

Social Media and Government Minitrack (Introduction)

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As the presence of governments on social media consolidates, the body of e-government research on social media has now accumulated for a number of years. The minitrack on social media and government celebrates its fifth year, and its history reflects such continuous growth. Research on social media and government has increased in the complexity of issues it tackles, following the multitude of impacts social media have on government structures, processes, and management. Initially approached as yet another channel of information provision, the use of social media has been progressively explored in its potential to improve transparency, intra- and inter-governmental communication, but also citizen engagement, and value co-creation. While an increasing number of areas concerning the use social media in government have been focused on, there are still research gaps to fill. The dominant focus of social media and government research has so far mainly been on issues related to the “supply side” of the phenomenon, that is on the strategies and management adopted by public agencies [1]. Additional focus is thus needed on the user side of the social media phenomenon, that is on the impacts on, and the behavior of, the very protagonists of the social media revolution: citizens as co-creators. Moreover, social media and government research is now faced with new challenges posed by the intertwining between social media and other emerging phenomena, such as big and open data, political polarization, or cyberbullying.

The papers presented in this minitrack provide an interesting mix of different and relevant perspectives on the latest evolution of the social media and government phenomenon. This year’s minitrack attracted ten submissions – more than twice the previous year – from which five were selected for presentation at the conference. The first paper, “Predicting Citizens Acceptance of Government-led e-Participation Initiatives through Social Media: A Theoretical Model” by Ayman Alarabiat, Delfina Sá Soares, and Elsa Estevez, responds to the call for further theorization that concerns e-government research in general, and social media in particular. The

authors propose a model to explain the citizen intention towards involvement in government-led e-Participation initiatives through social media, based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

The second paper, “Social Media and Absorptive Capacity of Greek Government Agencies” by Euripides Loukis, Marinos Themistocleous, Efthymia Nikolaou, and Marina Fragkiskou, investigates the use of social media from the perspective of the enhancement of the Absorptive Capacity of government agencies, both in its external environment oriented components (ability for external exploratory learning) and its internal ones (ability for transformative and exploitative learning).

The third paper, “Social Media Use for Decision Making Process in Educational Settings: The Greek Case for Leadership’s Views and Attitude in Secondary and Tertiary Education” by Maria Sideri, Ariadni Filippopoulou, George Rouvalis, Christos Kalloniatis, and Stefanos Gritzalis, presents the views of leaders of Greek secondary and tertiary education on the benefits and risks of social media use for the purpose of participatory decision-making.

The fourth paper, “Increasing Policy Success through the Use of Social Media Cross-Channels for Citizen Political Engagement” by Christopher Reddick, Akemi Takeoka Chatfield, and Uuf Brajawidagda focuses on user behavior, presenting a network analysis of citizen use of YouTube and Twitter to interact with content posted by public agencies.

The fifth paper, “Europe in the shadow of financial crisis: Policy Making via Stance Classification” by Lefkothea Spiliotopoulou, Dimitrios Damopoulos, Yannis Charalabidis, Manolis Maragoudakis, and Stefanos Gritzalis, showcases the use of analytical techniques to investigate public opinion stances, drawing on the very timely topic of the financial crisis in Europe.

[1] Medaglia, R. and Zheng, L. Characterizing Government Social Media Research: Towards a Grounded Overview Model. 49th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS) IEEE (2016), 2991–2999