The impact of social media on local government transparency and citizen engagement: The case of Tirana Municipality

Kristi Bego, MSc.[1]
kristibego1993@gmail.com

Prof. Asoc. Dr.Arlinda Ymeraj[2]
arlinda.ymeraj@uet.edu.al
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT & MARKETING
EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY OF TIRANA, ALBANIA

---

[1] Kristi Bego has graduated at bachelor studies in Banking & Finance, at Department of Economics & Finance, Faculty of Economics, Business and Development, at European University of Tirana, UET. She is a graduate student in Marketing (2016-2018) and returned to the European University of Tirana to pursue a second Master of Science in Management, at Department of Management and Marketing, Faculty of Economics, Business and Development. During academic years she has been a member of different student's clubs and has attended trainings, national and international certificates for "Leadership", "Business Management" (at Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth), "Federation Of Civil Defense Work Unions", Brussles, "E-Learner" E-Viva, and has already received: "Internal auditor" position at Ministry of Finance and Economy. Ms. Bego works for more than five years at Directorate of Local Taxes and Tariffs, Tirana Municipality, in the position of Internal Auditor at the Audit Directorate.

[2] Prof.Asoc.Dr. Arlida Ymeraj has been Head of Department of Management & Marketing at Faculty of Economics, Business & Development, at European University of Tirana, UET (September 2021). She has a vast and diverse experience, spanning over 40 years in various fields, including decision-making at the highest level. Particularly, she has 18 years of experience in lecturing at (post) university level and 20 years of experience in research. During 2011-2019 period she has mentored 10 degrees in BA programs, 55 degrees in MSc + MP programs and 5 doctoral degrees at UET. Prof. Ymeraj has participated with lectures and presentations in 7 international congresses of Public Policy, Social and Good Governance and in 9 scientific conferences, with international attendance in Tirana. She is the author of 1 monograph, 2 academic textbooks, 25 scientific articles (5 with impact factor), 18 policy papers, published in scientific journals at home and abroad.

Abstract

Over the last few decades, a decline on the trust of the citizens towards their government has been documented, leading to a fundamental concern in public administration (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2014). The perception of transparency has been identified as an important source of trust in government (Curtin & Meijer, 2006). Various authors have highlighted the potential contribution of social media in transforming the public administration towards a new and open format characterized by a) growth of the opportunity of citizens to participate in decision-making; b) improvement of public services; as well as c) promoting new forms of responsibilities. Taking advantage of the opportunities offered by social media, is not limited to the central government. Literature suggests that local governments can achieve many advantages by using social media in the communications with their citizens, and in participatory engagement strategies (Cohen, 2016; Belle, 2013; Tucker, 2011). Although local governments currently use social media to communicate, studies on how they use their platform are missing. In this context, this thesis aims to analyse the communication strategies of local governments through social media usage, and the effectiveness of these strategy in relation to transparency and citizen engagement. More specifically, this thesis examines the impact of Facebook on local government transparency and citizen engagement, focusing on the Tirana Municipality. The field of study addresses two types of different data; one consisting of an analysis of all the Facebook content posts made by Tirana Municipality for a period between June 2020–May 2021, and the other one consists of a qualitative analysis, from semi-structured interviews of the responses of Directorate of Digital Communication employees in Tirana Municipality. Finally, the conclusions of this thesis contribute towards the debate on local government transparency and citizen engagement, and provide important direction in developing suitable strategies and policies of social media activities.

1. Intro

1.1 Purpose of the Study

Nowadays, Information and Communication Technologies are widely used by people, not only for professional purposes, but also in their social life, and consequently they seek to interact with their governments by similar means. As a result, citizens' expectations for open and interactive public sector institutions are increasing. On the other hand, governmental institutions, are faced with austerity measures and intensive budget control, forcing them to seek new forms of innovation for their services (Lagos & Kutsikos, 2011). In this context, this thesis

aims to analyze the communication strategies used by local governments through social media and the effectiveness of these strategies on increasing transparency and citizen engagement.

1.2 Study Limitations

Social media is constantly evolving, and this study is a picture of local government practices at a specific point in time, so the results of this study will not be valid for long. Another possible limitation is related to the exploration through analytical methods of the impact of social media on increasing transparency and citizen engagement, by *taking as a sample of analysis only the case of the Tirana Municipality*, and the findings cannot be generalized to other local government institutions. Future studies may also expand the number of Municipalities studied in Albania or other geographical areas different from the region and Europe. These findings are only a first step towards an understanding of the use of social media by local governments.

1.3 Potential and Challenges of Social Media on Local Government

The term 'Social media' is referred to "a set of Internet-based applications that are built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and sharing of User Generated Content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2014). Nowadays, there are hundreds of different social media platforms, which vary greatly in their goals (Lee & Kwak, 2016): some forms of social media enable people to express themselves by sharing text, photos, videos and music (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram), while others enable people to work towards common goals (e.g., Wiki and Google Docs). Many researchers have highlighted the opportunities offered by Web 2.0 applications to government, such as improved transparency and accountability, through the dissemination of information to citizens (Bertot et al., 2014; Chun, Shulman, Sandoval-Almazan, & Hovy, 2014); improving policy-making, increasing opportunities to participate and collaborate in decision-making (Chun et al., 2014; Bonsón et al., 2016); or improving public services.

2. Transparency of Local Government

The importance of transparency is acknowledged by practitioners in many policy areas. Transparency is an essential component for political control and the monitoring of the public sector (Harrison et al. 2017). Transparency of the public sector derives from policies, institutions and practices that provide information

in methods that improve the understanding of public policies, increase political effectiveness and reduce the uncertainty of these policies (Guillamón, Bastida, & Benito, 2014). Transparency seeks to reveal all the necessary information in a timely and systematic manner. Thus, transparency assists societies on increasing the positive contributions of their government, on solving the problems of government activity. Policy information is a contribution to public sector policy control, for the daily responses, and for the monitoring and evaluation of public services (OECD, 2015). New technologies promote the link between government and citizens, companies, employees, and others, and also encourage transparency, decentralization, and internal and external accountability (La Porte, Demchak, & De Jong, 2002; Currie & Guah, 2006).

This study is conducted in a narrative and reporting method. It serves as a narrative for the key theoretical concepts treated in the theoretical part, for which the participants on the study are directly asked, because it shows the relationship two or more variables have with each other. The study aims to analyse the communication strategy used by local governments on Facebook as well as their effectiveness on citizens' engagement and transparency increase. In fulfillment of this purpose, semi-structured interviews were conducted with high-level representatives of social media management within the Tirana Municipality, as well as an analysis of the content of Facebook posts.

Towards achieving this goal, the study will address the researching questions as follows:

Research Question 1. What are the main communication strategies used by local government on Facebook? Do local governments use Facebook to increase their transparency and encourage civic participation or simply to promote the municipality?

Research Question 2. How successful are the various Facebook communication strategies used by local governments in relation to citizens' engagement on Facebook? What are the most successful strategies in promoting engagement on Facebook?

The proposed hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 1. Local governments mainly use one-way strategies of elaboration, such as, image creation and management, promotion of activities, providing news and information related to citizens, transparency and to a lesser extent networking / co-drafting strategies, also.

Hypothesis 2. Communication strategies that promote transparency, inform the public about community news, and include multimedia, result in higher levels of online citizen engagement.

This study tends to present a qualitative and analytical framework on the topic, and consequently secondary and primary data are used to secure the necessary information. Primary data are collected specifically for the researching project, while the method used for their collection, is content analysis and semi-structured interviews. The realization of this paper goes through these steps:

i. Finding, studying, and analysing the achievements made so far through the existing literature, and the attempt of creating a theoretical basis for further research.
ii. Finding data that are directly related to the study, by using the analysis of Facebook content posts and that of semi-structured interviews.

2.1 Sample selection

The field of study includes two types of different groups of data, one consisting of the content analysis of Facebook posts made by the Tirana Municipality for the period between June 2020-May 2021, and the other one consists of a qualitative analysis of the responses of employees of the Directorate of Digital Communication gathered from semi-structured interviews.

Tirana Municipality was selected for this study as it is the largest municipality in Albania (INSTAT, 2021), and the latter are more innovators in using new technology (based on the number of posts made on Facebook social media, compared to others municipalities, such as the Municipality of Durrës with 57 posts, the Municipality of Elbasan with 29 posts and the Municipality of Korça with 42 posts), who have a greater need of information publishing, regarding the high numbers of citizens compared to other cities (INSTAT, 2021) and relatively lower costs in using these new tools.

For the elaboration of semi-structured interviews, three employees were selected from the Directorate of Digital Communication, the department which administers the social media presence of Tirana Municipality. All participants involved in these semi-structured interviews accomplish the following criteria: (a) at least three month of work experience on local government social media usage, and(b) currently having high responsibility within Tirana Municipality, for social media usage. These interviews were conducted with the "face to face" method, as the number of interviews was low and this method contributed in gathering more complete data, since further questions were directed to the participants to secure more fulfilling information.

Monitoring of Facebook posts: This study uses content analysis to study and categorize Facebook posts made by Tirana Municipality for the period June 2020-

May 2021. The purpose of this content analysis is to describe a phenomenon (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). 695 Facebook posts were analysed to generate valuable data to perform the full analysis of these posts. Firstly, the posts were classified based on five categories representing the overall communication strategies used by the local government (transparency, activity promotion, information provision, impression management, and co-modelling) and 22 (twenty-two) sub- categories.

In particular, transparency refers to the dissemination of information regarding key activities and decisions taken by local authorities. This strategy includes posts related to the services provided by the municipality, cooperation with other institutions / agencies, activities and decisions of the mayor, the program and important decisions of council meetings, procurements, announcements, objectives and projects of the municipality.

Promotion of activities is about posts that promote organized activities, or activities that take place in the municipality, where citizens are informed about the activities programs and are invited to participate.

Dissemination of information refers to the exchange of information about less critical municipal issues such as weather information, citizens' actions, congratulations from the mayor and council, as well as general announcements and press releases.

Co-direction is a set of strategies aimed at increasing citizen participation outside the social media environment through calls to participate in council meetings and volunteer requests.

Image creation and management strategies create a positive image for the municipality by including multimedia features in the posts, such as photos and videos about the municipality, as well as the mayor and council members.

The post coding scheme is presented in Table 1.1. Data on the number of likes, comments and distributions were also collected for each post.

TABLE NO.1.1: Post coding scheme

Category	Sub- Category	Comments
Transaperncy	Services	Care for the past, adult care, libraries, education, health care, animal protection, scholarships, free services, public transport, theater and cinema, requirements and application documents
	Activities with other institutions	Police, schools, organizations, regional authorities
	Mayor's activities	Visits to schools and care centers for the elderly, interviews, messages, speeches
	Mayor's decisions	Decisions of the Chairman
	Meetings' program and Council's decisions	Schedule of future meetings and council sales
	Procurements	Procurement related to vehicles, cleaning products, fuels, area supplies and various consumables
	Announcements dheTenders	Employment announcements, tenders
	Objectives dhe Projects of the Municipality	Projects, airplane, completed projects

Category	Sub- Category	Comments
Activities' promotion	Activities of the Municipality	Celebrations, ceremonies, seminars, festivals, experiences, awards, charitable activities related to music, education, sports, poetry, theater, art, cinema
	Program/ Calendar of Activities	Municipality activity program
	Call for participation in activities	Invitation to participate in the activities of the municipality
Dissemenation of information	Announcements	Issues and news related to the municipality, results of announcements
	Press releases	News in a press release
	Other types of informations	Weather information, article will be distributed on the best link, link to my site link in this community, contests, information about closing routes, public transport timetables, strikes, etc.,.
	congratulations from the mayor and council	Congratulations made by the mayor or members of the municipal council committee on anniversaries, national days and celebrations, Christmas and Easter greetings, congratulations, good evening-morning
	Citizens' activities	Citizens' activities related to schools, youth, organizations, food distribution, campaigns, volunteers, cleaning, recycling
Image creation and management	Photoes of the Municipality	City Hall, landscapes, attractions
	Photoes of acitivities	Photos related to the activities of the Municipality
	Photoes of the Mayor	Photos of the mayor's activities
	Videos	Videos about the Municipality, the mayor, etc.
Co-direction	Annoucements for participation	Invitations and invitations to attend council meetings
	Annoucements for volunteers	Calls for volunteers in activities such as blood donations, recycling, cleaning, marathons and philanthropic events

Semi-structured interview is one of the most popular methods in qualitative research that seeks to discover, explain and generate ideas or theories about the phenomenon under study; as well as serves to understand and explain social patterns, the "How" questions (Hesse-Biber & Leavey 2006). To conduct semi-structured interviews (Appendix A of this paper) with local government employees of the Directorate of Digital Communication in Tirana Municipality, there is a list of questions covering the categories related to the use of social media, transparency and citizen engagement is compiled, discussed in the literature review.

Initial contact was established through telephone communication to determine whether the identified employees met the participation criteria and whether they were interested and willing to participate in the study. During the initial contact, an appropriate time was set for the interview.

3. Data Analysis

The field of study includes two different sets of data, one consists of an analysis of the content of all Facebook posts by Tirana Municipality for the period June 2020-May 2021, and the other consists of a qualitative analysis of the responses

of employees of the Directorate of Digital Communication from semi-structured interviews.

3.1 Descriptive Statistics of Facebook Posts

In this paper, the Facebook page of Tirana Municipality is used as a case study. The Tirana Municipality is the largest municipality, the capital of Albania, with a population of about 757,361 citizens (INSTAT, 2021). On January 24, 2013, the Tirana Municipality opened its Facebook page which currently has 31,691 (thirty-one-thousand-six-hundred-and-ninety-one) followers.

In May 2021, Tirana Municipality posted a photo of Tirana ladies taking care of the external environment. This post gained 154 (one hundred and fifty four) likes in less than 24 hours. Six (6) people commented and twenty others shared the post. Citizens engaged in this post congratulating the cleaning.

Table 2.1 shows that there are changes in the number of posts from month to month during the period June 2020 - May 2021. The number of posts varies from a minimum of 20 (twenty) to a maximum of 87 (eighty seven) posts per month With Average Number of posts is 57.9 (fifty seven points nine) posts per month.

TABLE NO.2.1: Total number of Facebook posts by months

Number of Facebook posts				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	84	12.0	12.0	12.0
JUNE	79	11.4	11.4	23.4
July	52	07.5	07.5	30.9
August	86	12.4	12.4	43.3
September	74	10.7	10.7	54
October	54	07.8	07.8	61.8
November	73	10.6	10.6	72.4
December	45	06.5	06.5	78.9
January	31	04.4	04.4	83.3
February	49	07.0	07.0	90.3
March	20	02.8	02.8	93.1
APRIL	48	06.9	06.9	100.0
Total	695	100.0	100.0	

Source: Processing of data by the author in SPSS program

His section presents the results of the study. As shown in Table 2.3, the most frequently used strategy is information dissemination (31.58%), followed by image creation and management (22.66%) and transparency (22.6%).

Marketing and promotion of municipal activities is also a common strategy used by Tirana Municipality on Facebook (19.17%). Analyzing the sub-categories, it can be seen that Tirana Municipality provides information mainly about the least important news of the municipality and issues such as weather information, articles about the municipality, competitions, information on closed roads, timetables and public transport, etc., (24.7%). Photos of the municipality (12.2%) are often used in Facebook posts by Tirana Municipality as tools to impress citizens and cultivate a positive image of the municipality. The other most widely used content is related to the services provided by the municipality (11.2%) and calls to participate in the activities of the municipality (11.1%). These types of content aim to increase the transparency and credibility of the municipality as well as to promote activities organized by local administrations. Therefore, the findings suggest that Tirana Municipality mainly uses Facebook in a top-down way to simply push one-way information to citizens, improve the image of the municipality and increase transparency. To a lesser extent, Tirana Municipality is investing in the interactive features of Facebook in order to increase citizen participation.

TABLE NUMBER. 2.2: Facebook strategies used by the Tirana Municipality

Category	Sub-Category	Number of posts	
	service	78	11.2%
Transparency (22.6%)	Activities with other institutions	6	0.8%
	Activities of the Mayor	26	3.8%
	Decisions of the Chairman	2	0.2%
	Schedule of meetings and decisions of the Council	0	0.0%
	procurement	4	0.6%
	Announcements and Tenders	15	2.2%
	Objectives and projects of the municipality	26	3.8%

Category	Sub-Category	Number of posts	
Promotion of Activities (19.17%).	Municipal activities	44	6.4%
	Program / Calendar of Activities	12	1.7%
	Call for participation in activities	77	11.1%
Dissemination of information (31.58%)	notifications	16	2.4%
	Press releases	20	2.9%
	Other information	171	24.7%
	Congratulations to the Chairman and / or the Council	11	1.5%
	Activities of citizens	2	0.2%
	Photos of the Municipality	85	12.2%
	Photos of Activities	44	6.3%
	Photos of the Mayor	19	2.7%
	Video	10	1.5%
Image creation and management (22.66%)	Call for participation	15	2.3%
	Call for volunteers	12	1.7%

To measure the effectiveness of Facebook strategies used by Tirana Municipality, the effectiveness index (IE) has been created. The Effectiveness Index consists of the following components: (a) attitude statement (number of likes per post), (b) commitment (number of comments per post) and (c) support (number of distributions per post). In order to compare the effects of Facebook strategies on the expression of attitude, commitment and support of citizens as well as to identify the most effective strategy, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. The results are presented in Table 2.3.

As Table 2.3 shows, there is a discrepancy between the average results of the three dimensions of effectiveness. Attitude expression has higher average scores (range: 7.55 to 34.82) compared to commitment (range: 0.30 to 0.53) and support (range: 1.68 to 4.08). These findings suggest that citizens click more "like" on the post than write a comment or share.

In terms of attitude expression, it can be argued that strategies such as image creation and management and information delivery have high average scores. ANOVA results show that there are significant differences in the mean attitude expression scores at level $p < 0.01$ between the five Facebook strategies [F (19.73), p = 0.000).

Table 2.4 shows the results of comparisons using the Tukey HSD test between different strategies for expressing attitude.

TABLE NO.2.4: Results of Post-Hoc Comparisons - Expression of Attitude

Category	Transparency	Promotion of Activities	Dissemination of information	Co-direction	Image creation and management
Transparent	-	-1.28 (0.995)	-4.38 (0.616)	-0.169 (1.000)	-27.27 (0.000)*
Promotion of Activities	1.28 (0.995)	-	-3.10 (0.910)	1.11 (0.999)	-25.98 (0.000)*
Dissemination of information	4.38 (0.616)	3.10 (0.910)	-	4.22 (0.890)	-22.88 (0.000)*
Co-direction	0.16 (1.000)	-1.11 (0.999)	-4.22 (0.890)	-	-
Image creation and management	27.27 (0.000)*	25.98 (0.000)*	22.88 (0.000)*	27.10 (0.000)*	-27.10 (0.000)*

Source: Processing of data by the author in SPSS program

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test show that the average score for image creation and management (M = 34.82, SD = 83.91) is significantly different from transparency (M = 7.55, SD = 9.72), promotion of activities (M = 8.84, SD = 10.36), provision of information (M = 11.94, SD = 20.87), and co-direction (M = 7.72, SD = 12.23). In contrast, no significant differences were found in any of the average outcomes of transparency, information provision, activity promotion, and co-direction. These findings indicate that citizens will like the strategies of creating and managing the image and as a result, also the municipal posts that contain multimedia such as photos and videos. No significant differences are observed

(level p> 0.01) between the five strategies in the average results of the engagement dimension [F = 2.39, p = 0.049].

Therefore, the Facebook strategy used by the Municipality does not affect the engagement of citizens on Facebook, in the behavior to comment.

Table No.2.5, the most distributed posts by citizens are related to image creation and management, promotion of activities and co-direction.

ANOVA results show that there are significant differences in the mean results of the support index between different strategies [F = 5.42, p = 0.000].

TABLE NO.4.5: Results of Post-Hoc Comparisons - Support

Category	Transparency	Promotion of Activities	Dissemination of information	Co-direction	Image creation and management
Transparent	-	-1.01 (0.377)	-0.22 (0.993)	-1.22 (0.463)	-2.40 (0.000)*
Promotion of Activities	1.01 (0.377)	-	0.79 (0.678)	-0.21 (0.999)	-1.39 (0.175)
Dissemination of information	0.22 (0.993)	-0.79 (0.678)	-	-1.00 (0.686)	-2.18 (0.002)*
Co-direction	-1.22 (0.463)	0.21 (0.999)	1.00 (0.686)	-	-1.18 (0.565)
Image creation and management	2.40 (0.000)*	1.39 (0.175)	2.18 (0.002)*	1.18 (0.565)	-

Source: Processing of data by the author in SPSS program

Based on Table 2.5 image creation and management (M = 4.08, SD = 6.41) has significantly (p <0.01) higher support scores compared to transparency (M = 1.68, SD = 3.59) and information delivery (M = 1.89, SD = 3.72). However, the average results of image management do not differ significantly (p> 0.01) from that of activity promotion (M = 2.68, SD = 4.57) and co-direction (M = 2.89, SD = 5.28). Moreover, no conidial changes were observed

4.2 Qualitative Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews

The online interactions of the institutions are very visible in the form of news on social media, however the basic strategy, daily management, tactics, interpretation and changes in existing tactics can only be achieved by extracting perceptions through the interview.

Types of social media roles include day-to-day management of social media sites, social media strategy development, senior management of all social media staff, and / or communication and support for all departments using media social throughout the institution.

The main reason for getting involved in social media spaces can be summarized in one main goal: Representation of the institution in all channels available on the Internet.

"Why are we on Facebook: to be where people are. "When people search on Facebook, they find us."

Respectively, to find out if citizens actually find the information on social media channels, the interviewees noted that an important indicator is the number of followers and viewers of the content:

"We look at raw numbers: how many followers did you have when you started the site and how many followers did you have now." […]

Respondents recognize the need to reach audiences that do not routinely interact with the Municipality and are therefore excluded from the information. They see the use of additional channels on social networking sites as a way to institutionalize their interactions and bring government information to citizens.

However, most social media respondents are not sure if they are reaching the audiences that their mission statement claims. A detailed analysis of the target audience has not been conducted; even social media directors do not know how representative their social media followers are.

The second most frequently mentioned objective of maintaining Facebook accounts is engaging citizens in recognizing the added value of social networking services: two-way interaction and active networking with the public. Citizens are invited to co-produce content that is then copied on websites and citizens are asked to provide additional opinions and information. As an example, social media channels are used to attract citizens to respond to surveys regarding the content provided:

"We do a survey and ask a lot of Yes / No questions, 1 to 10, and allow open answers to that. And we get a good amount of feedback from our audience." […]

Interactions focus mainly on lower levels of engagement and participation.

4. Conclusions

Social media offers governments a new approach to improving transparency and accountability, involving more and more citizens to participate and collaborate in decision-making to improve information management and access as a public service. This study contributes to a better understanding of the use of social media tools to increase the level of transparency of local governments.

A high level of Facebook use means that local governments tend to increase the level of transparency and openness by making information and data about processes accessible publicly and easily to citizens.

An analysis of the strategies used shows that Tirana Municipality is using Facebook as "another traditional communication channel" to provide one-time messages to the public about less critical information, to promote their services and to promote the image of the Municipality. Co-management strategies were the least used strategies by Tirana Municipality. This suggests that the Municipality is not taking steps towards open government by (a) improving transparency and accountability through the exchange of information related to critical information such as decisions made by local authorities, operations, objectives and projects related to the Municipality, and by encourage (b) citizens to attend policy co-creation council meetings.

The type of strategy proved to be an important factor influencing the effectiveness of the posts in terms of expressing attitude and support. In particular, image management was the most "liked" strategy compared to the other four types.

Moreover, transparency and co-direction strategies also performed well in bringing in support from citizens, but this effect was marginal. On the contrary, the engagement of citizens in the form of comments was not influenced by the type of strategy used on Facebook. This non-strategy effect on engagement can be attributed to two factors: low levels of citizen engagement with the municipality and non-use of "attractive strategies" by local governments such as seeking feedback and ideas.

As the use of social media by Municipalities is significantly increasing, they should pay special attention to their relationship with citizens through social media.

The use of social media is beneficial for participants as they increase the immediate interaction between citizens and governments. The Municipality's Facebook page is considered a symbol of modernity and reaction, perceived as a necessity for political legitimacy (Ma, 2013). To summarize, local governments tend to promote transparency and accountability through the use of social media, increasing citizens to oversee the work of governments and to express their concerns about these functions.

Social media applications need to be managed by qualified people to prevent the misuse of these tools, so there is a need to identify new organizational roles in the Municipality, such as the social media manager.

The main limitation of the current study is the specific nature of the data context as only Facebook posts have been examined. Communication strategies can vary across different social media platforms and different content can affect the effectiveness of other social media posts differently compared to Facebook. Thus, future research can compare the content posted and its effectiveness across different municipal social media accounts. In this way, local governments can better design their social media strategies to better reflect citizens' preferences and engage in dialogue with them.

5. Recommendations

Most local governments are using social media to increase transparency, but in general, the concept of dialogue and the use of social media to promote participation are still in their infancy at the local level, with very low levels of real-time broadcasting. , or an active presence on social networks most often used by citizens.

We recommend that Tirana Municipality should continue to use impression management techniques in order to increase the popularity and virality of their content in order to encourage and increase the number of people who interact on their social site.

Knowing that the posts are generally informative in nature about the plans or decisions of Tirana Municipality, I recommend that it should also decide:

a) A well-thought-out strategy of social media networks to identify the target audience, other departments and stakeholders to cooperate;
b) Clear guidelines for the use of social media should be established and determine the response, acceptance and moderation of comments, code of conduct
c) Establish coordination between different departments, for effective communication and obtaining information or photos in a short time in order to quickly inform citizens,
d) To appoint social media staff with clear duties and responsibilities such as social media managers, experts, analysts, moderators, etc.

It is important that the social network managers of public institutions be serious by having a clear communication strategy and taking steps to determine how social

media is incorporated into this strategy, taking into account when determining whether posting is the use of social media. convenient. Politicians need to focus on managing content on the Facebook page and providing information that properly addresses the needs of different users.

A review of the literature for this paper suggests that social media is a way to engage citizens' input, but as a strategy or tool in its own right, there are many unanswered questions about effectiveness.

Monitoring and evaluation

Early assessment of institutional capacity and the needs and interests of citizens contributes to successful social media strategies. Monitoring the reaction that every citizen has conducted and verifying which post has had the most impact through climates, likes or comments is a good sample to monitor and evaluate.

Attitude towards hypotheses

This study provides a first assessment of the Facebook strategies used by local governments in Albania and provides insights from a managerial perspective regarding the effective management of Facebook content.

The findings support Hypothesis 1 (one) which suggests that local governments mainly use Facebook in a top-down way to simply push one-way information to citizens, improve the image of the municipality and increase transparency. To a lesser extent, local authorities in Albania are investing in Facebook interactive features in order to increase citizen participation.

Based on the data analysis, it can be argued that impression management techniques are more widely disseminated by citizens compared to one-way strategies such as transparency and information delivery. However, impression management, activity marketing and co-creation strategies are just as effective in terms of online citizen support, which means that citizens are more likely to share posts that include multimedia, promote municipal activities and include calls for citizen participation. Thus, Hypothesis 2 (two) is based in part and only on the effect of impression management strategies on effectiveness.

Local governments in Albania have performed well in expressing and defending the attitude of citizens as they often posted content such as photos of the municipality that were "liked" and "shared" by citizens. Furthermore, local administrations should begin to use "attractive" mechanisms such as requesting information and presenting ideas about municipal issues and policies. In this way citizen engagement (commentary behavior) can be increased.

References

Albalate, D. (2017). The institutional, economic and social determinants of local government transparency. *Journal of Economic Policy Reform*, 16(1), 90–107.

Anttiroiko, A. V. (2014). Innovation in democratic e-governance: Benefitting from Web 2. 0 applications in the public sector. *International Journal of Electronic Government Research*, 6(2), 18–36.

Berthon, P.R., Pitt, L.F., Plangger, K. & Shapiro, D., (2019). Marketing Meets Web 2.0, Social Media, and Creative Consumers: Implications for International Marketing Strategy. *Business Horizons*, 55(3), 261–271.

Bertot, J. C., Jaeger, P. T., & Grimes, J. M. (2016). Using ICTs to create a culture of transparency: E-government and social media as openness and anti-corruption tools for societies, *Government Information Quarterly*, 27(3), 264–71. ha

Bertot, J. C., Jaeger, P. T., & Hansen, D. (2016). The impact of polices on government social media usage: Issues, challenges, and recommendations. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(1), 30–40.

Beynon-Davies, P. (2017). Models for e-government, *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 7-28.

Bingham, L. B., Nabatchi, T., & O'Leary, R. (2005). The new governance: Practices and processes for stakeholder and citizen participation in the work of government. *Public administration review*, 65(5), 547-558.

Bonsón, E., Torres, L., Rayo, S., & Flores, F. (2016). Local e-government 2.0: Social media and corporate transparency in municipalities. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29(12), 123–132.

Brewer, G. A., Neubauer, B. J., & Geiselhart, K. (2010). Designing and implementing e-government systems critical implications for public administration and democracy. *Administration & Society*, 38(4), 472–499.

Bryer, T. (2010). Across the great divide: Social media and networking for citizen engagement. In J. H. Svara & J. Denhardt (Eds.), The connected community: Local governments as partners in citizen engagement and community building, (pp. 73-79).

Bryer, T. A., & Zavattaro, S. M. (2011). Social media and public administration: Theoretical dimensions and introduction to the symposium. *Administrative theory & praxis*, 33(3), 325-340.

Cárcaba, A., & García-García, J. (2014). Determinants of online reporting of accounting information by Spanish local government authorities. *Local Government Studies*, 36(5), 679 695.

Chadwick, A., & May, C. (2007). Interaction between States and Citizens in the Age of the Internet: "E-government" in the United States, Britain, and the European Union. *Governance*, 16(2), 271–300.

Chun, S., Shulman, S., Sandoval-Almazan, R., & Hovy, E. (2014). Government 2.0: Marking connections between citizens, data and government. *Information Polity*, 15(1/2), 1–9.

Criado, J.I., Sandoval-Almazan, R. & Gil-Garcia, J. R., (2013). Government Innovation through Social Media. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30(4), 319–326.

Cromer, C. (2014). Understanding Web 2.0's influences on public e-services: A protection motivation perspective. Innovation: *Management, Policy & Practice*, 12(2), 192–205.

Curtin, Deirdre M. and Meijer, Albert, Does Transparency Strenghten Legitimacy? A Critical Analysis of European Union Policy Documents (2006). *Information Polity*, 2006, Available

at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=1434862 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1434862

Da Cruz, N. F., Tavares, A. F., Marques, R. C., Jorge, S., & De Sousa, L. (2016). Measuring local government transparency. *Public Management Review*, 18(6), 866-893.

Debreceny, R., Gray, G. L., & Rahman, A. (2006). The determinants of Internet financial reporting. *Journal of Accounting and Public Policy*, 21(4/5), 371–394.

Demchak, C. C., Friis, C., & La Porte, T. M. (2016). Webbing governance: National differences in constructing the public face. In G. D. Garson (Ed.), *Handbook of public information systems* (pp. 179–196). New York: Marcel Dekker.

Denhardt, R. B., Denhardt, J. V., & Blanc, T. A. (2014). Public administration: An action orientation.

Drüke, H. (2015). Can e-government make public governance more accountable? Performance accountability and combating corruption (pp. 59–87).

Evans, D., & Yen, D. C. (2009). E-government: An analysis for implementation: Framework for understanding cultural and social impact. *Government Information Quarterly*, 22(3), 354–373.

Falco, E., & Kleinhans, R. (2018). Beyond technology: Identifying local government challenges for using digital platforms for citizen engagement. *International Journal of Information Management*, 40, 17-20.

Ferejohn, J. (2003). Accountability and authority: Towards a model of political accountability. In A. Przeworski, S. C. Stokes, & B. Manin (Eds.), *Democracy, accountability and representation* (pp. 131–153). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Gallego-Álvarez, I., Rodríguez-Domínguez, L., & García-Sánchez, I. M. (2014). Are determining factors of municipal E-government common to a worldwide municipal view? An intra-country comparison. *Government Information Quarterly*, 27(4), 423–430.

Gandía, J. L., & Archidona, C. (2012). Determinants of web site information by Spanish city councils. *Online information Review*, 32(1), 35–57.

García-Sánchez, I. M., Frías-Aceituno, J. V., & Rodríguez-Domínguez, L. (2017). Determinants of corporate social disclosure in Spanish local governments. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 39, 60–72.

Gibby, A., Smith, S., Pang, V., & Toorn, C. V. (2018). The impact of Web 2.0 (Gov 2.0) and social media technologies on engagement in local government. PACIS 2014 Proceedings.

Grimmelikhuijsen, S. G., & Meijer, A. J. (2015). Does Twitter Increase Perceived Police Legitimacy? *Public Administration Review*, 75(4), 598-607. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12378

Jaeger, P. T., & Bertot, J. C. (2014). Transparency and technological change: Ensuring equal and sustained public access. *Government Information Quarterly*, 27(4), 371–376.

Johannessen, M.R., Johannessen, M.R., Sæbø, Ø., Sæbø, Ø., Flak, L.S. and Flak, L.S. (2016), "Social media as public sphere: a stakeholder perspective", *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 212-238.

Jorge, S., Sá, P. M., Pattaro, A. F., & Lourenço, R. P. (2015). Local Government financial transparency in Portugal and Italy: A comparative exploratory study on its determinants. Paper presented at 13th Biennial CIGAR Conference, Ghent, Belgium, 4–5 June.

Mergel, I. (2013), "Social media adoption and resulting tactics in the US federal government", *Government Information Quarterly*, Vol. 30 No. 2, pp. 123-130, available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2012.12.004

Mergel, I. (2015). Designing social media strategies and policies. *Handbook of public administration*, 456-468.

Mergel, I., (2016). Social Media Institutionalization in the U.S. Federal Government. *Government Information Quarterly*, 33(1), 142–148.

Moon, M. J. (2006). The evolution of E-government among municipalities: Rhetoric or reality? *Public Administration Review*, 62(4), 424–433.

Mossberger, K., Wu, Y., & Crawford, J. (2017). Connecting citizens and local governments? Social media and interactivity in major US cities. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30(4), 351–358.

Tellier, G. (2010). Public expenditures in Canadian provinces: An empirical study of politico-economic interactions. *Public Choice*, 126(3/4), 367–385.

The Tirana Municipality. https://www.facebook.com/bashkia.tirane.al/

Tolbert, C. J., & Mossberger, K. (2006). The effects of e-government on trust and confidence in government. *Public Administration Review*, 66(3), 354–369

Waheduzzaman, W. & As-Saber, S., (2015). Community Participation and Local Governance in Bangladesh. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 50(1), 128–147.