“Hit the Bull's-Eye”- Electronic Participation through Social Media

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Abstract. This paper presents research findings of reviewing 42 studies concerning electronic participation (e-Participation) through social media. Overall, such initiatives have reflected the prevalence of a one-way communication strategy, what do not considerably foster citizen involvement in policy decision making process.

Keywords. E-Participation, Social Media, E-Government, E-Democracy.

1. Introduction and Research Methodology

The evolving of e-Participation through social media initiatives has been quite intense in these latter times. These initiatives are enthusiastically seen as a way to enhance citizens’ political engagement and to foster their involvement in government policy decision making process [1], [2]. This ongoing research poster aims to summarize and organize the literature concerning such topic. Figure 1 presents the research methodology.

The search for relevant papers overlapped with other “neighboring” fields, namely e-Democracy and e-Government. In this sense, we developed and applied an assessment framework that includes three dimensions – 1) e-Participation as independent research area, 2) e-Participation as integral part of e-Democracy, and 3) e-Participation as integral part of e-Government. The three dimensions are depicted in Figure 2.

2. Results

Based on the analysis done up to date, Table 1 provides general findings related to each of the three dimensions depicted in Figure 2.
Steps

1. Defining data collection scope
2. Determining the criteria’s for selecting relevant papers
3. Classifying selected papers
4. Analyzing classified papers

Procedure and Outcome

Databases: ISI-Web of Science, EBSCO Host, and Scopus.

Research Keywords: Electronic participation and social media.
Result: Gathering 97 candidate papers, which covered the years 2009 to 2015.

Focus on e-Participation as a central subject, or given a considerable attention to e-Participation as a theme of discussion. Investigate the role of social media for e-Participation.
Result: 42 papers selected.

Developing the study assessment framework (Figure 2).
Classifying each of 42 papers according to the framework.

Producing a general insight on e-Participation through social media studies (Table 1).

Figure 1. Literature Review Methodology

E-Participation through Social Media Literature

E-Participation as independent research area
E-Participation as integral part of e-Democracy
E-Participation as integral part of e-Government

Figure 2. The Study Assessment Framework

Table 1. The Main Findings per E-Participation Dimension

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<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Main Findings and References Sample 2</th>
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| E-Participation as independent research area | • Politicians-citizens interaction and political activities (e.g. e-campaigns and e-voting) are the central interests of the majority of studies in this dimension [3]–[5].
| E-Participation as integral part of e-Democracy | • Little attention towards other e-Participation activities (e.g. e-consultation and online decision making) in government context [6].
| E-Participation as integral part of e-Government | • Politicians often employ e-Participation through social media initiatives as additional communication channel. In particular, to promote themselves and to gain citizens votes during election time rather than conducting real dialogues with citizens [7], [8].
|                                            | • A few studies address e-Participation as a central theme of discussion. Instead, e-Participation is treated as a “micro” subject along with other government/governance topics (e-service, openness and transparency), for example [9]–[11]. However, such public policy principles do not necessarily means truly participation [12], and e-Participation should not being examined for such impact [13].

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2 Due lack of space the complete list of papers reviewed is not included. Few references have been cited.
3. Conclusions

E-Participation through social media initiatives have achieved little success on attracting greater citizens' engagement. Three challenges of e-Participation through social media should be understood. First, the field of e-Participation research focuses more on political activities; it rarely examines the adoption of e-Participation through social media sponsored and driven by governments. Second, e-Participation initiatives through social media within e-Democracy context are largely communication initiatives rather than truly citizens’ participation. Third, e-Participation through social media initiatives in government context are widely employed as information and service provision initiatives rather than actual citizen participation government decision making process initiatives.

References


3 Related authors’ works including further discussions could be found in [14].