Research Article
Government's Presence on Social Media A Study with Special Reference to Jordan

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Abstract: Government agencies are increasingly integrating social media into their websites to enhance the potential of participation, interaction and collaboration among the governmental agencies and their stakeholders. This study examines the content analysis of the Jordanian governmental websites to find out how many of these are making use of the proliferation of the social media to have a presence there. The results, however, show a shy attempt by some websites, leaving the others totally out of the picture, making even that attempt unable to reach a satisfactory level of making use of the online tools known as social media for reaping more fruitful benefits.

Keywords: Governmental websites, Jordan, online networks, social media

INTRODUCTION

For the purpose of this study, social media is defined as online tools and utilities that allow communication of information online, participation and collaboration (Betot *et al*., 2012). It can also be defined as, websites that interact with users while giving them information (Ibid, 2012). Moreover, for the purpose of this research two categories of social media are to be considered: online networks and eco-systems e.g., Facebook, Twitter and online publications e.g., You Tube, RSS, Flicker and Twitter.

Online networks and ecosystems build and reflect the networks and relationships between peers, while Online publication tools provide services or platforms for sharing and publishing content online (Banday and Mattoo, 2013).

Though, the tools could differ in their approaches and purposes, they all have in common their aspiration to enable users to communicate, interact and share content in a social environment (Porter, 2008).

The objective of this study is to contribute to the existing literature body of social networking in two ways: First, it presents a comprehensive review of what is meant by social media networking and the presence of governments in such sites. Second, it seeks to examine and assess the current use of the social media networks in the Jordanian governmental websites to gain a deeper insight of the current state and the future direction of social media use in government.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many government agencies have integrated social media into their websites to increase interaction at different levels with their various stakeholders since social media platforms provide indispensable means for civic and political action (Kwak *et al*., 2013).

The integration of social media can offer key potential promises to both governments and end-users as summarized below (Jaeger, 2010):

Democratic empowerment and engagement: Social media can play a crucial role in making the public have a say in the political process. It has, in fact, proven that it can bring the involvement of the public in decision making and policy development. This has been witnessed in what has been termed as the "Arab Spring" in which social media was used as tools for organizing and generating awareness of political mobilization (Storck, 2011).

Co-production: A collaboration of government and stakeholders efforts to develop, design and deliver government services which brings improvement to the service quality, deliver and responsiveness. Since instant feedback and new views of government's workflow can be easily obtained.

Crowd sourcing: The government solicits contributions and innovations which are generated from the public's knowledge and talents.

Transparency and accountability: This is meant to bring transparency and accountability to the way the government conducts its operations. Thus, building and fostering the trust with its stakeholders.

Despite the fact that embedding social media into governmental websites can bring immense benefits in a world that is rapidly changing; making governments more willing to meet its citizens' needs and tailor its operation accordingly to their expectations and needs,

yet the risks associated with integrating social media in the process are not to be overlooked. Some of these risks are explained below.

Violation of privacy and intellectual property: Since social media provides platforms for users share collaborate and interact easily, this can infringe the rights of others intentionally or unintentionally through misuse of information (Banday and Mattoo, 2013).

Legal liability: Social media has a global character; therefore, it is hard to establish one legal framework that can govern all activities on the platforms it provides. Moreover, no or little knowledge about regulation or laws govern social media can easily trap some in cyber crimes without being aware of it (Magro, 2012).

Technological risks: These refer to attacks through techniques like spear phishing, social engineering and web applications to social media could easily risk individuals, agency, employees and information. Using social media with little or moderate computing skills, individuals or employees face multiple risks from highly skilled cyber attackers to get involved in unlawful activities and compromise on information security and privacy (Banday and Mattoo, 2013).

Misuses and abuses of the platforms: Corporate-sponsored spread of malicious rumors and falsehoods can easily occur. In addition, reporting and dissemination of inflammatory, one-sided and xenophobic news by anonymous online activists, a case that occurred in Japan (Kwak *et al.*, 2013).

The main thrust of e-government initiative has been the development and implementation of improvement strategies throughput government with emphasis on serving Jordan main national asset: its people by the provision of efficient and effective services (Hjouj Btoush, 2009).

The vision was that e-Government would be a contributor to Jordan's economic and social development by providing accesses to government information and services to everyone in the Kingdom irrespective of location, economic status, IT ability and education (MoICT, 2006). E-government represents a major shift in the role of government towards the 'client-focused' or 'citizen-centric' delivery of services, rather than government as a collector of information solely for its own purposes. The national strategy of the Jordanian e-government initiative aims at the following (MoICT, 2006):

- Improve government performance and efficiency
- Ensure public sector transparency and accountability
- Enhance Jordan's competitiveness
- Reduce costs and increase ease of interaction with government
- Develop skills within the public sector

- Boost e-commerce activities
- Improve information security

The official site of the Jordanian E-Government: http://www.jordan.gov.jo has presence on Facebook and it is regularly updated. It also has presence on Twitter and YouTube but the last update on those can be traced to a year back at the time of conducting this research.

The vision which forms the core of the e-government initiative holds in its essence the promises that are also discussed under the social media advantages' umbrella; which make it more enticing to have a presence of governmental websites on social media; while adhering to regulatory frameworks that will eliminate or at least reduce associated risks that have been aforementioned.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is based on content analysis of the Jordanian websites of the Jordanian ministries and their affiliate organizations. Conducted between November and the beginning of January 2014. A few studies have been conducted to indicate the presence of the Jordanian government on social media platforms. A study of the performance of Jordan e-government Facebook fan page, a page which was set by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies (MoICT, 2006). The study is mainly concerned with the citizens' interaction and engagement with that page (Khasawneh and Abu-Shanab, 2013).

The presence of social media tools, sites and platforms on governmental websites is a crucial indicator to what extent the government wants to interact with its citizen in a broader sense. It is also a way to gauge governments concern about developing its e-governments initiatives since social media proved to be more attractive when it comes to citizens' engagement with online information or services as it is pointed out that increased use of social media is the solution to low participation, eventually leading to a generation of broader, deeper and more advanced e-participation (Magro, 2012).

Table 1 shows the presence, if any, of the social media tools, platforms and sites on the Jordanian governmental websites.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows some limited presence of the Jordanian government on the social media sites.

There are 28 links to the Jordanian Ministries on the Prime Minster official website: http:// www.pm.gov.jo of which only 23 have active links. The main ministries were listed in the tables; however, there are many affiliated organizations within each ministry, only those that have some presence on the social media were listed in the tables as well.

Table 1: Presence of Jordan government on social media

Jordanian governmental websites	Face book	Twitter	You tube	Flicker	RSS	Linked In
• Prime ministry						
o Greater Amman municipality http://www.ammancity.gov.jo	√	√	√	X	√	X
o Petra tourism and development region authority http://pdtra.gov.jo	√	√	√	X	X	X
o Electricity regulatory commission http://erc.gov.jo	√	√	√	X	X	X
o National fund for supporting youth and support movement http://www.ysf.gov.jo	√	√ inactive	√ inactive	X	X	X
o Jordan anti corruption http://www.jacc.gov.jo	√ inactive	√	√	X	√	X
o Jordan TV and radio http://jrtv.gov.jo	√	√	X	X	X	X
o Jordan news agency (Petra) http://www.petra.gov.jo	√	√ inactive	X	X	X	X
o Higher education accreditation commission http://www.heac.org.jo	√ inactive	X	X	X	X	X
• The parliament The house of representatives http://www.representatives.jo	X	√	X	X	X	X
The Jordanian senate http://www.senate.jo	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of higher education and scientific research http://www.mohe.gov.jo	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of finance http://www.mof.gov.jo	√ inactive	√ inactive	X	X	X	√ inactive
• Foreign ministry http://www.mfa.gov.jo	√	√	√	X	X	X
• Ministry of industry and trade http://www.mit.gov.jo	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of interior http://www.moi.gov.jo	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of justice http://www.moj.gov.jo	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of municipal affairs http://www.mma.gov.jo	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of planning and international cooperation http://www.mop.gov.jo	√	√	√	X	X	√
o The higher population council http://www.hpc.org.jo						
• Ministry of public works and housing http://www.mpwh.gov.jo	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of health http://www.moh.gov.jo	X	X	X	X	X	
• Ministry of water and irrigation http://www.mwi.gov.jo	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of awqaf, islamic affairs and holy places http://www.awqaf.gov.jo	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of information and communication technology http://www.moict.gov.jo	√ inactive	√ inactive	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of energy and mineral resources http://www.memr.gov.jo	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of education http://www.moe.gov.jo	√ inactive	X	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of environment http://www.moenv.gov.jo	√	√	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of culture http://www.culture.gov.jo	√	√ inactive	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of agriculture http://www.moa.gov.jo	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of transpiration http://www.mot.gov.jo	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of tourism and antiquates http://www.tourism.jo	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Ministry of social development http://www.mosd.gov.jo	X	X	X	X	X	X

Nevertheless, some ministries or affiliated organizations were having inactive icons of some social media sites. These were also listed but with an indication that the link that lead to the social media site is inactive. This could be due to the fact that work is in progress to activate these links. However, this is just an assumption, as trying to get verification from the organizations themselves of why is the case as such, led to nowhere.

The fact that some websites were having presence on more than one social media site is interesting, as it reflects the belief of the people in charge of these organizations to connect with those they serve. It was also interesting to notice that in two cases, the main ministry has no presence of whatsoever on the social media, while their affiliated organizations have an active presence. These specifically could be seen first, the Prime Minster's affiliated organizations where only 8 out of 37 organizations have shown some presence on social media sites. The other case is that of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, as listed in the table the Ministry itself has no presence while the Higher Population Council, an affiliated organization, is having an active and up to date presence. This could be explained only by the willingness of the personnel in charge of each ministry or organization to have some presence on the social media sites.

Moreover, one ministry; the Ministry of Justice was providing a link to share the website itself on social media leaving it to the people who visit the website page to share it on social media sites.

As have been asserted before, there are some attempts to have some kind of presence on social media, yet these attempts are in need to be materialized and organized to have a more clear, active and up to date presence.

CONCLUSION

The proliferation of social media brought great attention to the fact that stakeholders can harness the potential of interacting with their governments more directly, monitor their functioning and take more active role in the policy-making processes. Social media sites not only offer benefits to stakeholders but also they offer governments better functionality when it comes to providing services by intensifying and monitoring services and reducing costs while improving the services' quality. Using these sites, governments can post job advertisements, promote services, announce and market events, seek public feedbacks and cooperation and collaborate across its geographically diverse agencies.

However, the integration of social media into the governmental websites should be done with both tacit and clear understanding of the associated risks. Regulatory and legal frameworks are in need to be in place to provide governments with adequate guidelines for security and privacy of data.

The Jordanian government presence is still not making full utilization of the potentials the social media can offer, especially when it comes to more interaction with its stakeholders through means that proved to be effective, less costly and much available for a large group of stakeholders.

This research has examined the presence of Jordanian government on the social media using content analysis. More research can be done to gauge how much that presence is yielding better engagement of stakeholders with their governments, whether the presence of governments on social media sites correlates positively with more traffic to the government websites. More research is also needed to address the different types of risks and how to reduce or eliminate them through policy and legal frameworks in favor of more adoption and adaption by governments of the social media sites.

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