

Social Media and Policy Making How Can Social Media Intervene in Policymaking?

Somayeh Labafi

Iranian Research Institute for Information Science and Technology
(IranDoc), Iran Email: labafi@irandoc.ac.ir

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Introduction

The emergence of participatory social media has created a new ecosystem for the participation of users in social events (Fuchs, 2021). Content exchange by the user generates values such as a social discourse and awareness of a special subject triggering political, social, and other types of changes (Edom, Hwang & Kim, 2018). With tens of millions of active users, social media have turned into dynamic resources of people's interests, needs, and beliefs, giving rise to a rich content reserve. This provides policymakers with a great opportunity to learn about citizens and communicate with them effectively (Simonofski & Burnay, 2021). Social media serve as a link between users and policymakers, serving as a novel source to involve users in formulating and enacting policies (Driss, Mellouli & Trabelsi, 2019). Policymakers need to know the users' opinions because users post their opinions on social media with minimal supervision (Dekker, van Den Brink & Meijer, 2019). Users express their positive and negative opinions on various issues on social platforms, providing policymakers with a unique opportunity to improve communication with citizens and learn about their needs and opinions (De Paula, Dincelli & Harrison, 2018).

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There is a relationship between the collection and analysis of social media data and the quality of public life. The use of public resources, once based on traditional resources in society, is generalized to include the concept of social media. This comes as the conceptualization of the user data and its acceptance by policymakers is viewed as a public resource for engaging users in policymaking to secure public interests (Napoli, 2019). Social media monitoring, or generally, social supervision is highly needed if governments wish to learn how to make the best out of user participation in social media (Panagiotopoulos, Bowen & Brooker, 2017).

Although data analysis is still in its infancy, the evidence-based policy approach to social media data has dramatically developed. Thus far, policymakers have failed to systematically use social media data in the policymaking process. This is inconsistent with evidence-based policymaking. The lack of the views and opinions of social media users, who are sensitive to different issues, would challenge the formulation, enactment, and assessment of policies in the future, given the fact that these views and opinions can facilitate the policymaking process by demonstrating some background knowledge of problems in different areas. However, more studies should be conducted about the application of social media data in governmental decision-making to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the scope, effects, and challenges of the application of these data in the public sector (Ku & Leroy, 2014; Liu & Kim, 2018). Therefore, the feasibility of using social media users' data in the public policymaking processes is thrown into question. Since no clear solution has been put forward to tackle this problem so far (Driss, Mellouli & Trabelsi, 2019). This special issue seeks to identify the challenges regarding the application of social media data in policymaking and decision-making in various fields. Researchers from different universities were invited to contribute to knowledge creation in this field. This special issue aims to expand the theoretical and practical boundaries of research related to the application of social media data in the public sector to improve decisions made by governments. This issue includes 7 papers as follows:

The opening paper is by Allen Albarran on "Social Media Companies, Legislation, and the Public Interest. The title of the second paper is "To Be or Not to Be on Social Media: Analysis Using Tragedy of Commons" authored by

Ranade, Joshi, Patvardhan and Bedekar. The third paper has been written by Thomas and Balaji and is titled “Space Constrained Fast Association Rule Mining with Optimal Support and Confidence Threshold Using Grammatical Evolution: An Effective Nudge in Policymaking”. Datis Khajeheian, Horst and Plotnikov have written the fourth paper which titled “Media Platforms as Blockholes of Information: App Economy and Burial of User-Generated Content”. Yadegaridehkordi, Momtazi and Nizam Bin Md Nasir have written the fifth paper titled “Impact of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) on Travelers’ Green Hotel Booking Intentions and Policymaking. The sixth paper is titled " Use of Social Media Functionality for Improving Information Sharing, Problem-Solving, and Co-Production in a B2B Context " has been written by Rajabi, Mirmehdi, Foroudi and Azimi. And finally, Williams and Kavousi have authored the seventh paper under the title of “Policy Dialogue, Collaboration and ICTS A Mobilization Decision Theory Perspective”. I as a guest editor, would like to thank everyone who contributed to the publication of this special issue. I wish you find the papers of this special issue useful and insightful. I hope that future relevant works promise greater participation of the public sector in the policymaking process.

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