

Crowdsourcing in Local Public Administration: Importance of Online Platforms

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ABSTRACT

Social networks have become very popular online sources of participation in crowdsourcing. This article examines the antecedents of user participation in crowdsourcing and importance of online community involvement in local public administration. Based on data collected from local public administrators and local public through survey, the results produce evidence that importance of online platforms in crowdsourcing can have a consistent impact on services delivery system in local public administration and importance of online open sources have significantly higher level in crowdsourcing on the whole, while importance of social media have significantly lower level overall. The paper contributes with potential implications and recommendations for local public management to achieve effective services delivery in developing countries through crowdsourced work. The present study is the first study that not only shows the effect of online platforms in local public administration, but also analyses the antecedents of crowdsourcing for participation (knowledge sharing, consultation, innovative ideation and reporting).

KEYWORDS

Citizensourcing, Crowdsourcing, Online Communities, Social Networks

INTRODUCTION

Scholars and practitioners have long regaled the possibility that ‘engage the crowd’ may have potential to revitalize public administration in improving the quality of public services delivery in local public administration. The term ‘crowdsourcing’ first emerged in print in Howe’s June 2006 article in *Weired* magazine and in complex societal issues, local public administration can play important role through crowdsourcing to improve public policies and services (Benkler, 2006; Bertot, Jaeger & Hansen, 2012; Johnston & Hansen, 2012; UN, 2008; Howe, 2006; Peters, 2010). Today, scholars seem to agree that crowdsourcing is used to create innovative and modernized ideas into practices of business and management (Borins, 2008; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004; von Hippel, 2005; Brabham, 2008). Crowdsourcing is an online engagement of crowd as public participation tool through social networking sites, mobile apps, blogs, mapping soft wares and so on (Brabham, 2013a; Duval, 2010; World Public Sector Report, 2003; Benkler, 2006). New public management reforms in the last two decades have considered citizens as one of the key elements in transforming local public administration into public service providers with a strong emphasis on participation of citizens (Svara, 2001; Hood, 1991; Moore & Moore, 2005; Bowler & Donovan, 2000). Contemporary

scholarly research in crowdsourcing has been done for profit companies and business production models but crowdsourcing has been gradually gaining traction in government functions as tool for bold ideas and innovative practices.

Although crowdsourcing is often considered to be a general concept with open sources, open innovation, an individual ability to contribute but important distinction of crowdsourcing is that it entails a mix of open process in involving online communities to solve problems for public management (Chesbrough, 2006; Brabham, 2013b; Messina, 2012; Takemoto, 2010). It can be argued that collective creativity and innovation are very influential because they produce constructive feedback on services for improving the quality of outcomes (Libert, 2010; Creighton, 2005; Burby, 2003). This suggests that citizens directly contribute collective technical and managerial suggestions through social platforms. In addition, crowdsourcing may play an important role in interaction between public managers and the public communities in which citizens contribute more resources in the form of time, expertise and efforts (Horne & Shirley, 2009; Bertot et al. 2010a; Nam, 2011). Clearly scholars need to identify the impact of online communities' initiatives for modern, innovative ideas for best practices and appropriate applications (Donahue, 2004).

Crowdsourcing is not only applied in developed countries but it also have strong impact in developing countries in various contexts such as in natural disastrous management in Pakistan, in Mali and in Uganda in market price information sharing, and in tracking human rights in Kenya (World Bank, 2014). This study is based on assumption that crowdsourcing may have effective role in local public administration for public services delivery system in perceptions of local officials and citizens in context of innovative, modernized management practices. Authors examine this proposition by studying two samples of local officials and citizens in Pakistan. Thus objective of this study is to know the importance of online platforms for crowdsourcing in local public administration, which include antecedents of crowdsourcing (knowledge sharing, consultation, innovative ideation and reporting) for online community user participation.

The structure of the article is as follows. First review the literature on crowdsourcing creativities. Second, innovative communication platforms are explored. Third, theoretical framework perspectives are identified to know the importance of crowdsourcing (knowledge sharing, consultation, innovative ideation and reporting) on public services delivery system in local public administration. Fourth the data and methods for the study are described. Then statistical analysis and results are presented. Finally authors discuss the implications of our findings and some recommendations for developing countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several scholars have pointed out the potential influence of crowdsourcing in industrial and business sector through online communities activities, but only few have investigated crowdsourcing in public administration (Brito, 2008; Brabham, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c; Hilgers & Christoph, 2010; Giordano et al. 2011). Literature reviews on open sources, crowd innovative ideas and social media platforms in crowdsourcing show that there is a distinction among online communities (Alexandra & Schedler, 2012; Sørensen and Torfing, 2011; Brabham, 2008; Chesbrough, 2003; Dunleavy et al. 2005). Our review of the literature finds that most empirical studies investigate either participation of crowd in social networks from social influence perspective or online co-creation in public industrial firms (Lakhani & von Hippel, 2003; Nambisan & Baron, 2009; von Hippel, 2005; Brabham, 2008; Lakhani et al, 2007; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Auh et al. 2007; Sia, 2009). Past research on incorporation of ICTs into the public sector e-governance (S. Jones et al. 2007; Bertot et al. 2010b; Bannister & Connolly, 2012; Dada, 2006) and public sector collaborative innovation during the last

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