Social Media and Government
Citizen Participation, Value Co-Creation and Service Delivery
Minitrack Introduction

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The use of social media by government agencies and citizens has now become mainstream. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WeChat represent global tools that bring in the potential to transform the interaction between government agencies, businesses, and citizens. Social media is, in fact, potentially not only just another channel for the provision of information by government agencies to the citizens, but also a powerful tool for citizen participation, as well as for collaboration with citizens for social value co-creation and for service delivery.

This minitrack, celebrating its sixth year, aimed at attracting high-quality research papers investigating various aspects of social media use by government agencies (e.g., for information dissemination, transparency improvement, collection of feedback, knowledge, experience and creative ideas, promotion of citizen participation, value and service co-creation), as well as by citizens (e.g., for policy-related information, opinions and ideas exchange, political action and mobilization). We received eight submissions, but we have been quite rigorous and selective in the review process, not accepting papers which are descriptive or lacking sound theoretical foundations and contribution. We thus finally accepted two papers for presentation in this mini-track.

The first paper has been authored by Björn Ross, Tobias Potthoff, Tim A. Majchrzak, Narayan Ranjan Chakraborty, Mehdi Ben Lazreg, and Stefan Stieglitz and is titled 'The Diffusion of Crisis-Related Communication on Social Media: An Empirical Analysis of Facebook Reactions'. It addresses the problem of deciding how crisis-related information should be published on Facebook in order to reach as many people as possible. Their study has been based on data collected concerning Facebook posts by emergency management agencies and municipalities during three recent terrorist attacks: a) the December 2016 Berlin truck attack; b) the March 2017 attack in Westminster, London; c) the 2017 April Stockholm attack. In particular, data were collected concerning posts about the events, along with the numbers of shares, likes and emotional reactions to them. In a regression analysis, the effects of several variables were examined that capture decisions on what information to publish and how. It has been concluded that posts containing condolences result in three times as many emotional reactions as other posts, all other variables held constant. Images and videos positively affected the number of reactions, while text length negatively affected the number of shares.

The second paper has been authored by Euripidis Loukis, Yannis Charalabidis and Aggeliki Androutsopoulou, and is titled 'Using Social Media for Government Passive Expert-Sourcing'. It presents and evaluates a method of using social media by government agencies for the collection of relevant information and knowledge from knowledgeable experts ('expert-sourcing'). A passive expert-sourcing method based on social media, which has been developed in a European research project, is presented and evaluated from a wicked problems theory perspective. In particular, the paper examines to what extent this method enables government agencies to collect high-quality information concerning the main elements of important social problems to be addressed through public policies: particular issues posed, alternative interventions/ actions, and their advantages/disadvantages; as well as to what extent there is consensus about these elements among different stakeholder groups. For this purpose, data have been collected through interviews with Members of the Greek Parliament. From their analysis, interesting conclusions have been drawn about the strengths and weaknesses of this expert-sourcing method, as well as required improvements of it.

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