Unorthodox Methods of Surveying Knowledge Dissemination in the Digital Era: Redefining Engagement and Professional Advocacy

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Key words: **Digital Pedagogy, Professional Advocacy, Knowledge Transfer.**

SUMMARY

The South African land surveying profession is experiencing a perceived decline in value; a challenge rooted in two critical communication gaps. Internally, a misalignment exists between the profession's accumulated technical knowledge and the preferred learning styles of its newest workforce cohorts, specifically Generation Y and Generation Z. Externally, the profession faces a communication gap with stakeholders in the built environment, where the surveyor's role is often underestimated, resulting in undervaluation and limited participation across the full property lifecycle.

To ensure continued relevance of the profession, this study introduces and motivates the need for an unorthodox digital approach to bridge both the internal and external communication gaps. The methodology centres on the use of three key platforms to present pedagogical instruments such as dynamic infographics, digital storytelling, and interactive online events. The study employs a mixed-methods evaluation, quantifying engagement through social media analytics and measuring comprehension shifts through audience surveys. The findings indicate that this visual and blended knowledge dissemination strategy enhances engagement and improves audience comprehension of complex technical concepts when compared with traditional text-based dissemination.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The South African land surveying profession has, for several years, battled a decline in value perception due to a disconnect between the profession's accumulated knowledge and its internal Generation Y and Z (Gen Y and Gen Z), and external stakeholders. Internally, the gap can be attributed to the misalignment between the learning style of the new cohorts, who prefer modular, digital, and visual content (Mwaura, 2023), and the text-based methods through which knowledge is typically disseminated. Externally, the disconnect is in part due to the legislative framework of the built environment that confines the reserved scope of work for land surveyors to the creation of diagrams and general plans only, with the effect that land surveyors are seldom engaged across the full property lifecycle. This has resulted in misunderstanding, undervaluation, and marginalization of the profession, leaving it to the surveying fraternity to communicate its full value proposition in order to realize the recognition necessary for its sustainability.

Therefore, to engage both internal and external stakeholders, the profession must communicate its technical expertise and wisdom in formats that effectively engage these audiences. With approximately 60% of Africa's population being under the age of 35, and in an era that is digitally driven, knowledge dissemination is increasingly directed towards digital-native audiences. Adopting unorthodox digital dissemination methods such as dynamic infographics, digital storytelling, and interactive online events is not only an educational shift; it is also a strategic act of professional advocacy that bridges internal and external gaps and makes technical expertise accessible and impactful.

1.1. Problem Statement

In South Africa, the land surveying profession is challenged by a dual communication gap that threatens its relevance and sustainability. Internally, the profession's technical knowledge sharing methods do not align with the learning preferences of Generation Y and Z, weakening generational continuity. Externally, surveyors remain marginalized due to regulatory frameworks, including the definition of Built Environment Professions in Section 1 of the CBE Act and the duties of Land Surveyors as defined in Section 11 of the Land Survey Act, which distorts the perceived contribution of land surveying across the property lifecycle. These gaps require ongoing knowledge dissemination and professional advocacy to ensure the profession's recognition and long-term viability.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

This study evaluates the effectiveness of unorthodox digital knowledge dissemination strategies in addressing the dual communication gaps confronting the surveying profession. Specifically, the study examines how digitally facilitated tools, such as dynamic infographics, digital storytelling, and interactive online engagements, function as both pedagogical mechanisms for generational knowledge transfer and professional advocacy instruments for audience engagement. Ultimately, the study aims to determine whether accessible, outcome-based digital communication strategies can reposition land surveying as a continuous and essential contributor across the property development and built-environment lifecycle.

1.3. Research Questions

1.3.1. To what extent do traditional text-based methods in South African land surveying fail to engage Gen Y and Gen Z and support knowledge comprehension?

1.3.2. How does the communication deficit affect stakeholder understanding and valuation of the land surveyor's role across the property lifecycle?

1.3.3. Which unorthodox digital methods are most effective in improving engagement, comprehension, and professional perception?

1.4. Justification of the Study

There observably exists a communication gap between land surveying and its internal and external stakeholders. Internally, this has resulted in uncertainty regarding the continuity of the profession and effective knowledge sharing. Externally, the results are undervaluation, marginalization, and the risk of perceived irrelevance. These communication gaps and knowledge deficits are not an indicator of the insignificance of the profession or of a lack of technical competency. It is argued in this paper that they are the result of a lack of engaging methods of surveying knowledge dissemination that provide context and relatability and therefore improve comprehension.

The unorthodox knowledge dissemination methods presented in this study provide evidence for these arguments. The findings contribute to the establishment of a replicable dissemination approach that can be adopted within the land surveying fraternity globally.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Knowledge Dissemination in Surveying and Geomatics

Historically, surveying education has focused heavily on "how" to measure, often neglecting the "why" or the broader societal impact (Coetzee et al., 2024). This narrow focus has contributed to a lack of intergenerational knowledge exchange and limited professional advocacy. To address this, there is a need for "active recruitment" strategies that effectively engage the target audience and communicate the surveyor's value beyond conventional

boundaries. For example, participatory GIS (PGIS) projects have shown that when students see surveying in action, solving real community problems, they are much more likely to enter the profession (Musungu & Motala, 2024). Furthermore, the modern world demands more flexible, hybrid approaches that integrate pedagogy with emerging technologies (Cox, 2024).

2.2. Generational Learning Preferences (Gen Y, Gen Z)

Gen Z (born after 1997) represents the first true generation of digital natives. In STEM education, these students favour "Active and Challenge-Based Learning" that mimics the dynamics of their future work environments (Caratozzolo et al., 2020). They have shorter attention spans for passive content but are highly proficient in navigating digital tools (Huss, 2025). There is also a growing opportunity for "intergenerational collaboration". While older professionals provide historical and cultural context, younger generations offer technological expertise (Amaro & Kallas, 2024). To bridge this gap, there must be a shift away from "lecture-centric" models toward "reciprocal learning" environments where knowledge flows in both directions through digital media (Abstract; Amaro & Kallas, 2024).

2.3. Social Media in STEM Education

Social media has transcended its role as a social tool to become an engine for "Critical Digital Pedagogy." Platforms like LinkedIn are no longer optional; they are essential for building professional identities and careers (Noor et al., 2025). For geomatics, these platforms allow for "just-in-time" learning and the dissemination of technical research to a global audience (Gustafson, 2025). By utilizing LinkedIn and other professional networks, surveying societies can foster "communities of practice" that provide peer support and mentoring for young surveyors (Taiwo et al., 2024). This digital engagement is a form of "professional renewal," allowing the profession to remain vibrant and push its agenda in an increasingly commercialized higher education landscape (Mwaura, 2023).

2.4. Knowledge Translation for Non-Technical Audiences

Knowledge Translation (KT) is the art of moving research from the journal page to the real world. In professional dissemination, infographics have emerged as a dominant tool because they deliver the "maximum amount of content in the least amount of space" (Jaleniauskiene & Kasperiuniene, 2023). Research in other fields, such as medicine, confirms that infographics significantly enhance professional dissemination and audience engagement on social media (Butdisuwan et al., 2024). For surveyors, translating complex technical data, such as cadastral law or spatial data infrastructure (SDI), into accessible narratives is a critical act of advocacy. Infographics serve as "mindtools" that help both students and stakeholders grasp the surveyor's value in property management and infrastructure development (Sellars, 2024; Jaleniauskiene & Kasperiuniene, 2023).

It has been argued that success of individuals in the engineering industry does not solely depend on technical proficiency, consequently, the success of surveying as a profession does not solely depend on the technical proficiencies of the field, it also depends on appropriate engagement strategies and dismantling the traditional silos that are usually characteristic in the built environment knowledge sharing (Khairdi, et al., 2024; Spoelstra & Collins, 2023).

Storytelling proves effective as a pedagogical tool in knowledge dissemination, fostering creativity, deepening conceptual thinking, and enhancing communication through visual, auditory, and textual components. This method facilitates one's ability to articulate complex topics, such as surveying, more clearly while baring multi-layered abstract relationships (Ozeren, 2025).

At the core of bearing these multi-layered conceptual relationships, is the necessity to be perceived as knowledge bearers in the specific field of surveying. This perception helps establish credibility, change the dynamics of policy making, and build relationships with policy makers, the public, and other built environment professionals (O'Connor, 2025). Without these relationships built through advocacy, professions usually lose their identity, resulting in poor compensation for high responsibility work because of the lack of recognition of the profession and its impact (Stasulis, 2019).

2.5. Undervaluation of Land Surveying

It can be noted that the South African legislative framework somehow contributes to the systematic undervaluation of land surveying relative to its built-environment counterparts, and its exclusion from the built-environment professions (Council for the Built Environment Act 43 of 2000, s 1(iv)) and, consequently, the full participation in the property lifecycle. Building Control Offices within municipalities are where all formal developments receive municipal approval (NBR & BS Act 103 of 1977, s 4(1)). Building Control Officers may be drawn from several built-environment disciplines, including architecture, civil or structural engineering, quantity surveying, and building surveying (Regulation A16 of the NBR & BS Act).

These professions are therefore institutionally embedded within municipal decision-making structures and are positioned as central to the regulatory process to assess different aspects of development (NBR & BS Act, s 6). Surveying expertise, on the other hand, is structurally externalised in that it is something municipalities may call upon, rather than something recognised as integral to their internal professional capacity within the Building Control Offices (Regulation A20 of the NBR & BS Act). These offices often possess in-house competence in architecture and engineering, while lacking equivalent cadastral expertise. Yet legislation grants Building Control Officers discretionary authority to decide whether a survey is required, even though these officers are generally drawn from disciplines other than land surveying (Regulation A11 of the NBR & BS Act).

Furthermore, the Land Survey Act 8 of 1997, the Geomatics Profession Act 19 of 2013, and the Land Survey Regulations do not reserve the identification of existing property boundaries to registered land surveyors. While these laws restrict cadastral surveys, diagrams, and general plans for registration purposes to registered surveyors, no law mandates that existing boundaries must be re-identified by a land surveyor before a development may proceed and no legislation enforces the identification of boundaries prior to developments. As a result, municipal Building Control Departments are not legally required to employ land surveyors as part of their internal development review process Unlike the approval and assessment of building plans, which is regulated and restricted to professionals listed in Regulation A16 of the NBR and BS Act.

The result is not only practical risk in relation to boundary disputes and siting errors (Mondoclox (Pty) Ltd v Branch and Another, 2022; Pillay and Another v Moonsamy and Another, 2024), but also a symbolic relegation of surveying within the professional hierarchy of the built environment, as evidenced by the KwaZulu Natal Department of Public Works and Infrastructure's 2025 vacancy for Chief Director: Infrastructure Programme Coordination (Ref. No. CDIPC/HO/03/2025). This vacancy specified degree qualifications in engineering, quantity surveying, architecture, town and regional planning, or infrastructure project management, but did not list land surveying (KwaZulu Natal Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, 2025). Evidently, the legislative gap contributes to the systemic undervaluation of land surveying within municipal and broader built-environment governance structures. A viable avenue for enhancing the relevance and inclusion of land surveying, pending legislative reform, is through public communication of the risks associated with proceeding without a registered land surveyor and through sustained professional advocacy.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method exploratory research design to evaluate the effectiveness of unorthodox digital knowledge dissemination methods in addressing the internal and external communication gaps within the South African land surveying profession. A mixed method approach was adopted to enable triangulation between the qualitative insights derived from practitioner-led case studies and quantitative digital engagement metrics & survey-based perception data. The selection of this research design is appropriate for examining emerging digital dissemination practices that operate in dynamic professional environments where controlled experimentation is not reflective of real-world conditions.

The study is positioned as practitioner-led research, with both authors as practitioner-researchers who actively designed, implemented and evaluated digital knowledge dissemination within surveying profession and public environments.

3.2. Case Studies and Data Sources

Two purposive case studies were employed, reflecting distinct targets but complementary dissemination objectives:

3.2.1. **Case Study 1 (Internal Communication Gap):** Digital content produced by the first author aimed primarily at new cohort of surveying practitioners (Gen Y & Z) and young built environment professionals. Knowledge dissemination occurred via LinkedIn infographics and interactive online sessions (GeoTalks) via MS Teams, designed to enhance technical comprehension, professional continuity and peer learning.

3.2.2. **Case Study 2 (External Communication Gap):** Public-facing digital content is primarily produced by the second author, disseminated via TikTok and

LinkedIn. This content utilised narrative-driven, real-world case examples to improve public understanding surveying processes and professional value.

For analytic consistency, a sample of twelve LinkedIn posts (6 infographics and 6 case reviews) published over a 6-month period (May to October 2025) and six TikTok short videos published over a 12-month period (February 2024 to March 2025) were selected based on their relevance to surveying knowledge, educational focus and availability of platform analytics.

3.3. Digital Analytics

Quantitative engagement data was extracted from native social media platform analytics dashboard. Metrics included engagement rates (reactions, comments and reposts), impressions or views and available audience demographics indicators such as age group, geographic location and professional seniority. These indicators served as behavioural measures for audience reach, engagement intensity and perceived reference value. The analytics were aggregated to identify consistence performance patterns across platforms and contents formats, enabling comparative assessment of unorthodox dissemination instruments relative to their intended audiences.

3.4. Online Survey and Data Triangulation

To complement behavioural analytics, a structured online survey was conducted via Google Forms in December 2025. The survey comprised of 13 questions covering respondent demographics, baseline familiarity with land surveying concepts, exposure to digital surveying content, perceived effectiveness of different unorthodox methods, shifts in understanding and professional value perception. Convenience sampling through the authors' digital networks yielded 118 complete responses, with a mixed representation from the public, students, young build environment practitioners and academics. Descriptive statistics was used to identify trends and preferences derived from the survey data collected.

Findings were triangulated across two data sources: (1) platform analytics (observed behaviour); (2) survey responses (self-reported perception) to strengthen validity and reduce limitations related to self-selection bias & authors positionality. While this study is contextually situated within South Africa, the methodological framework supports broader applicability for digital dissemination model for the surveying profession.

4. FINDINGS

The empirical evidence for this study utilises metrics from LinkedIn, TikTok and an online survey (n =118).

4.1. Social Media Performance Metrics

The following table consolidates the performance metrics of internal-facing technical content (Infographics), external-facing narrative content (Long Posts) and high-reach unorthodox storytelling (Short-form videos).

Table 1:Aggregated Performance Metrics by Dissemination Tool

Content Type	**Unorthodox: TikTok (Short Videos)**	**Unorthodox: LinkedIn (Infographics)**	**Unorthodox: MS Teams (GeoTalks)**	**Traditional Digital: LinkedIn (Long Posts)**
Primary Intent	Public Awareness/ Valuation	Internal Technical Gap	Internal Knowledge Transfer & Dialogue	External Professional Reach
Avg. Engagement Rate	4.23%	1.99%	1 session per month	1.08%
Avg. Impressions/Reach	258 167	10 694	40-60 (attendance)	24 158
Avg. Saves *(Utility)*	1 106	65.8	N/A (one recording per session)	13.2
Avg. Reposts *(Advocacy)*	392	26.2	N/A	15.2

Analysis: The findings indicate a clear performance disparity between "traditional" long-form digital post (narrative-driven text) and "unorthodox" visual content. Short-form videos and Infographics demonstrated the highest efficiency in fostering active engagements and future utility ("saves"). While long-form posts achieved a wider professional audience on LinkedIn (24 158 avg. impressions), their engagement rate (1.08%) is lowest across all digital methods. GeoTalks provides a qualitative deep-dive communication bridge, whilst maintaining a consistent professional community of up to 60 attendees per session.

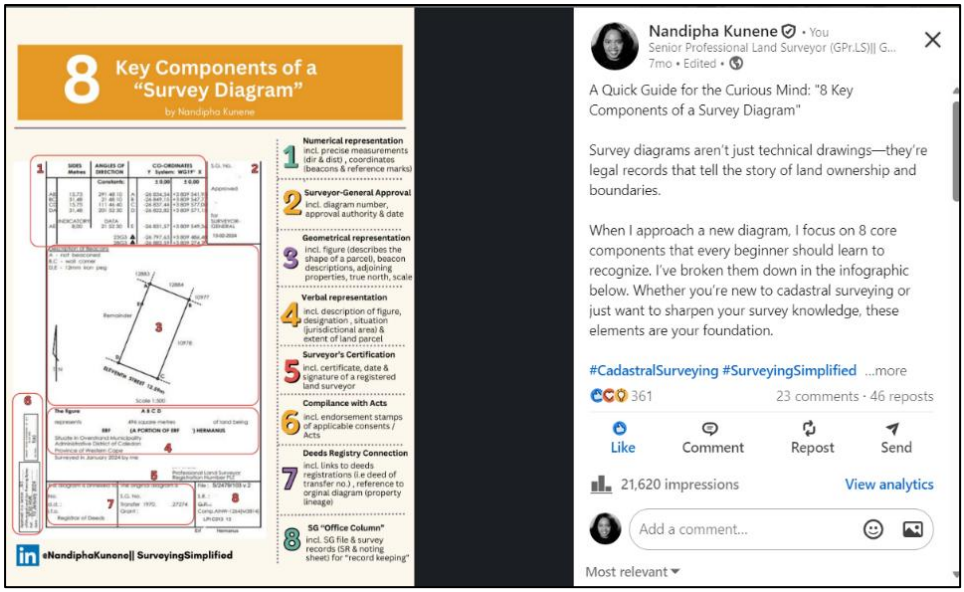


Figure 1: Example of an Infographic post "decoding the survey diagram"- extracted from first author's LinkedIn Page

4.2. Survey Insights: Perception and Comprehension

The survey provided a qualitative depth into how different cohorts processed surveying knowledge. The cohorts represented the survey population which predominately composed of "Digital Natives" with Gen Y and Z accounting for 39% of respondents. The remaining 61% comprised of external stakeholders (property developers, other built environment professionals and the public).

Table 2: Audience Preferences and Knowledge Impact.

Survey Metric	Gen Y & Z (Internal)	External Stakeholders (Public/Built Env.)
• **Format Preferences**	Short-form Video (TikTok/Reels) – 44.9% (top) Text-based Articles/ Documents – 5.9% (bottom)	Short-form Video (TikTok/Reels) – 48.2% (top) Text-based Articles/ Documents – 6.2% (bottom)
• **Visual Retention Score**	4.1/5.0 (high preference)	
• **Shift in Value Perception**	84.2% reported increased valuation of the profession	92.4% reported increased valuation of the profession
• **Knowledge Improvement**	87.0% reported improved understanding of complex surveying concepts/processes	89.4% reported improved understanding of complex surveying concepts/processes

Only 5.9% of respondents favour text-based articles, highlighting a significant mismatch between tradition knowledge dissemination formats and modern consumption habits. By contrast, the high "visual retention score" (4.1/5) which refers to the ease of remembering visual

content vs. text-based data aligns well with the strong engagement levels observed in the social media performance metrics.

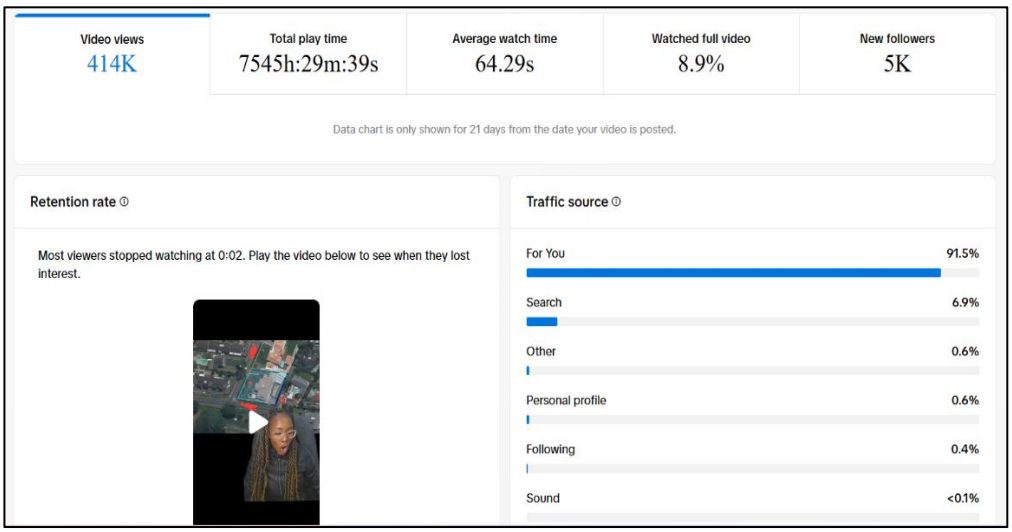


Figure 2: TikTok analytics on a short video about "a 0.40m Building Encroachment" - extracted from R. Ginya's TikTok page

5. DISCUSSION

The findings provide a critical look at the "communication gap" within the South African land surveying industry. The discussion below addresses the three primary objectives of the research.

5.1. Internal Communication Gap: Failure of Traditional Dissemination in Engaging Gen Y and Gen Z

Research Objective 2.4.1 examined the extent to which traditional dissemination methods fail to engage the younger cohort in the surveying profession? The findings reveal a near-total disconnect in how survey knowledge is disseminated versus how it is consumed in today's digital-first professional environment. With a preference rate of 5.9%, traditional dissemination methods (text-based articles/documents) are effectively invisible to the emerging workforce.

The engagement rate difference between "Long-form posts" (1.08%) and "Infographics" (1.99%) on LinkedIn highlights a shift from "reading" to "decoding". The high save-to-impression ratio suggests that the younger cohort (Gen Y and Gen Z) treat digital platforms (such as LinkedIn) as decentralised information libraries. When 86.9% of the younger cohort report improved their understanding of complex survey concepts after engaging with visual/digital content, the so-called "internal communication gap" is unmistakably a byproduct of the surveying profession's pedagogical inertia.

5.1.1. GeoTalks: Bridging the Mentorship Gap

A unique finding of this study is the success of GeoTalks, a series of eight (8) MS Teams sessions designed to bridge the gap between young professionals and industry experts. While social media provides reach and infographics provide technical data, GeoTalks addresses the

Relational Gap. With an average attendance of 40-60 professionals, these sessions provide a "virtual boardroom" where unorthodox storytelling and mentorship occur in real-time. The 10.2% preference for interactive online events in the survey suggests that while visual content is essential for learning, practitioners still crave dialogue. GeoTalks serves as the "capstone" of the dissemination model, converting the interest generated by TikTok and the knowledge gained from infographics into professional community and shared expertise.

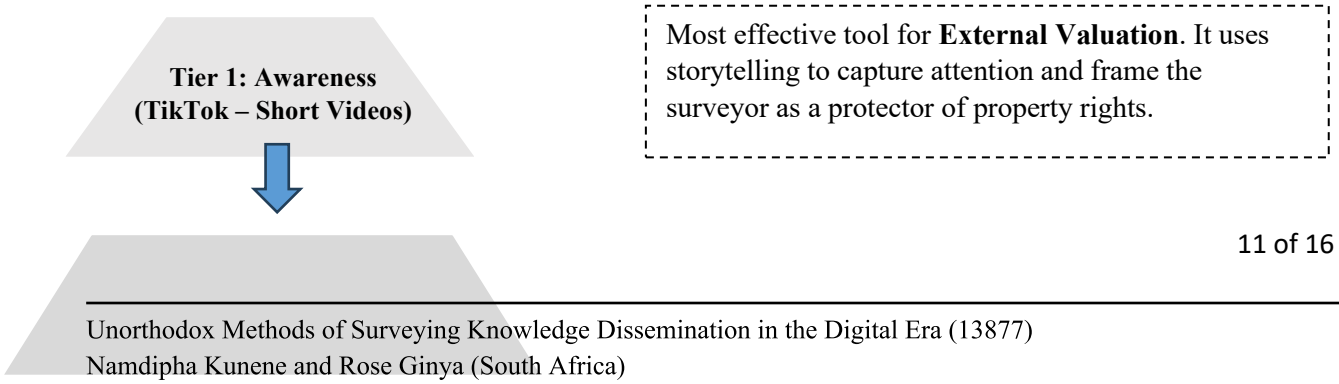
5.2. External Communication Gap: Communication Deficit and Professional Valuation

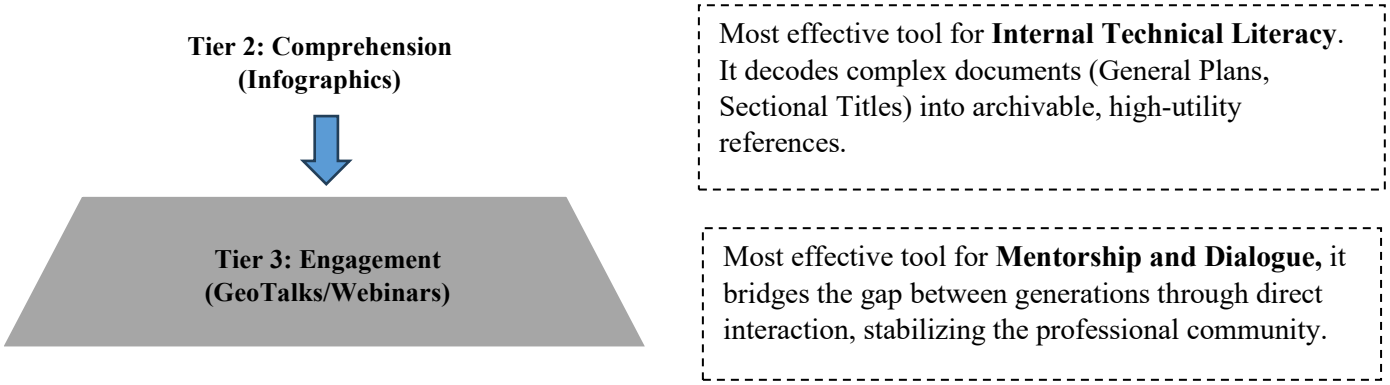
Research Objective 2 investigated the impact of the communication deficit on external stakeholders. The land surveying profession is frequently perceived as a technical “black box” service, meaning that while the external stakeholders understand the outcome (i.e. survey derivable such as diagrams), they do not understand the expertise or processes required to reach the results. The findings of this study suggest that this a direct result of the profession’s failure to articulate its value within the Property Value Lifecycle.

The analytics derived from the TikTok posts reached over 1.5million views, with the highest resonance coming from videos that framed surveying as a risk mitigation tool (e.g., the 414,000 views for "0.40m Encroachment"). For external stakeholders, when presented with visual explanations such as real-world narrative videos of sectional titles and boundary disputes. 92.4% of stakeholders (specifically developers and the public) reported a significant increase in their valuation of the surveyor’s role, this shift suggests that when stakeholders understand that a survey diagram is a "legal record that tells the story of ownership" rather than just a technical drawing, they view the surveyor as a foundational enabler of the property lifecycle. Notably, traditional professional communication methods appear insufficient for public engagement, as they fall short in contextualising surveying expertise within everyday property related decisions and risks. In contrast, unorthodox digital dissemination methods act as a translation layer, enable surveying knowledge to be translated into consequence-based explanations that resonate with non-technical audiences.

5.3. Effectiveness of Unorthodox Digital Methods

Which tool is most effective? Comparative analysis demonstrates that no single digital instrument is universally optimal. Effectiveness is strongly dependent on audience type and communication objective; therefore, we propose a three-tiered knowledge dissemination funnel as a most effective framework for the digital era.





Based on the findings, this study demonstrates that unorthodox digital dissemination methods significantly enhance perceived understanding, retention, and professional value recognition within the land surveying profession. By aligning communication formats with audience learning preferences, surveying knowledge can be made more accessible without compromising technical integrity.

In addition, the findings also prove that a visual-first, multi-platform approach, utilizing short-form video for advocacy, infographics for literacy, and online events for mentorship not only improves comprehension but fundamentally restores the profession's perceived value. To remain relevant to the 18-35 cohort and the broader property sector, this "Unorthodox" model must become the professional standard for knowledge dissemination.

6. RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

This study shows that unorthodox digital dissemination methods reduce the communication gap in the land surveying profession without diluting the knowledge. As illustrated in Figure 4, using practical visual, narrative, and interactive tools, engagement can be achieved and technical knowledge effectively shared.

While keeping traditional technical documentation as a core reference, A mixed approach is recommended that chooses digital formats to suit the audience and purpose. An iterative intentional approach has been proven to improve comprehension and strengthen professional visibility. This in turn encourages a proactive compliance and profession inclusion. In doing so, digital dissemination contributes to professional sustainability and reinforces the land surveyor's essential role across the property development lifecycle.

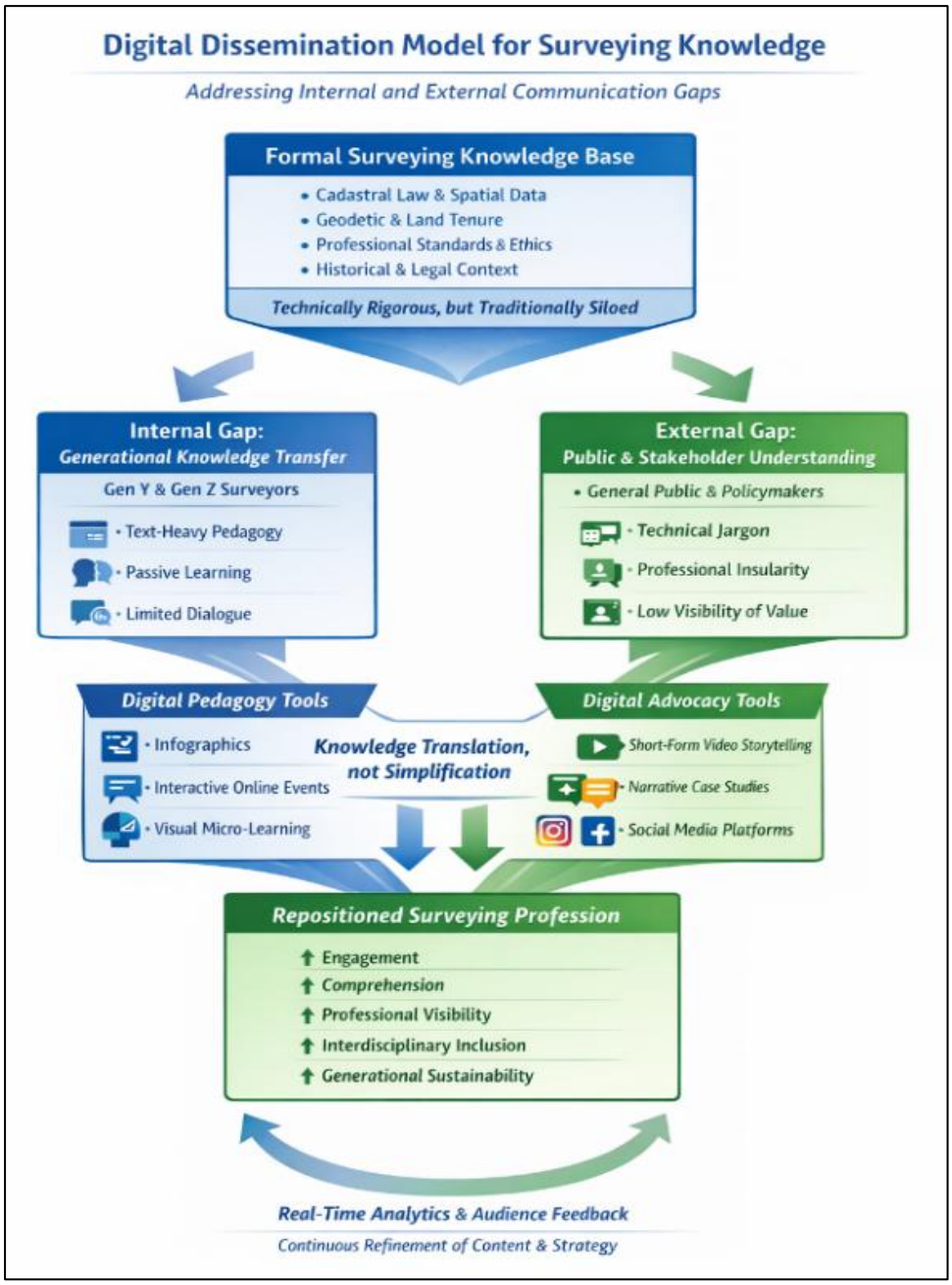


Figure 3: Recommended "Digital Dissemination Model for Surveying Knowledge"

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Nandipha KUNENE is a registered Professional Land Surveyor based in South Africa. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Surveying from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and Master of Management specialising in Digital Business from the University of Witwatersrand) and is recognized for her specialization in cadastral surveying and digital transformation. As a National Executive Committee member of the South African Young Surveyors Network, she supports emerging professionals. Kunene founded GeoTalks, a series bridging young professionals and industry experts through knowledge-sharing and dialogue. A passionate advocate, she creates accessible educational content and drives discussions on professional renewal and technological integration in geomatics.

Rose GINYA is a registered Professional Land Surveyor operating in South Africa. She is currently Master's in Land Surveying (UKZN) Candidate. She serves as an Associate Board Member of the South African Institute of Building Design (SAIBD) – a predominantly architectural professions Voluntary Association where she advocates for Land Surveying. She

regularly contributes on local and national radio to further professional advocacy while creating engaging educational content on social media.

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