Chapter 76

Adoption of Social Media Services:
The Case of Local Government Organizations in Australia

Mohd Hisham Mohd Sharif
University of Adelaide, Australia

Indrit Troshani
University of Adelaide, Australia

Robyn Davidson
University of Adelaide, Australia

ABSTRACT

The increasing diffusion of social media is attracting government organizations worldwide, including local government. Social media can help local government improve the manner in which it is engaged with community and its responsiveness whilst offering cost savings and flexibility. Yet, there is paucity of research in relation to the adoption of social media Web services in local government organizations. The aim of this chapter is to investigate the factors that drive the adoption of social media Web services within Australian local government. Using qualitative evidence, the authors find technological, organizational, and environmental factors that drive the decisions of local government organizations to adopt social media Web services. In addition to extending the existing body of knowledge, this chapter offers insight concerning important managerial implications for helping local governments to better understand social media adoption in their organizations.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing diffusion of social media is attracting government organizations worldwide including local government (Anttiroiko, 2010). Social media can help local government to become more responsive to its citizens, engage with the community and promote both accountability and transparency (Accenture, 2009; Australian Government, 2009; Eggers, 2007). Social media can also offer cost savings and flexibility (Lim & Palacios-Marques, 2011) to both local government

and citizens using it whilst providing opportunities for improving service delivery and obtaining community feedback effectively and efficiently (Chang & Kannan, 2008; Markova, 2009; Osimo, 2008). In fact, evidence is emerging on how local government in the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, Germany and New Zealand are using social media for improving their services to the public (Anttiroiko, 2010; Purser, 2012; State Services Commission, 2008; Towns, 2010).

There is general agreement in extant literature that social media can be defined as any interactive Web-based application based on Web 2.0 technology that offers Web services enabling interactions between or amongst Web users and enhances their ability to create and share information on the Web (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; O'Reilly, 2007). Although social media and Web 2.0 are distinct concepts they are used interchangeably in the literature. Web 2.0 represents a newer platform foundation of the Web which consists of a set of technologies (e.g. Adobe Flash and RSS) to enable richer content to be published on the Web (O'Reilly, 2007). By contrast, social media refers to Web services that enable user generated content (UGC), that is, various forms of media content created by Internet users and available on the Web based Web 2.0 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Examples of social media applications include blogs and micro blogs (e.g. Twitter), wikis (e.g. Wikipedia), social networking (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn), multimedia sharing services (e.g. YouTube), content syndication (e.g. RSS feeds), podcasting (e.g. iTunes) and content tagging services (Anderson, 2007; Hansen, Shneiderman, & Smith, 2010).

Despite the growing number of local governments taking part in implementing social media and federal government investment in terms of financial and organizational resources to improve social media initiatives (Steward, 2012), the uptake by government organizations in Australia, including local government has been sluggish and not as good as the development in the corporate world (Samuel, 2009). In a survey conducted with 235 local governments across Australia (Purser, 2012), only 25 percent of the local government organizations were identified to use social media and only six percent of local government organizations were identified to use social media extensively. Another recent survey of 560 council websites found that many local government websites are still based on one-way interaction designs and only eighty-two councils had social media applications promoted on their websites (Howard, 2012).

Like other IT projects, investment into Web services such as social media by governments often requires organizational change to culture, people, structure and processes if effective results are to be accomplished (Dadashzadeh, 2010; de Kool & van Wamelen, 2008). According to Osimo (2008), government organizations need to have a clear social media strategy to ensure the success of social media initiatives. Thus, in order to utilize the full potential of social media, a systematic approach is needed to identify the key determinants that influence successful adoption. Although various studies (Chang & Kannan, 2008; Meijer & Thaens, 2010; Wigand, 2010) and reports (Howard, 2012; Osimo, 2008; Purser, 2012) exist concerning the use of social media to enhance service delivery and the many benefits they offer, there is agreement amongst scholars that their adoption across local government remains under-researched (Millard, 2010; Nam, 2011; Wigand, 2010). Specifically, only limited studies have been found that can improve the understanding of the factors that drive social media adoption. Notably, James & Clarke (2010) explored the factors for designing social media applications for Australian local government whilst Purser (2012) focused on exploring the benefits, risks and barriers of using social media in Australian local government and identified areas where social media could be used effectively. Samuel (2009) outlines a number of deterrents which may make government organizations in Australia unwilling to embrace social media. In Japan, Schellong (2008) explored the effect of social networking services in improving

Related Content

Resource Allocation using Dynamic Fractional Frequency Reuse: A Technique to Reduce Inter Cell Interference at the Cells Edges

Anitha S. Sastryand Akhila S (2017). *International Journal of Wireless Networks and Broadband Technologies (pp. 34-44).*

www.irma-international.org/article/resource-allocation-using-dynamic-fractional-frequency-reuse/198515

A Novel QoS Aware Shortest Path Algorithm for VSDN

Amandeep Kaur Sandhuand Jyoteesh Malhotra (2017). *International Journal of Wireless Networks and Broadband Technologies (pp. 1-14).*

www.irma-international.org/article/a-novel-qos-aware-shortest-path-algorithm-for-vsdn/198513

CORM: A Concern-Oriented Approach and Model to Computer Network Design

Hoda Mamdouh Hassan (2012). *Developments in Wireless Network Prototyping, Design, and Deployment: Future Generations (pp. 174-201).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/corm-concern-oriented-approach-model/67010

Key Microwave and Millimeter Wave Technologies for 5G Radio

Vojislav Milosevic, Branka Jokanovic, Olga Boric-Lubeckeand Victor M. Lubecke (2021). *Research Anthology on Developing and Optimizing 5G Networks and the Impact on Society (pp. 770-798).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/key-microwave-and-millimeter-wave-technologies-for-5g-radio/270216

A Mobile Matchmaker for the Ubiquitous Semantic Web

Floriano Scioscia, Michele Ruta, Giuseppe Loseto, Filippo Gramegna, Saverio Ieva, Agnese Pintoand Eugenio Di Sciascio (2016). *Mobile Computing and Wireless Networks: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 994-1017).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-mobile-matchmaker-for-the-ubiquitous-semantic-web/138316