Chapter 17

The Use and Management of Public Information in Social Media:
A Case Study of Town and City Councils Throughout Andalusia on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube

Inmaculada Sánchez-Labella Martín

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7383-0537

University of Seville, Spain

ABSTRACT

The increase of political disaffection in Spain, as is occurring in many western democracies across the world, coincides with a growing vindication of democracy on the part of the citizenry, which translates to a demand for more governmental transparency and access to information. With this in mind, this chapter explores the availability of information in local public administrations on social media. The study analyses the presence of town and city councils throughout Andalusia on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, examining how these media are managed and their effects, by studying the content and resources provided to the citizens for interacting with the institutions. The results revealed that although the selected councils tried to adopt these new information channels, they are still far from taking full advantage of the possibilities the new technologies could provide.

INTRODUCTION

Local authorities constitute the most direct conduit between citizens and public administrations. They are the gateway for most of the requests that citizens make to their political representatives, who in turn have the duty to attend to, manage and process petitions, either within the same town hall or by appealing to other institutions (Bosón, Torres, Royos, & Flores, 2012). In this sense, Campillo Alhama (2011, p.

1036) points out that citizens must be informed and have access to all the information on administrative procedures and actions that may influence their situation. It is based on the idea that transparency is a basic democratic principle and that its role in the public sphere requires that administrations publish and make accessible general information that may be of interest to citizens (Gandía, Marrahí, & Huguet, 2016, p. 29).

This study is framed in a context in which Spain (as is occurring in many other EU countries) is experiencing a growing disaffection with the political class, which is augmented by the lack of a tradition in government transparency which coincides with a growing demand for democracy by the citizens (Villoria, 2014). Given this scenario, a new law regulating transparency, access to public information, and good governance was put on the books in Spain (Ley 19/2013, de 9 de diciembre, de Transparencia, Acceso a la Información Pública y Buen Gobierno). In its preamble, the document enthrones transparency, access to public information and good governance standards as "the fundamental axes of all political action". Despite this, compliance with the law by administrations has not been uniform and there is still the problem of the lack of facilities for users to access this information in an intelligible way (Beltrán Orenes & Martínez-Pastor, 2016). This law has already had its transposition in almost all the Spanish autonomous communities. In the case of Catalonia, as an empirical result of this implementation, the heads of the Journalism and Communication Laboratory for Plural Citizenship of the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (Moreno Sardà, Molina Rodríguez Navas, Corcoy Rius, Aguilar Pérez, & Borrás Farran, 2013) prepared the Infoparticipate Map. The map is an online platform that was developed from 2012 with the purpose of collaborating to remedy the lack of Spanish legislation on transparency. The main objective of this project, which was extended in the first phase to the autonomous communities of Catalonia, the Canary Islands, Madrid, Andalusia, Aragon and Galicia, was to evaluate the information to ensure that public administrations improve their communication practices and offer complete and understandable transparent information, so that citizens can exercise their legitimate rights to democratic control and evaluation of institutions.

Given this scenario, and based on Law 19/2013, cited above, this chapter emerges as a complementary line of research to the one developed by the Catalan Research Group in its R&D&I project entitled: "Methodologies and information models for monitoring the actions of those responsible for local governments and accountability." The work starts from considering that in today's society, in which technological development is the protagonist, easy access and the correct disposition of online information by local authorities creates a growing need for all citizens. Beyond its presence through web portals, it is considered convenient to pay attention to the use and management of information on social networks as an instrument that allows citizen participation. Thus, the objective is to analyse how the main municipalities of each Andalusian province share public information through these new channels which are presented as a communication and interaction tool between administrations and citizens.

FIRST NOTES

To begin to enter the digital landscape at the hands of public administrations, social networks must be understood as social technologies derived from the web 2.0 that allow the generation of virtual communities from the connection, generation, interaction and exchange of information of an unlimited group of people who share interests (Criado & Rojas Martín, 2013; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Its consolidation as another means of communication in our society causes new social challenges

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-use-and-management-of-public-information-in-social-media/312685

Related Content

Responding to Contemporary Needs of Learning Communities Through Utilizing Emerging Social Networking Tools
Elif Bura Kuzu Demirand Yavuz Akbulut (2023). *Research Anthology on Applying Social Networking Strategies to Classrooms and Libraries (pp. 605-627).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/responding-to-contemporary-needs-of-learning-communities-through-utilizing-emerging-social-networking-tools/312944

Still in Fashion?: A Study on Facebook Usage
Alberto Marcuzzoand Thanos Papadimitriou (2013). *International Journal of Virtual Communities and Social Networking (pp. 42-61).*
www.irma-international.org/article/still-in-fashion/85356

Best Practices in Social Media for Knowledge Management: With Special Reference to Communities
M. K. Prasanna Iyer (2016). *Product Innovation through Knowledge Management and Social Media Strategies (pp. 1-30).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/best-practices-in-social-media-for-knowledge-management/141454

"Army Uniform Is Part Of My Skin": A Critical Discourse Analysis of ICT Growth and Politics in Pakistan
M. Naveed Baqir (2011). *International Journal of E-Politics (pp. 27-34).*
www.irma-international.org/article/army-uniform-part-skin/55817

Website Attractiveness in E-Commerce Sites: Key Factors Influencing the Consumer Purchase Decision
Siddharth Khannaand Ashok Kumar Wahi (2014). *International Journal of Virtual Communities and Social Networking (pp. 49-59).*
www.irma-international.org/article/website-attractiveness-in-e-commerce-sites/121670