – in the development and maintenance of the SAPS website.

For a police agency website, and, in this case, the SAPS website to be effective and to deliver service, it must cater for the needs of its users. But as Nielsen (1993: Executive Summary) points out users do not always know what is best for them. Members of the public who visit the SAPS website for various reasons do not necessarily know whether the website has been optimally designed in terms of user-friendliness and whether it does meet their needs as effectively as it could and should. Trenner (in Oppenheim, Citroen & Griffiths 1990:64) describes user-friendliness as the way a system “handles user errors sympathetically and efficiently, provides support and orientation, accommodates user levels and has a friendly output”.

Hugo (in Oosthuizen 1994:34) warns that “Any media centre that ignores its external environment may end up delivering the right products for the wrong needs”.

It is therefore the responsibility of the owner of the website to ensure that user needs are attended to.

Despite an extensive search, no relevant literature could be found on specific guidelines for an effective police agency website. One of the aims of the research project, is do to just that, i.e. to determine such guidelines.

## 2.2 Guidelines for an effective website

The literature consulted has consensus on what makes for an effective website. The golden rule is:

**A website must be user-centric in terms of both content and structure.**

To achieve this, the following six major determinants could be surmised from the literature:

- A web-based ‘publication’ and a print publication are not the same and cannot be developed in the same way.
- Content management is vitally important.
- Information architecture (the design and structure of the website) is equally important.
- A website strategy should be considered.
- Needs of the specific website users should be determined.
- An evaluation or audit of the website should be undertaken.

### 2.2.1 A user-centric website

Like any other customer, the online or website customer/user is also king. Website users must be given the best service and therefore a website must be user-centric. To achieve this, a website must cater for user needs. This, primarily, means information needs, i.e. the content of the website. However, the way the content is made available, i.e. the structure and design of the website, is equally important.

The assumption of this study is therefore that a user-centric website, specifically in terms of contents and structure and design, is the ultimate aim of any organisation’s online presence. In years before the WWW was established, Martyn, Vickers and Feeney (1990:267) explained that a user-centric approach meant that more attention must be paid to users’ responses; there must be more interactivity and more of a professional relationship. Oboler (1983:103) backs this: “provide the pertinent information in the appropriate amounts to be useful in the patron’s evaluation, assimilation and utilization of the information”.

Erstwhile media guru Marshall McLuhan stated some four decades ago that technology must be used to extend a person’s consciousness (McLuhan 1964:4). This implies that technology must be applied to satisfy the needs of a person - or a user. Referring to the ‘electric age’, he maintains, “We see ourselves being translated more and more into the form of information, moving towards the technological extension of consciousness” (1964:7). “All technologies are extensions of our physical and nervous systems. These extensions serve the purpose of increasing power and speed” (McLuhan 1964:90).

Stover (in Dahnke & Clatterbuck 1990:71) says that communication technologies are extensions of the capability for communication.

Marchionini (1995:40) argues that electronic systems should amplify our natural abilities rather than create new methods and tools that must be learned. He adds that the information extracted from a message by a particular recipient will strongly depend on the knowledge he or she already has and the kinds of knowledge states that are possible for and desired by him or her. The extracted information may only be marginally related to what the source intended to convey – either because the source information is not clearly expressed or distributed by the channel or because of the focus of attention of the recipient.

Norman, too, emphasises the importance of what the user wants. According to him, society has fallen into a machine-centred orientation to life. He explains that such orientation forces persons into a role that supports technology, for which they are unsuited. This is inappropriate, for the machine-centred point of view judges everything on artificial terms. Norman advocates a reversal to a person-centred point of view, where technology serves people and complements their abilities (cf. Norman 1993: Preface).

Nielsen states that in essence user-centric design is “nothing else than making life easier for the user” (Nielsen 1993:Executive summary). He warns “remember that your system will be tested for usability even if you don’t do it yourself. Your customers will do it for you, as they struggle to use the system” (Nielsen 1993: Executive summary).

Shneiderman concurs: “The egocentric style of the past must yield to humility and a genuine desire to accommodate the user’s skills, wishes and orientation” (1992:473).

Osswald emphasises that websites must from time to time be subjected to user testing (Osswald 2001).

Evans states that the user-oriented approach to information products and services unites various disciplines of science today. It is important to identify and analyse those who seek information and the environments in which they work as these are fundamental concerns of the information providers (Evans 1998).

Steve Yelvington concludes: “(Online sites) succeed when they create in the customers’ mind a perception of unique value. Note that I say *unique value* and not *added value*” (Yelvington 2000).



### 2.2.2 Differences: Web-based and print publications

One of the most salient points to be borne in mind when considering the effectiveness of a website is the importance of distinguishing between a web-based ‘publication’ and a print publication.

Novices starting a website do not necessarily know this or take it into consideration. When Ask Africa undertook the customer expectations measure for the SAPS (Ask Africa 1997) in 1997, it looked into content needs and not structure and design regarding a website. Once the differences between the two types of ‘publication’ are understood, however, the differing structure and design of a website also become crucial elements to consider.

A web-based ‘publication’ and a print publication are not the same and cannot be developed in the same way. This is a mistake often made by corporations and organisations when they establish a website. The SAPS has fallen into this trap. When it decided to publish its 2001/2002 Annual Report on its website, it simply copied the CD. Some pages appear vertically and page numbers appear that do not coincide with the references given (SAPS 2002c).

A website is, of course, not a ‘publication’ in the traditional sense of the word. Such publication implies the use of paper to produce the publication. Robin Peek (1998) questions this assumption: “What is a publication if it is not on paper? Is it the paper that is the priority or the function? Not so long ago, we had a clear idea what we meant by the term *publishing*. For centuries the world of publishing was ink to paper. Other forms of mass media, like television and radio, informed us, but society has not considered these to be published works.” He elaborates: “There is more to this concept of publishing than mere print. Perhaps, in the not-so-distant future, it will be time to offer the dictionaries another definition of publishing” (Peek 1998).

Despite the few similarities between conventional publishing and online publishing, the traditional newspaper does serve as a useful metaphor, according to McAdams (1995). “The newspaper metaphor provides a superior structural model for an online service”. Her viewpoint is that such metaphor could help a person in understanding an online system. “A person’s assumptions about how an online system works and what it can and cannot do come largely from this metaphor [...] The newspaper metaphor uses the front page as the entry point to the system, it relies on headlines to tell users what items in the system are most important, and it employs division into sections similar to the sections of a large metropolitan daily. It also promotes an assumption that users can follow a typical organizational structure to find any information they want.”

This metaphor could be applied to the home page of a website. Equally, it could be applied to the home page of the SAPS website.

Nielsen (1993) points out the major differences in a web-based publication and a print publication, namely difference in layout and design, interactivity, and the use of multimedia. He explains that layout and design differ in that with a web page the user scrolls up and down a web page; in the case of the printed page the user looks or glances through the information.

Regarding navigation, Nielsen explains the difference as follows: “In print, navigation mainly consists of page turning: an ultra-simple user interface, which is one of the printed medium’s great benefits. Because page turning is so limited, it is often not even thought of as a design element. Hypertext navigation is a major component of web design, requiring decisions such as appearance of links how to explain where users can go and where each link will lead information architecture”.

A web-based publication – versus a print publication – brings about interactivity. Nielsen explains interactivity as “... the ability to control the information coming at you, to be an active rather than a passive participant”. Development of true multimedia-journalism, according to Nielsen, is also a distinguishing feature for an online publication. Active use of multimedia content is still largely missing from online publications. This is particularly true in the case of police agency websites. The Hong Kong Police Service is the only website assessed in this study that applied multimedia.

Buddle as quoted in De Wet (1997:29) believes that the ability to direct readers to vast amounts of information is what most distinguishes e-papers (and electronic publishing) from traditional publishing.

### **2.2.3 Content and information management**

Content and information management are vital concepts in website development. Information management includes information transfer, which “is concerned with all the process involved in transferring information from sources to users” (Vickery & Vickery 1987:6).

A website could be regarded as a tool to manage the information an organisation deems important to improve its (the organisation’s) performance. Information scientists have described such a tool as an “information system”.

Taylor’s model of information systems (in Oppenheim *et al.* 1990:163-174) could be applied to assess the quality and effectiveness of such a system. Taylor lists various features. According to him, an information system is effective if information is easily accessible and the system has an

overall structure and is easy to use. Satisfactory linkage to internal and external sources is important. Information should be made available without errors being introduced by the system. Information should be current, i.e. new information should be rapidly included within the system.

Content management is an important component of website development and maintenance. Stratigos (2001) explains that technology is but the enabler that makes content relevant. She adds that in deciding on content it is important to assess users' content needs and preferences; to evaluate and select content from numerous sources and to facilitate the receipt, organisation, presentation and deployment of content.

When it comes to content design, Nielsen (1993) advocates short text and plain language. His view is that users are lazy when it comes to scrolling, therefore coherent page chunking is important. To ensure optimum legibility, he recommends highly contrasting colours and plain or subtle backgrounds. He advises that text should be kept static as moving text is harder to read. To make it easy and intuitive for users to find information, he suggests logical grouping together of content options. Speedy page downloading is very important, he emphasises.

#### **2.2.4 Information architecture**

Information architecture incorporates the design and structure of a website. It is as important for an effective website because it helps people find and manage information.

Louis Rosenfeld defines information architecture as that which "involves the design of organization and navigation systems to help people find and manage information more successfully" (Rhodes 1999).

In this website interview, Rosenfeld give various tips for well-planned information architecture. These include the following:

- A web strategy, with the customer's need at the centre, must be compiled.
- A logo must be placed on each page and linked to the home page.
- Style sheets must work.
- No more than two fonts must be used.
- Suggested colour links are blue for unvisited and purple or red for visited.
- Good links add value. More local navigation as well as links to external sites are required. Links from other websites are extremely important. If good resources are provided and other sites feel it will benefit their users, they will use the link.
- Illustrations should be kept small, except for secondary pages where users have requested an enlarged product photo.

- Printable versions of any long documents should be provided.
- Simplicity is the goal of page design. Users focus on content (Rhodes 1999).

## 2.3 e-Government

“Technology has offered us a vast array of information carriers, as diverse as the human imagination – from cave walls to papyrus, parchment and paper. The most recent information carrier is a form of energy which, in its basic form, is weightless and re-usable and whereby information can be spread at the speed of light: the electronic information carrier” (Taylor: 2002).

Taylor adds that society is changing in response to the demands of the Internet Age. The electronic information carrier concept demands that we need to reconsider the role of government in modern society. He states that the digital revolution offers unprecedented opportunities for improving virtually all forms of public service delivery. Rather than relying on government employees to respond to inquiries, through the use of e-Government, the public can serve themselves to a wide variety of information and services (Taylor 2002).

Electronic government (e-Government) could be described as the application of e-commerce concepts to a government department’s processes in its dealing with citizens or with other government departments. Hoekman (2002) explains that e-Government aims at transforming the existing governance systems through digital means by increasing participation, efficiency and effectiveness in order to foster democracy and economic and social development.

USA e-governance is a pace-setter in this regard. The e-Government initiatives are improving the delivery of government services to the citizen and the federal government is using technology as a tool to better serve citizens and improve efficiency. “All of the projects are providing higher quality information often at a lower cost to the government. People are better able to choose how and when to access information and transact business” (Office of Management and Budget 2003). The three guiding principles for USA e-governance are the following:

- Citizen-centred, not bureaucracy or agency-centred
- Results-oriented, producing measurable improvements for citizens
- Market-based, actively promoting innovation (Office of Management and Budget 2003)

FirstGov.gov - another example of US online service delivery - is America’s “Front Door” to a wealth of information, services and transactions available from the US government.

FirstGov.gov provides citizens with access to more than 180 million pages of online government, including resources from state and local governments, in addition to those of the federal government. FirstGov.gov also provides information on other customer channels the public can choose from, including phone, fax, e-mail and mail (FirstGov.gov 2003).

Microsoft, a sponsor of the Regional Workshop on building e-governance capacity in Africa – held in Johannesburg from 28 – 31 October 2002, explains that government agencies worldwide are evolving into e-Governments to provide better access and service to the public and businesses (Microsoft 2002).

Referring to the African scenario, Okpaku (2002) at the above workshop, emphasises that African governments must draw up strategic policy containing compelling commitments to “acquire attributes others require of us as *essentiale* to our right of passage to global citizenship”. The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (Nepad) has a vital role to play in developing the continent’s common agenda of development, including the development of information and communication technology, he states.

The workshop indicated that African governments and their departments – including those of the police (that have the prime aim of providing service) – would increasingly have to look into ways of adopting e-Government principles.

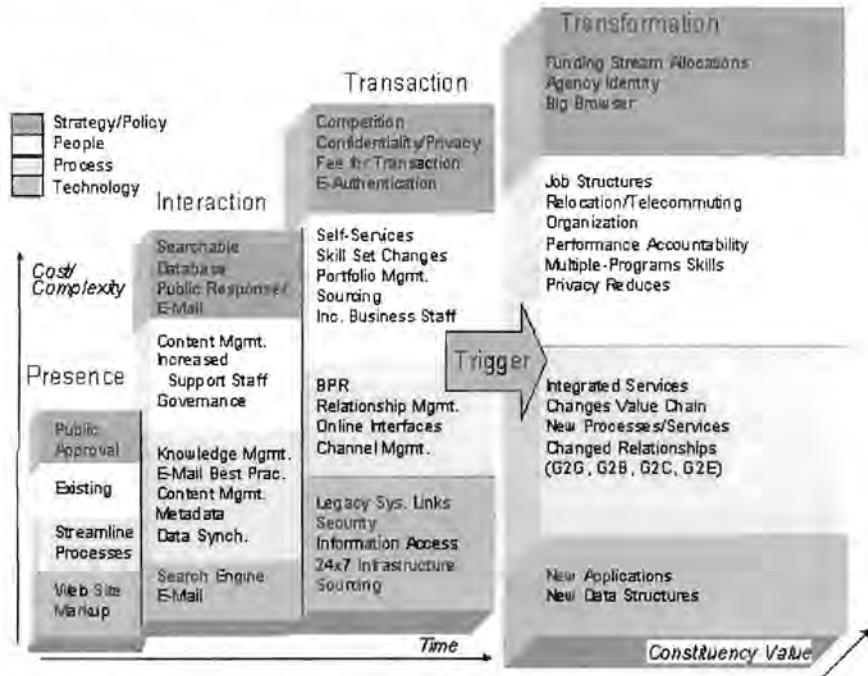
The South African government recognises that e-governance will “transform the nature of interaction between government and recipients of services [...] and will also have a profound effect on the current structures and processes of government, pushing existing institutions towards greater economies of scale, efficiency and service delivery improvement. The internal information and communications environment within government will also be transformed, enabling internal users to benefit equally from the system. The enormous value government will gain from being able to provide better services will be enormous, according to Taylor (2002).

Although quite a lot seems to be happening in the e-Government space in SA, it is, however, unlikely that the public will see any major improvements in its user experience with government departments in the near future (Humphries 2002). South Africa's government has given itself a 10-year horizon to get from standing in line services to online services. It is probably going to need that decade and more before a comprehensive e-Government structure is in place.

## 2.4 Gartner Group's e-Government model

The Gartner Four Phases of e-Government Model is shown in the figure below (Baum & Di Maio 2000).

Figure 1 1 Gartner Group's e-Government Model (Baum & Di Maio 2000)



The figure shows the Gartner Four Phases of e-Government Model (Baum & Di Maio 2000). It provides a framework for positioning e-Government initiatives, demonstrates the progression of e-Government in the connected environment, and identifies the strategy and other factors that contribute to success in each phase.

Baum and Di Maio (2000) state that the model provides a reference framework for positioning e-Government initiatives. The model demonstrates the progression of e-Government in the connected environment, and identifies the strategy and other factors that contribute to success in each phase. It helps to measure progress for e-Government initiatives and to establish a roadmap to achieve the desired levels of constituency service. In this study the levels of police agency service delivery are measured against this model. The phases are as follows:

**Phase 1: Presence:** This phase informs the public about government agencies. It is to simply have a cyberspace placeholder on the Internet for posting information and possibly some official documents.

**Phase 2: Interaction:** A websites has basic search capabilities, host forms to download, links to relevant sites, and e-mail addresses of offices or officials. This stage enables the public to access

critical information online and receive forms that may have previously required a visit to a government office.

Phase 3: **Transaction:** Users can conduct entire tasks online. In this stage self-service applications are built for the public to access online, and to use the Web as a complement to other delivery channels. It highlights benefits of 24x7 availability and provides opportunities to develop cross-agency shared services.

Phase 4: **Transformation:** This is about redefining government service delivery – providing a single point of contact and making the government organisation transparent to citizens. Users participate directly in government activities (“virtual agencies”) online (cf. Baum & Di Maio 2000).

## 2.5 Web strategy

Strategy planning for any organisation or project is not dissimilar to building plans for a building. It is indisputably indispensable.

Roodt et al (in Cochrane s.a.:19) state that the vision and mission of any organisation (or project) must be translated into specific short-term, medium-term and long-term strategic objectives and goals. In order to attain these goals, strategies have to be formulated.

In 2002 the SAPS published its *Strategic Plan for the South African Police Service* (SAPS 2002a). The document states that the plan “indicates the Department’s priorities and strategies ... for the purpose of addressing crime effectively and improving service delivery [...] and a linkage to relevant departments and society to ensure an multi-disciplinary approach [...]” (SAPS 2002a: 45).

The website of any organisation has the ability to facilitate optimal use of information and it should play a central role in an organisation’s strategy. “It is seen as one of the powerful external mechanisms today” (SITA 2002:2).

It follows that the Web should receive attention in the organisation’s strategic framework.

The Vision of the Information and Systems Management (ISM) Strategic Framework in the Strategic Plan is stated as “To enable the optimal use of information by the SAPS in creating a safe and secure environment for all people in South Africa (SAPS 2002a: 39). No mention is, however, made of the SAPS website under this section (SAPS 2002a: 39-42) or elsewhere in the Strategic Plan.

Further, from the above, it almost speaks for itself that a Web strategy is equally important. In this regard SITA is a forerunner in the field of South African government online publishing. It compiled a website strategy discussion document in June 2002 (SITA 2002).

Personal interviews conducted with the webmasters of the Lothian and Borders (Edinburgh), Essex and London Metropolitan Police Services all indicated that no such documents had been compiled prior to or subsequent to the establishment of their websites (Boland 2002, White 2002 and Farrows 2002). Ms Boland of the Lothian and Borders Police Service, however, indicated that this was something that she was considering (Boland 2002).

## **2.6 User needs assessment**

Where service delivery underlines the vision and mission of an organisation, the people it serves must be assessed to determine what services they require. Such assessment should not be a once-off, but should be undertaken periodically.

Misunderstanding regarding user needs is sometimes the result of police making assumptions about what people want. Illustrative of this is where the police in Victoria, Canada held meetings with the community to learn about its concerns. They thought the public would want to discuss the increase in crime. Instead the members of the public complained about noisy parties, vagrants and skateboarders (cf. Jesilow & Parsons 2000:163).

When the SAPS decided to establish a website in 1997 it requested an outside research company to conduct a survey regarding customer expectations (Ask Africa 1997). This survey is discussed in Chapter 1 of this study. Although criticism on the survey is recorded, it nonetheless was an attempt to ask the prospective clients or users what they would want published on such a website.

The survey further recommended that a feedback mechanism be built into the website to facilitate interaction with the SAPS in this way. The current website does have such a mechanism: Website users were furnished with an Internet communication official's e-mail address to direct queries, hints, concerns, etc. This mechanism has enabled the website to stay in touch with its users.

For the purpose of this study, the queries directed to this e-mail address for the period April 2001 to May 2002 were analysed. A total of 608 queries were broken down into categories and subcategories to determine what users wanted to see on the website. This analysis is the subject matter of Chapter 3 of this study.



## 2.7 GCIS website evaluation or audit

Any project or campaign launched by an organisation needs to be assessed from time to time in order to determine its effectiveness. The SAPS is in the fortunate position that the GCIS conducted an audit of government websites and its own website in 2001.

The GSIC undertook an audit of all national government websites in 2001 (GCIS 2001) in order to assess their effectiveness in providing access to information (GCIS 2001).

One of the main conclusions of the audit was that most of the existing government sites are not user-centric. Instead of focusing on what users require, most of the websites simply give information on their specific departments.

The purpose of the audit was “to identify issues that influence the usability of government websites and to identify issues that influence information and functionalities that could be added” (GSIC 2001).

The audit revealed the following:

- It is difficult to find information on most sites. This is attributed to factors such as poor information organisation and navigability, design and layout that could be improved and the need for improved search engines.
- Interactivity takes place to a limited extent only.
- The choice of main categories on the home pages is often not logical.
- Information is sometimes presented in confusing categories.
- The choice of headings (also for links) is often not logical.
- Hierarchical structures are often deep – this requires many clicks to get to the actual information.

Other factors include a lack of clearly defined aims, insufficient indication of publication dates, a lagging behind in updating websites, and poor indication that web pages form part of a specific website.

The GCIS audit, in addition to the general comments on the shortcomings of government websites, also provides comments to individual departments on their websites. In this way the SAPS also received a critique of its website.

### 2.7.1 SAPS website audit

The SAPS website was audited between 20 and 23 February 2001. The audit report pointed out the following (cf. GCIS 2001):

- Pages on the website have their own look and feel.

- In many cases the source and dates are not provided.
- Headings are not always descriptive of what is to be expected.
- Certain important information is missing, for example, a statement on the aim of the website, the vision and mission, contact details, CVs of some high-profile role-players, announcement of activities and events, and an annual calendar of events.
- The content is not organised logically
  - It is difficult to navigate the site. The only link to main options is via a home button at the bottom of all pages.
  - There are dead/broken links and pages with no link to any other pages.
  - There is no search facility.
  - There is limited interactivity, which is brought about by the fact that there are two e-mail addresses given on the website.
  - There are too many large graphics and attention-getting devices, e.g. large images.
  - Backgrounds are busy.
  - Document formats are not consistently indicated.
  - No indication is given of applicable browsers with which the site may be viewed.
  - Script error messages appear often.
  - No indication is given of applicable browsers.

This audit of the SAPS website adds value in that:

- it gives direction in terms of how the website should be improved and developed; and
- it is incorporated in the guidelines (see Chapter 6) compiled for this study to assess the SAPS.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This chapter shows that the SAPS website could be regarded as a tool to promote service delivery and, further, that it should develop its capabilities of delivering e-Government services. Service delivery in the SAPS, which has been transformed since the new government came to power in 1994, rests on consultation and interaction between the SAPS and its clients. This is in line with the international trend of community involvement in policing, which, in turn, has brought about community or partnership policing.

To promote service delivery, therefore, the SAPS website has to involve its community of users in its development and maintenance.

Further, to be an effective service delivery tool, it must meet the requirements for websites in general. This specifically applies to website content and design and structure. What goes for websites in general, also goes for the SAPS website.



In addition, to be an effective communication tool for the South African government, the SAPS website should stand to meet the requirements of optimal service delivery. In this regard, the principles of e-Government are discussed.

Further major requirements in developing and improving a website is the development of a website strategy to show the way forward, an assessment of user needs (the latter should also be done periodically), and an audit – and subsequent audits from time to time – of the website.

## CHAPTER 3 – REQUIREMENT OF THE SAPS WEBSITE AS A SERVICE DELIVERY TOOL

### 3.1 Introduction

Website users have needs that must be addressed. Chapters 1 and 2 elucidate this.

The Ask Africa survey (1997) discussed in Chapter 1 identifies the five major customer information needs of SAPS website users, namely information on criminals, crime statistics, missing persons, community policing and structures and strategies.

Chapter 2 discusses the Service Delivery Improvement Plan (SDIP), which focuses on satisfying customer needs (SAPS s.a.:78). Chapter 2 further describes users as part of the website “community” and that community involvement is important in ensuring the success of the website.

In addition, the literature survey in Chapter 2 advocates the importance of a website being user-centric and not organisation-centred, both in terms of content and structure. This emphasis on a user-centric approach is supported by the GCIS audit, which is also discussed in Chapter 2.

This chapter deals with the assessment of user needs by analysing the queries directed to the Internet communication official responsible for receiving such e-mail queries via the SAPS website.

The SAPS website furnishes an e-mail address for the Internet communication official at the SAPS (namely [response@saps.org.za](mailto:response@saps.org.za)) to which visitors can mail their queries about the SAPS, and specifically about the SAPS website. There is a possibility that this facility was created as a result of the recommendation made by the SAPS expectations measure (Ask Africa 1997) discussed in Chapter 2. However, this could not be verified.

The function of the Internet communication official is to re-direct all queries received to divisions within the SAPS that could and should respond to the specific queries. It follows that where certain queries recur repeatedly, they cover issues that should be addressed on the SAPS website.

For the purposes of this study, the queries for the period April 2001 to May 2002 were analysed.

### 3.2 Objective of SAPS website query analysis

The objective of the analysis of the SAPS website queries is to help provide guidelines in deciding how the existing SAPS website should be improved to make it meet the requirements of its users more effectively.

To achieve this

- specific information SAPS website users would like to see on the website is described; and
- major categories and subcategories of user needs are compiled.

### 3.3 Research design

The person to whom all SAPS website queries are e-mailed is known as the SAPS Internet communication official. This official is responsible for recording all queries. For the period April 2001 until May 2002, 608 queries were recorded. Of these, 150 were queries related to the so-called Nigerian scam. There was an upsurge of the distribution of these “Nigerian letters” in 2001/2002 (De Beer 2001). Persons receiving such letters approached the SAPS website in order to notify the police about it and to seek advice. The fact that they did so, does indicate that the website is regarded as an avenue for communication by the public.

The number of queries per month differs. The reasons for this are the following:

- Server problems from time to time result in a decrease in the number of mails being received. For example in March 2002 new cables were installed at SAPS Head Office and SAPS e-mail users could not use their e-mail facility for some three weeks. There was a marked decline in e-mail traffic.
- The PC used by the Internet communication official gave problems at various times in the period under review and data stored was lost.

The research design used for this study is quantitative. Neuman describes a quantitative data collection technique as “the collection of data in the form of numbers” (2000:33). “Analysis proceeds by using statistics, tables or charts and discussing how what they show relates to hypotheses” (Neuman 2000:123). In this study the number of queries received are tabulated, categorised, and then analysed. Leedy and Ormrod (2001:14) describe descriptive quantitative research as “An approach that involves either identifying the characteristics of an observed, pre-existing phenomenon or exploring possible correlations among two or more phenomena”.

Content analysis is used in this study. “Content analysis is a technique for gathering and analyzing the content of text” (Neuman 2000:292). Neuman’s explanation for content analysis is that it uses “objective and systematic counting and recording procedures to produce a quantitative description of the symbolic content in a text” (2000:293). “Content analysis lets a

researcher reveal the content in a source of communication. It lets him or her probe into and discover content in a different way from the ordinary way of reading a book or watching a television program” (2000:293). Leedy and Ormrod (2001) describe content analysis as a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns and themes. They add that the purpose of content analysis is to identify the specific characteristics of a body of material and “that the method of collection is “the coding of material in terms of predetermined and precisely defined characteristics” (2001:157).

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001:157) the method of data analysis is the tabulation of the frequency of each characteristic, and descriptive analyses. In this study the number of e-mail queries the SAPS website received from its users is counted and recorded, tabled and analysed to give a quantitative description.

A researcher samples in order to draw inferences from the sample to the population (Neuman 2000:217). For this study non-random sampling that is purposive is used. By non-randomness is meant that the sample size is not determined in advance and there is limited knowledge of the larger group or population from which the sample is taken (Neuman 2000:196). Neuman defines purposive sampling as “an acceptable kind of sampling for special situations [...] it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind [...] With purposive sampling the researcher never knows whether the cases selected represent the population” (Neuman 2000:198). Leedy and Ormrod (2001:219) explain that in purposive sampling units are chosen for a particular purpose.

Further, regarding purposive sampling, Babbie and Mouton (2001:166) explain that sometimes it is appropriate for a researcher to select a sample on the basis of his or her knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of the research aims (based on judgment and the purpose of the study). They add that “ [...] the study findings would not represent any meaningful population [...] This study would be considered a test run, however, rather than a final study” (Babbie and Mouton 2001:166).

The sampling method for this study fits a requirement for purposive sampling in that “the researcher never knows whether the cases selected represent the population” (Neuman 2000:198). The queries received from e-mail users are used. However, there can be no way of telling whether these 608 queries are representative of what visitors to the SAPS website would like to know.

Further, this study could also be described as applied research, according to Neuman (2000: 24-25). He explains that its main strength is its immediate practical use (Neuman 2000:24). Mouton

(1996:72) describes applied research as “programme evaluation research” (1996:72). Neuman adds that applied researchers try to solve specific problem or help practitioners accomplish tasks and that “theory is less a problem to them than seeking a solution to a specific problem for a limited setting” (Neuman 2000:24).

Neuman further states that where basic researchers emphasise “high scientific standards and try to conduct near-perfect research [...] applied researchers may compromise scientific rigor to get quick, usable results” (Neuman 2000:24). Mouton (1996:104) upholds the view that the primary purpose of applied research is “to make a contribution to real-life issues” (1996:104). Neuman adds that applied researchers balance rigour against practical needs. “The primary concern is with the ability to generalise findings to areas of interest to sponsors” (Neuman 2000:25). They must, however, be aware of the consequences of compromising standards (Neuman 2000:24-25).

### 3.4 Analysis of queries

What this study does is that it tables all queries received for the period April 2001 to May 2002. Various tables have been compiled. The information for each month is captured, indicating (i) the nature of the query, and (ii) whether the person sending the e-mail was from South Africa or elsewhere (iii) male or female, and (iv) student or pupil, if indicated.

The data was first compiled per month – Table 1 illustrates this.

#### 3.4.1 SAPS website: Internet queries from users: April 2001

**Table 1 SAPS website: Internet queries from users: April 2001**

Nature of query	Number	SA	Other	M	F	Student	Pupil
Info: Stephen Harvey murder trial in Vereeniging	1		1		1		
Policing priorities and objective	1	1					
Deaths in police custody as result of police acts	1		1	1		1	
Police acts since 1994	1	1					
Police ethics	1	1			1	1	
SA: fairness/corrupt/equal/(f) of legal system	1		1	1			
Wet op Gesinsgeweld (Afrikaans version)	1	1			1		
Graphical info on woman abuse in SA	1	1			1		
Mail address Norwood station	1	1		1			
Total	9	6	3	3	4	2	

Tables for all other months, i.e. May 2001 to May 2002, were also compiled. These 14 tables (April 2001 to May 2002) were consolidated to give the information in Table 2 and 3 below.

### 3.4.2 Biographical details of SAPS website users who e-mailed queries (April 2001 to May 2002)

The biographical details of the SAPS website users who e-mailed queries for the period April 2001 to May 2002 are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2 Biographical details of SAPS website users who e-mailed queries (April 2001 to May 2002)**

SA queries	Other country queries	Country not indicated	Male	Female	Gender not indicated	Students	Pupils
397	188	23	427	131	50	35	10

### 3.4.3 Queries grouped in categories of issues (April 2001 to May 2002)

Table 3 gives the identified categories of issues about which queries were received. It indicates the number of queries about each issue per month.

**Table 3 Queries grouped in categories of issues (April 2001 to May 2002)**

ISSUES	4.01	5.01	6.01	7.01	8.01	9.01	10.01	11.01	12.01	1.02	2.02	3.02	4.02	5.02	Total
Scam								1	1		1	11	26	110	150
Contact details	1	8	5	12	6	5	2	6	5	16	8	3	16	6	99
HRM	1	6	14	5	2	7		6	5	9	4	4	10	6	79
Jobs		1		6	5	6	4	6	3	19	10		14	5	79
Laws/Acts	1	2	3	3	4	2	2	2	1	2	5	3	2	2	34
Statistics	2	1	3	5	1	3	1	2	5	7	1				31
Stolen goods			1			3	6		1		1		1	4	17
Reservists		1	3	1		1	1	1		3	3			1	15
Steps and Procedures		2	3	2			1		1		2	3			14
Priorities/objectives	1	3	2		2			1			2		2		13
Women and children	2		1		1			1				1	4	2	12
Website structure		1	2	2						3			2		10
Missing persons		1	1	1							1	1	1	1	7





Scorpions				1	3	1		1			1				7
Firearms						1	1		1	1		1		2	7
Criminal records		1						1		1	1		2		6
Internet crime	1	1				1		2		1					6
Other		2	1	1	2	2	1	2	3	1	2	2	1	2	22
Total	9	30	39	39	26	32	19	32	26	63	42	29	81	141	608

### 3.4.4 Major issues categorised in rank order

Table 4 gives an exposition of the number of queries received for each issue (in rank order).

**Table 4 Major issues categorised in rank order**

	Scam	Contact details	HRM	Jobs	Laws/Acts	Statistics	Stolen Goods	Reservists	Steps/Procedures	Priorities/Objectives	Women and children	Website structure, etc.	Scorpions	Firearms	Missing persons	Crime records	Internet crime	Other	Total
No	150	99	79	79	34	31	16	15	14	13	12	10	7	7	7	6	6	22	608

Following the identification of major categories (as shown in Table 4 above), subcategories were identified, as in the tables below. Tables are given for the issues in respect of which 10 or more queries were received, that is, the 11 issues that ranked the highest.

### 3.4.5 Scams

**Table 5 Category: Scams**

Subcategory	No
All queries were related to the so-called Nigerian Scam	150
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>

Most of the queries from visitors to the SAPS website were about the so-called Nigerian scam. Referring back to Table 3, it is evident that this issue for the first time reared its head in queries to the SAPS website in November 2001. Known as Nigerian-advance Fee Fraud or 4-1-9 (after a section of the Nigerian penal code), the scam has recently emerged as one of the most lucrative

fraudulent activities perpetrated by organised crime elements within the Nigerian community. According to information the SAPS has, the fraudsters have set up a home base in South Africa from where they disseminate scam letters locally and do foreign business. In this way they try to obtain money or goods from companies or individuals (De Beer 2001).

Persons receiving such letters approached the SAPS website in order to notify the police and to seek advice. The fact that they did so, does indicate that the website is regarded as an avenue for communication by the public.

### Recommendations:

- That information about the Nigerian scam be placed on the SAPS website.
- Queries about the Nigerian scam could also be answered under 'Frequently asked questions' (FAQs) on the website.
- That persons receiving such letters be advised by e-mail where to find further information on the website.

### 3.4.6 Contact details

**Table 6 Category: Contact details**

Subcategory	No
Contact details for police stations	35
Commissioner, snr superintendent, high ranking officers, Comm Selebi, specific members	17
How to find other persons	5
Divisions	4
Human resources	4
Occult division	3
Child Protection Unit (wrong number is said to appear)	3
Scorpions	3
Media liaison officers	3
Public relations	3
Computer crime unit	2
Dog and dog breeding unit	2
Police clearance	2
Forensics	2
Gold and diamond unit	1
Fraud unit	1
Polmed	1
Crime stop – 2 different numbers given	1

City morgue	1
Criminal Record Centre e-mail	1
Special task force	1
Whom to contact: info on illegal software	1
SAPS museum	1
Regional inspectorates	1
List of toll free numbers for area offices	1
SAPS at Johannesburg International Airport	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>

The subcategories in Table 6 indicate what contact details users require. It is clear that there is a need for contact information for various divisions and units to be published on the website, as well as contact information regarding certain individuals.

#### **Recommendation:**

- That the contact details of all departments, units and divisions be published on the web. This should include physical addresses, postal addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. Where contact details of individuals in their official capacity as spokespersons or contact persons for their departments or units could be furnished, this should be done.

#### **3.4.7 Jobs**

**Table 7 Category: Jobs**

<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>No</b>
How to join	12
Vacant posts	12
Job opportunities	10
Work for non-citizens	8
Career in forensics investigation	6
How to join Scorpions	5
How to re-join	4
Recruitment policy	3
Applied for position – no response	2
Procedures to become a policewoman	2
Where to find job info	2
How to find ads for jobs	2
How to specialise in police interrogation	2
Career in criminal profiling	2

Career as crime mapping analyst	1
Posts for matriculants	1
Where to find posts advertised for forensic experts	1
How to join task force	1
Info on training for forensics	1
Exchange programme for police internationally	1
Information on police as career	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>

This table shows that SAPS website users want to know more about jobs and career opportunities in the SAPS. Although vacancies appear on the SAPS website, there is no space made available for more information on careers within the SAPS.

**Recommendation:**

- That a web page be created that deals exclusively with job vacancies and career possibilities within the SAPS. This page should cover career and training opportunities in the various specialised units and divisions, recruitment and reappointment policies and other career matters within the SAPS.

**3.4.8 Human Resources and Resource Management**

**Table 8 Category: Human Resources and Resource Management**

<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>No</b>
Info on human resources in units and divisions	13
Contact details of the Human Resources department	9
Rank structure	7
Pension	4
Where to complain of poor service	4
Details of National Commissioner	4
SAPS training/promotions/job descriptions	3
Request for police badges	3
Details of HR department	2
Details of commissioners in different areas	2
Photos of police commissioners	2
HR general details	2
General info on ranks	2
Organigram for HR department	2
Info on police training college	1

Old passing out parade video	1
Leave benefits	1
Number of members of SAPS	1
Exchange transfers for SAPS members	1
How to verify a police member's death	1
Where to give positive feedback	1
Info on police vehicles	1
Info on officers who fall asleep while on duty	1
What if killed as reservist in line of duty	1
Info on police chiefs in 1920s and 1930s	1
Number of black legal advisors in SAPS	1
Vehicle insurance programme within SAPS	1
Whether ordinary citizens may wear stab resistant vests	1
Death/disability benefits for SAPS members	1
Police service in small rural areas	1
Possibility of community involvement – e.g. home-based detectives	1
Number of police motorcyclists in SAPS	1
How to improve communication network within SAPS	1
Physical fitness standards for SAPS	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>

The subcategories dealt with under human resources show that information is required on a wide range of information pertaining to human resources and resource management. It is evident from the queries that the following information specifically is required:

- Details about the human resources department
- Details about human resources in divisions and units
- Details about specific staff members, for example the commissioners in SAPS areas
- Information on other human resources issues, ranging from job descriptions, ranks, training, promotions, to the number of black legal advisors in the SAPS

**Recommendation:**

That a section ‘Human Resources and Resource Management’ be created on the SAPS website. Such a section should then incorporate the subcategories given in Table 8.

### 3.4.9 Laws, Acts and legal issues

Table 9 Category: Laws, Acts, legal issues

Subcategory	No
SAPS acts and regulations	6
Laws regarding police clearance	5
How to obtain interdict/restraining order	3
Act in terms of using SAPS logo	2
Fairness of SA legal system	2
Family Violence Act details	1
Legal system in SA: Access to records	1
SA law on dactyloscopy	1
Laws on skateboarding	1
Act in terms of SAPS officers that could be deployed as part of international peace-keeping	1
Laws regarding rights of minors	1
Laws governing security groups working in SA	1
How many black legal advisors in SAPS?	1
Legal issues concerning transfer of documents in online environment	1
SA laws on computer crime and Internet security	1
Legality i.t.o. passing on press releases to individuals	1
Issues of legal sexuality	1
Info on anti-terrorism laws in SA	1
Details on what crimen injuria is	1
Deaths in police custody as result of police action	1
Act on self-defence	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>

This section indicates that SAPS website users require more information on laws and acts as well as various legal issues. It is of interest that there are five queries about the SAPS Act. The SAPS Act does, in fact, appear on the website.

#### Recommendations:

- That the two issues here that received the most queries, namely legislation regarding police clearance and the SAPS Act receives attention. In the former case, details of how to go about getting police clearance should be given and it should be easy to find. As users seemingly have problems in finding the latter, namely the SAPS Act, this should also receive attention. It indicates that the logic of the structure of the website needs to be assessed.

- That links be provided to relevant Acts published on other government websites.
- That serious consideration be given to implementing a search engine on the website.

### 3.4.10 Statistics

**Table 10 Category: Statistics**

Subcategory	No
SAPS statistics in general	20
Crime statistics – where on web	1
Crime statistics – comparison between areas	1
Localised crime statistics	1
Crime statistics updates on web	1
Seriousness of crime rate	1
Info on juvenile crime	1
Suicide statistics	1
Statistics on missing children	1
Vehicle hijacking statistics	1
Info on Decembers statistics	1
Police suicide statistics	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

The table indicates that queries are received about statistics. Statistics do appear on the SAPS website and there is a link on the SAPS home page. It is therefore surprising that one user did ask where it could be found on the website.

#### **Recommendation:**

- As with the category Laws, Acts, Legal Issues, information is published on the website. Again, it is clear that the logic of the website structure must be assessed.

### 3.4.11 Stolen goods

**Table 11 Category: Stolen goods**

Subcategory	No
Stolen Ids/passports	7
Stolen goods general, e.g. how can one ascertain whether something purchased has been stolen?	5
Stolen cellphones	2
Procedures on searching for stolen goods	1
Info on stolen and cloned cheques	1



List of cars mostly stolen	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>

In 2001 the Minister for Safety and Security launched a SAPS project to make communities aware of the dangers of buying and selling stolen goods. Queries of this nature directed to the SAPS website reveal that there is a need to know more about issues such as these.

**Recommendation:**

- That all campaigns that are launched be published on the SAPS website. This includes the campaign on Stolen Goods as information requested by users will then be furnished.

**3.4.12 Reservists**

**Table 12 Category: Reservists**

Subcategory	No
How to become a reservist	12
Info on community policing and volunteerism	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

**Recommendation**

- That information on how to become a reservist and how to become a volunteer at police stations be placed on the website.

**3.4.13 Steps/ procedures**

**Table 13 Category: Steps/procedures**

Subcategory	No
How is police performance monitored and measured?	2
Joining procedure	2
Procedures of arrest	2
Examples of various reports/forms	1
Procedures for dealing with bank and ATM robberies	1
What is the punishment for first-time offenders	1
Information on how to report incidents of road rage	1
Where to submit hints for better policing	1
More information required on destruction of stolen vehicles	1
Details of SAPS field operations	1
Procedures for investigating deaths	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>



This category shows that SAPS website users want to know more about general policing. They want to know how to go about submitting complaints against the police, how to report incidents of road rage, how to submit hints for better policing, etc. They also seek information on procedures for investigations and on joining the SAPS.

**Recommendation:**

- Note should be taken of general policing procedure that the users want to know more about. Various procedures could be placed on various appropriate places on the website. Alternatively a web-based procedure manual containing various procedures could be published.

**3.4.14 Police priorities/ objectives**

**Table 14 Category: Police priorities/ objectives**

Subcategory	No
General information on the SAPS strategic plan, basic service delivery and human rights policy	4
General information on police priorities	3
Information on best practices policy	2
General information on police ethics	2
Furnish vision and mission	1
Information on recruitment policy	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

Table 14 indicates that SAPS website users want to know more about police policies, priorities, objectives and strategy.

**Recommendation:**

- That all these issues be covered on the website. The SAPS vision and mission must also be published on the website.

**3.4.15 Women and children**

**Table 15 Category: Women and children**

Subcategory	No
Details about Child Protection Unit	6
Information on women abuse in SA	2
Information on domestic violence	2
What to do if a boyfriend abuses a woman	1

Information on child abandonment	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>

Crimes against women and children are reason for serious concern in South Africa. This was highlighted by Schonteich (2001:76-80). Although this issue is covered on the SAPS website, the nature of the queries shows that it should receive more attention.

**Recommendation:**

- That the coverage regarding the issue of women and children be further researched. The logic of the website structure regarding this issue must also be assessed and necessary improvements made.

**3.4.16 Structure/design of website, etc.**

Table 16 illustrates queries and comment about the structure and design of the website, etc. These queries were grouped under ‘Other’ in Tables 3 and 4.

**Table 16 Category: Structure/design of website, etc.**

Subcategory	No
Why no link to Servamus (a journal dealing predominantly with police service issues)?	2
Why no link to traffic authorities?	1
There is a “site unavailable” message when trying to link to stolen identity information	1
Why not create a facility to e-mail press releases on request?	1
Why not create a web page where crimes could be reported anonymously?	1
The site is unfriendly.	1
Why does the website not have a search engine?	1
Press releases dating back to 2001 cannot be accessed.	1
The site is of a poor quality.	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>

Comments such as “the site is unfriendly” or “of a poor quality” should, ideally, be substantiated, but SAPS website users who e-mail such criticism do not necessarily do so.

**Recommendation:**

- That cognisance be taken of criticism against the website and that ways of improving the website be looked into. The suggestions made, for example, acquiring a search engine on the website and making the press releases dating from 2001 accessible, also need urgent attention.

### 3.4.17 Results

For the period April 2001 to May 2002 a total of 608 queries were received from visitors to the SAPS website. These queries were tabulated and the nature of the queries was established.

The queries dealt with the following (in rank order) issues (only issues for which more than 10 queries were received are listed):

- Nigerian scam
- Contact details of various police division/units and individuals
- Jobs
- Human resource management
- Laws, Acts
- Statistics
- Stolen goods
- Reservists
- Steps/ procedures
- Police priorities/ objectives
- Women and children

The fact that throughout the period under review queries pertaining to these issues were received indicates that SAPS website users require further information. Such requirements should be addressed.

An analysis of the queries indicates that website users require the following:

- Specific content on the website
- A website that ‘works’ for them and delivers service. They want to know how to go about doing certain things, for example, obtaining police clearance.
- Interactivity. In the case of the so-called Nigerian letters, for example, they want to know what to do about the letters they receive. However, they, in turn, also want to inform the SAPS about what is going on.

### 3.5 Findings

As is stated earlier, the analysis draws inferences from the sample to the population. It gives limited knowledge of the larger group from which the sample is taken (Neuman 2000:196, 217). It does, however, give us a glimpse of reality. The analysis has distinct categories and numerous and diverse subcategories. From the subcategories generalisations can be made. Table 6, for example, which indicates the need for contact details, could have various subcategories. Contact details for various divisions and police stations are required. This does not mean that the contact

details for only these divisions and stations are required – the implied generalisation would be that users require contact details for all SAPS divisions and stations. Comprehensive contact details must be supplied.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The SAPS website query analysis finds its strength in its immediate practical usability to generalise findings (cf. Neuman 2000:25). The results of this analysis can be applied – as is apparent from the recommendations made in this chapter.

The analysis indicates that SAPS website users are primarily concerned with the content and less with the structure of the website.

The user needs indicated in this chapter can be integrated with the evaluation that follows in Chapters 6 to ultimately enable the SAPS website to enhance service delivery. Chapter 6 determines the best practices derived from an evaluation of a number of police agency websites. In Chapter 6 these standards of best practices are then applied to evaluate the SAPS website. The user needs identified by the analysis in this chapter (Chapter 3) will add value to the final recommendations on SAPS website improvement.