

A Conceptual Model of the Factors Affecting Saudi Citizens' Use of Social Media to Communicate with the Government

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Abstract : In the past decade, developers of Web 2.0 technologies have shown increasing interest in the topic of e-government. There has been a rapid growth in social media technology because of its significant role in backing up some essential social needs. Its importance and power is derived from its capacity to support two-way communication. Governments are curious to get engaged in these websites, hoping to benefit from the new forms of communication and interaction offered by such technology. Greater participation by the public can be viewed as a chief indicator of effective government communication. Yet, the level of public participation in government 2.0 is not quite satisfactory. In general, it is still at the early stage in most developing countries, including Saudi Arabia. Although it is a fact that Saudi people are among the most active in using social media, the number of people who use social media to communicate with the public institutions is not high. Furthermore, most of the governmental organisations are not using social media tools to communicate with the public. They use these platforms to disseminate information. Our study focuses on the factors affecting citizens' adoption of social media in Saudi Arabia. Our research question is: what are the factors affecting Saudi citizens' use of social media to communicate with the government? To answer this research question, the research aims to validate the UTAUT model for examining social media tools from the citizen perspective. An amendment will be proposed to fit the adoption of social media platforms as a communication channel in government by using a developed conceptual model which integrates constructs from the UTAUT model and others external variables based on the literature review. The set of potential factors that affect these citizens' decisions to adopt social media to communicate with their government has been identified as perceived encouragement, trust and cultural influence. The connection between the above-mentioned constructs from the basis for the research hypothesis will be examined in the light of a quantitative methodology. Data collection will be performed through a survey targeting a number of Saudi citizens who are social media users. The data collected from the primary survey will later be analysed by using statistical methods. The outcomes of this research project are argued to have potential contributions to the fields of social media and e-Government adoption, both on the theoretical and practical levels. It is believed that this research project is the first of its type that attempts to identify the factors that affect citizens' adoption of social media to communicate with the government. The importance of identifying these factors stems from the potential use of them to enhance the government's implementation of social media and help in making more accurate decisions and strategies based on comprehending the most important factors that affect citizens' decisions.

Keywords : social media, adoption, citizen, UTAUT model

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