Use of Social Media in Citizen-Centric Electronic Government Services: A Literature Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This article undertakes a literature review on such articles on social media and citizen-centric e-government services. This research uses 139 articles to perform the intended literature review. The keywords analysis of these articles indicates that Web 2.0, participation and open government/open data were some of the frequently used keywords in addition to the two major themes of e-government and social media on which all the articles were searched for. The analysis of research methods indicated that majority of the studies were analytical, conceptual, descriptive, or theoretical in nature. The theoretical analysis however indicated that there is a lack of theory-based research in this area. The review of literature indicated that research themes such as electronic participation, engagement, transparency, communication/interaction, trust, security and collaboration are some of the most frequently used categories under this area of research. A research framework has also been proposed from the key themes emerging from the review.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

Governments across the world are responsible to their citizens and society at large, as they are accountable for preserving the interests of the general public (Bonson et al., 2015). Driven by rising citizen prospects and the need for government innovation, social media has become a key component of electronic government (hereafter, e-government) in a very short period of time (Bertot et al., 2012). Given the substantial evidence to suggest a steady rise in the predominance of social media among citizens of all walks of life, government organisations are now increasingly experimenting with social technology to communicate with their citizens (Chui et al., 2012; Goncalves et al., 2015). Such efforts and others have given rise to great anticipations in terms of reaching out to new audiences, building a relationship with constituents and other stakeholders, creating new patterns of communication, refining

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openness, transparency and participatory democracy, crowdsourcing solutions and innovation and above all lowering government costs (Kavanaugh et al., 2012; Picazo-Vela et al., 2012).

A number of studies (e.g. Cotterill and King, 2007; Dwivedi et al., 2017a; Kaigo and Okura, 2016; Mossberger et al., 2013) have analysed the role of social media in fostering the transparency of governments and strengthening the interaction between citizens, other relevant stakeholders and public administrations in the last decade. For example, Cotterill and King (2007) explored how UK local authorities and their partners work together in sub-regional e-government partnerships. Through a case study, the authors also found that social networks can have some impact on the adoption and implementation of e-government in the region. Similarly, Kaigo and Okura (2016) explored how various functions of government promote the civil society Facebook page engagement and how the dysfunctions in the government operations unintentionally discourage engagement.

Even though the research is about the role of social media in e-government is about a decade old, the comprehensive exploration of literature on the role of social media in e-government indicates that there are only a few studies (e.g. Alarabiat et al., 2016; Bertot et al., 2012; Boudjelida et al., 2016; Dwivedi et al., 2017a; Medaglia and Zheng, 2017) that have undertaken the literature review in this area. For example, Bertot et al. (2012) used an iterative strategy that involved conducting a literature review, content analysis and web-site analysis on multiple perspectives on government transparency efforts, the role of ICTs and social media in these efforts and the ability of the e-government initiatives to promote collaborative transparency. However, the focus of this paper is only restricted to fundamental initiatives, potential influences and future challenges for collaborative e-government as a means of transparency. Moreover, Alarabiat et al. (2016) and Boudjelida et al. (2016) reviewed the literature related to citizens’ electronic participation (or e-participation) in government activities. In other words, these literature reviews are also limited to the exploration of citizen’s e-participation in government initiatives and only fractionally analyse the related literature where social media is preferably used over other online tools (e.g. online forums, governments’ official websites and other online technologies). Drawing from an extensive review of government social media literature, Medaglia and Zheng (2017) mapped government social media research into six focus categories of context, user characteristics, user behavior, platform properties management and effects. Based on their analysis, they proposed a framework to establish relationships between the six focus categories. Similarly, However, no research has yet been undertaken to comprehensively analyse the overall literature on social media in citizen centric e-government perspective. Therefore, it is timely to perform the literature review for such research articles that have used all these key terminologies together. Considering this, the remaining parts of the study are structured as follows: The next section presents the literature search and analysis approach. The following section analyses a brief account of analysis of keywords, theories, models or frameworks and research methods from the existing studies on social media and e-government. The next section presents the publications as per years and outlets. The subsequent section presents the frequently occurring limitations on the existing research on e-government and social media. The following section analyses the available 139 studies as per their key research themes or categories and propose a framework based on emerging categories. This is followed by discussions and conclusion of the research toward the end. We acknowledge that we have already presented a conference paper (see Dwivedi et al., 2017a) on this topic in ICEGOV held in March 2017 in India but we have updated this paper with 24 new research articles published in 2017 on the theme of e-government and social media and have also updated the existing paper with some more analysis and updates of the existing content including tables and have also added some more new analyses. For example, we have added a completely new section on publications according to year and outlets, limitations of existing research and development of a framework emerging from the available themes on e-government and social media research.
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