Social Media in Government

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ABSTRACT: Social media is a place where headlines are created, storms whipped up, and opinions are shared. It meets customers where they are, and it is a great place to communicate with them. Government agencies and officials represent some of the most engaged with users on social media. They are increasingly using social media to engage with citizens, share information, and deliver services more quickly and effectively than ever before. It can also be used to educate the public about the government's work and services and promote cooperation across government. Social media is also an outlet for expression. It is being used across the world by different government agencies. This paper is a primer on the use of social media by the government.

KEYWORD: social media, government, politics.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional social media include written press, TV, radio, and billboards. Governments use the traditional media; this one-way communication reflects the low feedback of stakeholders to communicate with government, which leads to low participation from stakeholder's side. Media has a major role to play in politics as it acts as an intermediary between the government and the citizens. Media dictates the opinion of the public and it has an adverse effect on the political power in the United States. Media power can be categorized into three distinct parts: the linkages between media and politics, media and presidential elections, and the influence of media on the voting behavior of the people, public opinion and foreign news, etc. The role of media in politics is shown in Figure 1[1].

More and more organizations are using social media to conduct outreach, recruit job candidates, and encourage workplace productivity. Government processes are embracing the latest evolutions of the technological boom and social media can play a strong role in supporting this change. Social media represents a powerful solution for consolidating interactions between public authorities and citizens. It has become imperative that government agencies communicate with citizens via social media during crises, to justify public decisions and actions. The development of social media platforms has altered modes of

communication between the government and the public. It has facilitated interactivity in government activities, making them more participatory, transparent, consultative, and collaborative [2].

Engaging citizens is not just an expectation for the government, it is a civic duty. Governments recognized the importance of Internet, and started to provide their services electronically over e-government websites. They have also realized that more and more of their citizens are present over social networks, not over governments' websites. As the social media evolved, the government also evolved in the same direction and witnessed a move from e-government services to social government; i.e. governments provide their services over social media such as Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, and Flickr [3]. Government agencies in the United States and around the world are increasingly looking to leverage social media to improve the quality of government services and enable greater citizen engagement. The use of social media by governments can be traced back to the emergence of "Web 1.0" technologies that revolutionized the way commerce was conducted [4].

SOCIAL MEDIA BASICS

Modern social media, also known as social networking, include Facebook (Facebook, Inc, Menlo Park, California, USA), Twitter (Twitter Inc, San Francisco, California, USA), YouTube (San Mateo, California, USA), LinkedIn (Sunnyvale, California, USA), Instagram (Facebook, Inc, Menlo Park, California, USA), and Pinterest (San Francisco, California, USA). Both the traditional and modern social media are illustrated in Figure 2 [5]. Modern social media began in 1978 by Ward Christensen and Randy Suess who created bulletin board to inform friends of meetings, announcements, and share information. Since then, social media has become an integral part of our life [6]. Social media gives companies another means of reaching people in ways that traditional media cannot. They allow your company to boost their brand. Companies that fail to invest in having a strong presence on social media will soon realize they missed out on a serious competitive advantage. As shown in Figure 3, the critical characteristics of social media are connectedness, collaboration, and community [7].

Social media (also called Web 2.0 or social networking) refers to Internet-based and mobile-based tools that allow individuals to communicate, share ideas, send personal messages, and images. Web 1.0 is the "read-only Web." Consumers are allowed to read information created by the provider of the online information. Web 2.0 allows users to create information, send posts and share audio, graphics, text, and video online [8].

Social media are computer-mediated communication tools that enable users to share and consume content through varied modalities such as text, image, and video [9]. Recently, the use of social media has been extended to the healthcare field. Healthcare professionals now use SM as part of their daily activities. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events, and interests. The majority of those who use social networking sites use them to form self-aggregated interest groups for fundraising, awareness, marketing, and general support.

SM sites may include wikis, blogs, and social networks.

➢ *Wikis*: These are easy-to-publish websites. They can be quickly and easily edited by multiple users. Wiki" is a Hawaiian term meaning "quick." Wikipedia happens to be the most commonly used wiki in the medical community as healthcare professionals use Wikipedia to find medical information. However, Wikipedia sometimes contains factual errors that lacks depth compared to traditionally edited, peer-reviewed information sources.

➢ *Blogs:* These are the oldest, most established, and evaluated form of social media. They provide the opportunity to publish large amounts of information in a variety of media (text, video, and audio) in an open forum. Blogs have been used by healthcare workers for peer-to-peer communication. Medical blogs

generally target one of two different audiences: patients or providers. Microblogs provide dynamic and concise form of information exchange through social media.

➢ *Social Media:* Social media platforms such as Facebook allow individuals to post photos and messages and share them with friends, relatives, and acquaintances all over the world. Media sharing sites comprise social media tools that are optimized for viewing and sharing. They are great resources for education, community building, marketing, and research. They have become encyclopedic resources.

Today, many social media tools, including social networking sites, blogs, microblogs, wikis, media-sharing sites, are influential in our everyday life and are available for health care professionals (HCPs).

Mobile social media (MSM) has emerged as the combination of social networking and mobile technologies. It is becoming a global phenomenon as it enables IP-connectivity for people on the move. It is mediated by mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, or laptop computers. It refers to social media applications such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, MySpace, and Twitter that are delivered via mobile devices. These popular social media platforms have made mobile apps for their users to have instant access from anywhere at any time [10]. Figure 3 shows some most annoying industries on social media [11].

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR GOVERNMENT

Long before social media existed, politicians and governments had to use traditional media (such as television ad, newspapers, and door-to-door flyers) to raise the profile of candidates. This was a high-cost initiative that had an immeasurable impact. In contrast, social media provides the government with a low-stakes entry point to build awareness of its initiatives, grow personal brands, and engage with the general public.

Social media and the government, from municipal to provincial to federal, go hand in hand because social media is an excellent place for the government to communicate with constituents, launch campaigns, and build awareness around initiatives. It has played a significant role in the communications strategies of government bodies, politicians, and lawmakers worldwide. Stereotyped as dishonest, greedy, and unreliable, there is an opportunity to change perceptions by using social media for communications and building a personal brand that is based on transparency. People look up to the government for leadership during tough times; it makes sense that lawmakers, politicians, and governments use social media to provide regular, official updates to citizens. Governments must invest in social media to help them identify inaccuracies and respond accordingly. Social media is an excellent space to test campaign messaging [12]. Figure 3 shows the relationship between government, citizens, and social media [13].

Local governments use social media to connect with citizens, promote events and local initiatives, and recruit new employees. Government agencies and officials of all levels should be present on the social media platforms used by their constituents. The following eight essential elements for government social media policy can used by agencies to direct their efforts [14]:

1. employee access – the degree to which employees are allowed to access social media sites while at work and the procedures for gaining access;

2. account management – procedures for creation, maintenance, and destruction of social media accounts;

3. acceptable use – guidelines on how employees are expected to use social media tools while at work, including issues such as time of use, purposes of use, and types of equipment;

4. employee conduct – expectations for employee conduct on social media sites and consequences should a violation occur;

5. content – procedures for posting content on official agency social media pages, including creation and editorial requirements for such content;

6. security – security procedures for safeguarding government data and infrastructure;

7. legal issues – legal considerations and requirements for use of social media; and

8. citizen conduct – management of citizen-generated content on a government agency social media site

These eight essential elements are depicted in Figure 4 [14].

BENEFITS

Social media sites and apps are great ways to connect and share information. Social media has quickly penetrated the realm of government operations. Recent years have witnessed more interest by government agencies in exploiting the social media in interacting, mobilizing, and collaborating with citizens, particularly in disasters, crises, and emergencies. Social media has become a powerful tool for government to disseminate information and sway public opinion. More and more citizens have used social media power to voice their opinions on government actions. Social media will always be a good place to keep the general public informed and engage with the citizens on a deeper level. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram make government officials more accessible than ever. Most nations believe that social media has been a good thing for democracy in their country. Other benefits of using social media in government include the following [15]:

1. Better citizen engagement

2. Fast tool in crisis communications

3. Accurate information dissemination

4. Testing or change public perception

5. Serve as a source of community updates

6. Humanizes politicians and makes them more accountable to the general public.

CHALLENGES

Not all social media content is accessible to people with certain disabilities, which limits the reach and effectiveness of these platforms. Social media use affects young users' political views and exposes them to people with different backgrounds and views. Social media platforms influence their political views.

A prominent challenge social media faces is the dissemination of contradictory information and news that may prevent the public from obtaining the value expected of such social technology. The extensive usage of social media by society forces public administrations to analyze and think carefully about how they can take advantage of such usage in responding to crises. Social media is a harsh reality, and people will call you out, so make sure what you say is true. Remaining compliant with privacy requirements is critical for any government body. It is important to be thoughtful with what you post on the web and social media and how you phrase it. Just because a photo is on social media does not mean it is in the public domain.

Communication between the government and social-media companies can be problematic. Critics have expressed concern that the government should not use its power to silence opposition. The President, the Surgeon General, the White House press secretary, the State Department, the F.B.I.—may not urge, encourage, pressure, or induce harmful speech. The First Amendment limits the government, constrains the government, but protects private people. The First Amendment is interpreted in this way as an attempt to protect some separation of powers [16]. Social media giants Facebook and Twitter banned Trump from their

platforms for using of social media to share misleading content and inflame his millions of followers [17]. The government needs to balance its interest in promoting accurate information against the threat of governmental overreach, while the social media should curb the spread of illegal material including terrorism and child sex abuse. Use of social media technologies must follow the current laws and standards that govern information and information technology.

CONCLUSION

Social media is a set of online technologies, sites, and practices which are used to share opinions, experiences, and perspectives. In essence, social media is about conversation.

It is a dialogue that happens between government and its citizens [18].

Social media is transforming the way in which people connect with each other and the manner in which information is shared and distributed. It has become a huge virtual community, with highly interactive and collaborative environment among its members. It is the future of communication because this new form of media makes the transfer of text, photos, audio, video, and information in general increasingly fluid among Internet users. It is not just about being social anymore. Businesses are taking advantage of social media to communicate directly with their target audience to boost business. Government institutions and officials of all sizes are following suit, using social media tools to communicate important information to constituents and improve delivery of services. They use social media to pay attention to what people are saying in their areas and share information in real time [19].

It is encouraging that 85 percent of governments and agencies are active on social media. Government agencies can take into account citizens' opinion and track their sentiment. Social media can have a great impact on democratic practices because they change the relationships between the governed and those governing. More information about the uses of AI in social media can be found in the book in [20].

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Figure 1 The role of media in politics [1].

Figure 2 Traditional and modern social media [5].

Figure 3 Critical characteristics of social media [7].
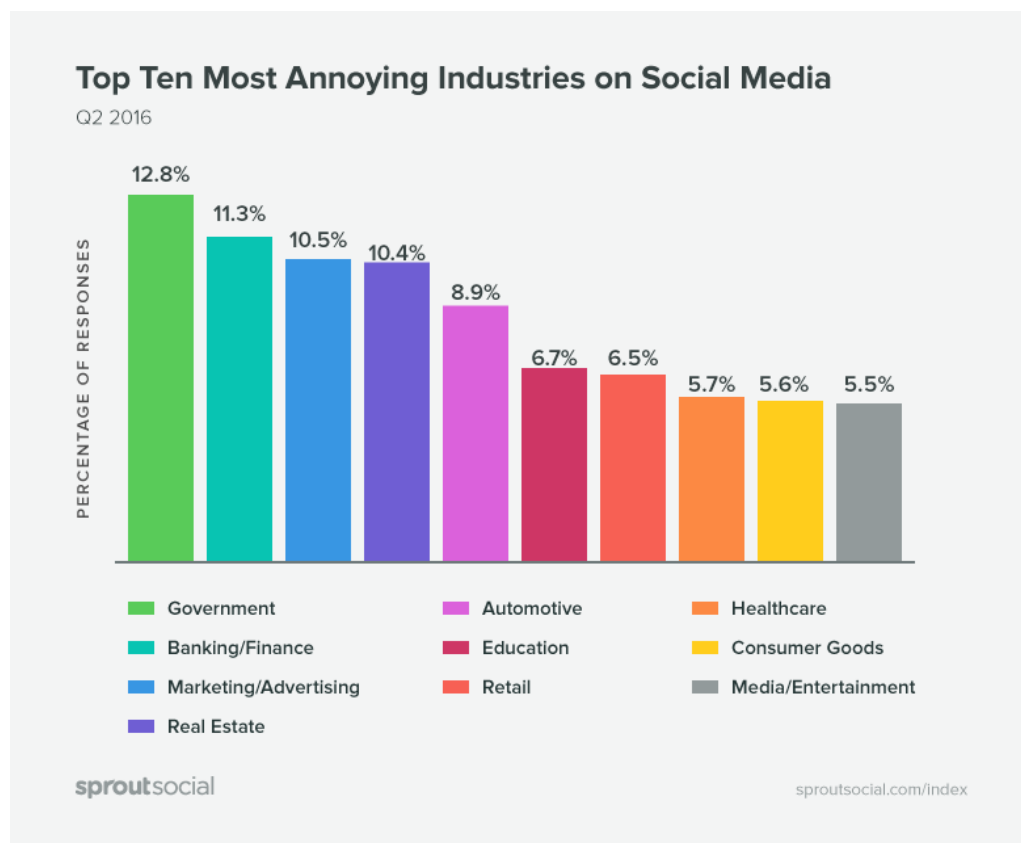

Figure 4 The most annoying industries on social media [11].
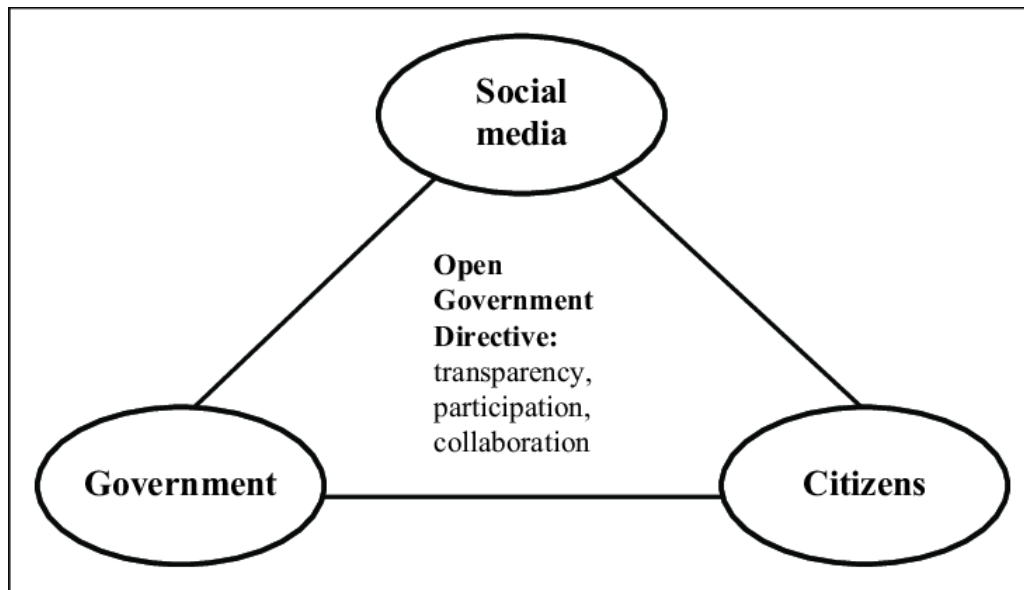
Figure 5 The relationship between government, citizens, and social media [13].

Figure 6 Eight essential elements for government social media policy [14].

Figures p. 153/189 (white house), Images for social media tool for government