

Policymaking in the Times of Social Media: What Has Changed in India? A Study of Telecom Sector's e-Consultation Efforts

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This paper aims to study the changes in policymaking brought about by the Government of India's adoption and promotion of social media under its Framework & Guidelines for Use of Social Media for Government Organisations (2012). The government states therein that "the objective for the use of social media is not just to disseminate information but also to undertake public engagement for a meaningful public participation for formulation of public policy". The paper aims to capture the changes brought about in the policymaking and governance space as a result of the government opening up online communications channels (social media) with the citizenry. Through a case study of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's e-consultation process, this paper attempts to find out "the integration of social media environment in policy consultations" in India.

Methodology/Approach: The paper through a review of literature first explores the concept of social media and establishes whether the current government websites fall in the domain of social media. It reviews how social media is being utilized by various governments across the world in the governance and public policy domain. It then through the case study of Telecom Authority of India website explores e-consultancy in the policy-making domain and analyses the changes brought about with social media. A random analysis of six TRAI consultancy papers is conducted. The methodology adopted includes content analysis of relevant online platforms of TRAI and stakeholder survey to explore citizens' perceptions of pre-legislative consultation. The paper then identifies the limitations/lacunae of the current social media use by TRAI.

Findings: The paper finds that TRAI website has social media functionalities embedded and is functioning as social media platform to promote participative policy making. However, it finds there are limitations in the approach brought about by lack of active promotion of pre-legislative consultation on external social media platforms. While the TRAI website is a vibrant interactive space, external social media platforms are being used to broadcast official information and for self-promotion. There is little or no attempt to actively engage stakeholders. Although TRAI is at the forefront of pre-legislative consultation online, there is not much action on its other social media functionalities like discussion forum.

Research limitations: The paper studies just one government website for government's participative policy-making activity using social media. More websites will be studied as part of ongoing research by the author to develop a more holistic picture.

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Practical implications: The paper posits that government websites are social media if they have functionalities of social media embedded and the activities on the website promote networked and participative governance. This opens up space for further research in the field on how government websites can be made social media and used to promote participatory democracy. Secondly, the paper explores how the government has appropriated the media space via its web 2.0 websites and its presence on social media. This line of thinking can be explored further. There is very little literature on Indian governments experiments with social media. The field is vast, and its exploration can yield explosive results with vast implications. Fourth, the study of pre-legislative consultation on web 2.0 websites of the Government of India has deep implications for participatory democracy.

Originality/Value: This exploratory paper sets the path for further research in the field in India and contributes to the development of knowledge on the use of social media by governments to promote democratic values, trust and transparency.

Keywords: Pre-legislative Consultation, Social Media, Participative Policy-making, web 2.0.

INTRODUCTION

The digital age has hastened the demise of journalism as we know it. Social media has further blurred the lines of the frontiers of journalism. As citizens break into the traditional realm of media, thanks to a robust and rapidly evolving social media, the government too has not stayed behind. If “an informed public is an intrinsic social good” and “journalism’s key role is fostering democracy”, then has governance in the digital age appropriated the practice of journalism? The purpose of this conference paper is to examine the shift in governance practices in India in the era of web 2.0 social media. Through extensive literature review, the paper first examines what is Web 2.0 social media and how does it become a tool for participative democracy. Through content analysis of TRAI website, its social media handles on Facebook and Twitter and a random analysis of three consultancy papers, it then examines how the Government of India is enlisting social media to promote participatory governance vis-a-vis policymaking. A randomized sample survey is also conducted to understand the perception of the people vis-à-vis participatory policymaking.

In order to understand the changing governance model in the digital age, this paper explores the following research questions:

RQ1. What is the practice of journalism in the digital age?

RQ2. Are media websites social media?

RQ3. Do government websites behave like social media?

RQ4. Is social media a tool for participative policy making?

RQ5. Has social media brought transparency in governance and generated trust?

RQ.6 Has government through its social media websites appropriated the traditional role of media?

MEDIA 2.0

Dan Gillmor in the 'Introduction to Journalism and Citizenship: New Agendas in Communication' (ed., Zizi Papacharissi, 2009), "media are becoming democratized¹" not so much in the sense of voting "but participation". He calls access, the second great democratization that digital media has brought about. As he notes, the mere consumers of media have today become creators. But more pertinent to this essay is the note: "But we are only in the beginning stages of emerging, more diverse ecosystem of journalism where a host of competitors collectively provides a more nuanced and valuable information flow to the people who need it most—all of us who function under a system of self-government."

The pertinent question as the boundaries of journalism expand and dissolve is no longer "Who is a journalist" but "What is journalism?" To be sure in this new ecosystem, journalism is "evolving from a lecture into a conversation and many are joining this conversation – citizens, industry, civil society, government – everyone who has learnt to work web 2.0. But as professionals and amateurs jostle for space in the digital media ecosystem, the lines have become blurred. Gulyas (2013) who explored the use of social media by journalists in four European nations – Finland, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom – to find out how professional variables, namely media sector, length of professional career and size of organisation, influence use of and views about social media – discovered that journalists, just like media audiences, are "increasingly fragmented and their professional practices are influenced by a myriad of different variables".

Journalism today is then a fragmented profession with even its core professional values being influenced by social media. Hermida (2012) examined the influence of social media on the core journalistic value of verification. The authority of a journalist or a media outlet has traditionally stemmed from its credibility as the verifier of news and information that it peddles. Verification hence is at the "core of journalism as a system of knowledge production and central to a structural claim to expert status and statement of authority." The proliferation of unverified news and information on social media has had media experts red-flagging social media as a space which is eroding the discipline of verification, a central tenet of journalism. Hermida quotes Kovach (2006) who writes that from the time 24/7 digital news was introduced the process of verification, which he calls the "beating heart of credible journalism" has suffered. "In 'The Elements of Journalism' (2001), Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) have outline journalism's core and call the discipline of verification as "the essence of journalism". For Zelizer (2004) journalism's legitimacy is dependent on its ability to provide "referential presentation of the world at hand". In fact, one agrees with her that what distinguishes journalists from other public communication professionals is their journalistic ability to represent reality. In the social media era, news is being shaped by the inherent characteristics of web 2.0 social media messaging tools and from being a close representation, reality has become "a tentative and iterative process where contested accounts are examined and evaluated in public in real-time" (Bruno, 2011).

For news media, Twitter is a great tool as they can send out short snippets of news in real time. All established media houses have their twitter handles and Facebook pages and are breaking news in real-time. Media organizations are tapping "user-generated content...for gathering eyewitness reports as events unfold in real-time"

and are lapping up real-time feedback from the public. User-generated content on social media has undeniable value in the reporting of major news events and networked media systems applies – the knowledge of particular circumstances of time and place’ ((Hayek, 1945, p. 519), plays out in this space. As news is unbundled in social media space, it loses its veracity. Though now “news is omnipresent” it is unstructured data, uploaded by both professional journalists and social media publics and is “raw, unprocessed journalism”. Contradictory reports, rumors, speculation, confirmation and verification circulate via social interaction in a compressed news cycle on Twitter. News and information are published, disseminated, confirmed or refuted in public through a process facilitated by social media. Social media is fashioning news formats for instance, the live blog format as news media experiment with a more “iterative and collaborative approach to reporting and verifying the news” (Hermida 2012). In the online networked space “journalists today are just some of the many voices in public communication” Deuze (2003).

Bruno (2011) finds media essaying the role of curator and journalism less of a final product presented to the audience as a definitive rendering of events.

In response to the first research question, we find journalism in the digital age has lost its traditional role and is in the process finding a new definition and meaning.

SOCIAL MEDIA & MEDIA WEBSITES

Preceding from the above, if journalism is becoming a conversation and a democratic space for collaboration, then are websites like www.timesofindia.com social media? In response to our second research question, we evaluate what social media means. Social media has been defined variously by different academic experts and there still exists considerable ambiguity surrounding the definitions. Even in academic circles, the question as to “What are social media?” is inevitably answered as Twitter and Facebook. Jonathan A. Obar and Steve Wildman (2015) bring much clarity to the concept by synthesizing the definitions from various literature and identifying the commonalities present in the spectrum of social media services. They, however, concede there are two well defined challenges related to the conceptualization of social media. The first challenge emanates from the speed of evolution of technology that is continuously pushing the boundaries of the concept. The second is the fact that social media promotes various forms of communication that are like those being facilitated by other forms of technology – that promote networking, collaboration and communication (for example, telephone, fax, email).

The commonalities as delineated by Obar and Wildman are:

1. *Social media services are web 2.0 internet-based applications and have changed the way we interact online:* This is the main distinguishing aspect of social media from other forms of communication on other tech platforms (like say email, Whatsapp). Referencing the definition of social media by Kaplan and Michael Haenlein (2010) as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content”, a change more due to ideology than substantive changes in technology; and “prosumption capitalism” of Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010) which they say is characteristic of digital era economy, Obar and Wildman explicate this commonality as a platform where content is created and published by multiple parties. However, as most researchers agree, to confine social media within the

narrow contours of any definition is to kill its spirit and “there is no systemic way in which different social media applications can be categorized” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

2. *User-generated content is the crux of social media:* From personal information on social networking websites to tweets, likes, comments on blog posts...to “an endless number of user-generated decisions that populate social media sites...and increasingly link us together” are all content that fuel social media sites.

3. *Individuals and groups create site-specific user profiles within the boundaries of the social media service:* Boyd and Ellison define social network sites as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi- public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.”

4. *Social media services facilitate social networks online by connecting netizens and or groups:* This may not be as direct as on social networking platforms like Facebook (friends), twitter and instagram (follows) or LinkedIn (connections) or as Obar and Wildman call “lists”; however, any platform that seeks user information even in the form of a comment facilitates social networks online.

The last bit is pertinent in the context of the current analysis. However, despite these commonalities, as Obar and Wildman note, “social media functionalities are being built into products not traditionally designed for social networking purposes” and so the ambiguities remain.

To sum up the main characteristics of social media briefly:

- a. It has changed the way we interact online
- b. More than technological, there is ideological foundation for this change
- c. Users of social media are prosumers i.e. producer-consumers
- d. Social media thrive on user-generated content
- e. Social media allow users to create profiles
- e. Social media enable social networks and links/connections even with something as basic as comment facility.

Researchers like Zheng, L., & Zheng, T. (2014) list the distinctive characteristics of social media in their work and as we can see there are clear overlaps with above commonalities. The specific characteristics of social media include:

1. **Participation:** Social media encourages users to contribute and comment i.e., provide feedback, blurring the line between media and audience.
2. **Openness:** A unique feature of most social media services is their openness to feedback and participation. Voting, comments, and information sharing are encouraged and barriers to accessing and making use of content are rare.

3. Conversation: Traditional media is about broadcast; content is transmitted or distributed to an audience. Social media, on the other hand, are conversational, two-way interaction channels.

4. Community: Social media allows communities to be formed quickly and communicate effectively around common interests; and

5. Connectedness: This is what gives social media its social characteristic. It thrives in this connectedness, through the facility of hyperlinks that help combine various media in one place.

To summarize, the definition of social media as a social structure in which technology puts power in the hands of communities, not institutions, as well as a set of open, web-based and user-friendly applications that enable users to network, share data, collaborate and co-produce content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010) seems most appropriate.

In response to the second research question, we find most established traditional media companies have embedded the above characteristics of social media into their websites. India's leading national's dailies online platform, www.timesofindia, is Web 2.0-based platform with social media functionalities embedded – interactive, open, has user-generated content, allows user comments, curates, co-creates and publishes content from citizen journalists/readers in the form of blogs, reports, inputs, source material, develops and nurtures its community of readers among others.

SOCIAL MEDIA & GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

To answer my third research question, whether government websites (TRAI website –www.traai.in) is Web 2.0 social media, we first look at what governments are doing in this digital networked space.

Meijer and Thaens (2013) draw a distinction between social media technologies and government websites. Social media technologies “are different from the previously dominant information websites in the sense that they provide platforms for interactions between users and these users engage in a variety of interactions to obtain the information they are specifically interested in”. The researchers also provide a systematic overview of the differences between social media and information websites:

Differences between information websites and social media

	Information websites	Social media
Content provider	Organizational content	User-generated content
Network topology	One-to-many	Many-to-many
Information specificity	Information specificity	Personalized information

According to Bretschneider & Mergel (2010), what matters post adoption of a new technology by an agency is to what use and to what extent are they putting it. Currently, as literature demonstrates, the use of social media

applications by most governmental organizations is more like an extension of the e-government services under the earlier digitization efforts of the government. However, as (Lindgren & Jansson, 2013) suggest, this wave must be distinguished from the earlier e-government phase where the focus was on e-delivery of service or government programs/schemes. In contrast, social media applications are not to be used as additional channels for services e-delivery but as channels for government's interactions with its stakeholders. Mergel's (2013) study found that government agencies mostly use social media channels to push their central mission, engage the public, or participate in issue-based conversations and network with stakeholders. While e-government services are hosted on the webserver of the concerned government or department; social media applications are owned by third parties and the government/department has no direct control over the technological features. E-government websites are static and are chiefly used to publish information, whereas, social media facilitates higher degree of interactivity between government and citizens as well as content co-production (Cormode & Krishanmurthy, 2008; O'Reilly, 2007). According to Mergel (2013), "Social media applications allow for multiple authors and authorship rights are distributed to outsiders, including citizens." What this means is that citizens can post comments on blogs, leave messages, create content, say on its Facebook page, retweet a tweet by a government agency or forward the content to their network. Social media and e-government services are not exclusive, rather they are complementary. Social media applications are enabling governments to establish direct contact with citizens, as the traditional ways of interacting with citizens have yielded little success. In fact, "all social media applications are used to complement the existing communication mechanisms in government" (Mergel 2013).

From the above analysis, we can conclude that for a government website to be social media, it must act and behave like one. For this to happen, it must have social media functionalities embedded in it. These characteristics of social media will distinguish it from first generation e-government tools for outreach and dissemination of information and services and establish it as second generation web 2.0 social media.

Banday and Mattoo (2013) who have analyzed the use of social media and their promising advantages for e-governance in government organizations with special reference to India write that social media facilitate governments to serve its people as they promote government information, services and collaboration with its stakeholders bringing together government agencies, citizens, agencies work and information. Social media can expand the usage of internet to realize the full benefits of e-government. Banday and Mattoo see governments using social media to post job advertisements, promote services, announce and market events, seek public feedbacks and cooperation and collaborate across its geographically diverse agencies. They also feel that social media's enormous prospectus for increasing citizen usage of e-service and e-participation could increase transparency which in turn can increase trust in government. The authors analyze the Draft Framework & Guidelines for Use of Social Media for Government Organisations (2012; since approved) and compare it with similar guidelines of other countries.

For Banday and Mattoo social media is a tool for enhancing e-government services via wider reach by governments and enhanced usage by publics. They do not explore social media's role in promoting co-creation and participative democracy.

For our analysis, the following stipulations in the Government of India's social media Framework under point 5.1.2 Choosing Platforms., is noteworthy. It allowed government departments and agencies to engage social media in any of the following manner:

- By making use of any of the existing external platforms, or
- By creating their own communication platforms

Further, it provided the departments the discretion on the choice of the platform:

1. The choice of the platform – whether owned or externally leveraged should be made based on the following factors:

a) Type of Consultation – whether the consultation is open to public or confined to a particular group of stakeholders e.g. experts

b) Scope of Engagement – whether the consultation requires daily, weekly, bi-weekly or even hourly interaction

c) Existing Laws – whether existing laws permit use of such platforms and the requirement under such laws regarding data protection, security, privacy, archiving etc.

The incumbent government at the Centre provided a major push to e-governance and in a short time taking governance from first generation of static service delivery to web 2.0 social media empowered e-governance. The impetus was provided under its ambitious Digital India program launched in 2015 with the expressed aim to promote inclusive governance. With Centre itself a votary of tech-enabled governance, it is promoting Digital India and various other digital initiatives through laws, incentives, competitions among states and others. Most government agencies, ministries and department websites are today vibrant interactive spaces led by the example of Government of India's flagship websites like mygov.in and pmindia.gov.in. The ministry of Human Resource Development website – <http://mhrd.gov.in> – boasts of a social media hub (<http://mhrd.gov.in/social-media-page>) and the Telecom Authority of India hosts open consultation and discussion forum on its website. Most of the government websites require you to register or log in to post comments or participate in activities. They have links to social media accounts of the agency or have embedded live tweets and Facebook comments, posts and activities, soliciting you to follow or like or post comment. As of September 19, 2018, there were 6510.08K registered members of MyGov who had posted 3896.55K comments in 782 discussions and made 223.70K submissions in 781 tasks.

An analysis of the landing pages of Government of India/departments/ministries' websites shows most opting for what I call 'mix use' – they have created their own websites with social media functionalities and are also using external platforms for wider outreach.

When we evaluate TRAI's website (traai.in in this research) using Meijer and Thaens (2013) framework for differentiating government websites from social media, we find TRAI website exhibits definitive characteristics of social media.

	Information websites	Social media	TRAI
Content provider	Organizational content	User-generated content	Yes – feedback generated and uploaded by users
Network topology	One-to-many	Many-to-many	Yes – feedback from many accessible in public domain provision for counter comments
Information specificity	Information specificity	Personalized information	Personalized and specific to target public

SOCIAL MEDIA, GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY & PARTICIPATIVE POLICYMAKING

The advantage of social media use in governance stems from its ability to foster not just two-way but multi-way interaction within government and provide tools that allow “new forms of interactions with citizens.” When governments interact with citizens on social media, they are perceived as open and transparent. This generates trust and allows governments to promote citizens' participation in decision-making, policy and governance. Ironically, the presence of traditional media on social media has had the reverse effect of eroding trust as discussed above.

L Zheng and T Zheng (2014) quote Krzmarzick (2012) on the five levels of social media use in federal government: 1) informed decision making, 2) communication with citizens and other agencies, 3) internal collaboration, 4) research/information gathering (crowdsourcing and expert sourcing) and 5) marketing and promotion.

As more governments reach out to citizens on social media for collaboration and co-creation, more scholars are researching into its potential in the governance and policy-making domain and find a new age of opportunity emerging through the combination of e-government, social media, web-enabled technologies, mobile technologies, transparency policy initiatives, and citizen desire for open and transparent government, as governments recognize the great potential of social media to extend government services to the citizens, solicit new ideas from them, and improve decision-making and problem-solving (Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes 2010; Bertot, Jaeger, & Hansen, 2012). Dawes (2010) rightly points out how social media have renewed emphasis on democratic governments as open, accessible and transparent to the governed. Others like Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia (2012) have studied the use of Facebook and Twitter by governments and find social media fosters better communication, participation, and collaboration with citizens. Twitter has been recognized as a tool for information sharing with the public effectively and for promoting public to participate in the democratic process (Wigand 2010).

But more importantly, governments are breaking new grounds with social media. They are using it as a tool to reinvent government–citizen relationships. Charalabidis (2012) explores how governments are exploiting 2.0 social media for deepening public engagement in participative policy making. As Barber (1984) writes “Participation ...enhances the power of communities and endows them with a moral force”. Democratic governments for long

have struggled to enlist citizens' feedback and efforts to help design public policies that are more attuned to their needs; social media is erasing this distance.

With societies becoming more heterogenous and pluralistic, the need for participative public policy making is more acute than before. This pluralism, celebrated in liberal democracies like India, also gives rise to “wicked” problems in public policy formation domain. These are social problems that are complex and open-ended offering no easy solution as the solutions too are contested (Head 2008) and require wide consultations with stakeholder groups in order to arrive at a synthesis of the disparate viewpoints. Additionally, in a rapidly evolving society government needs to collect relevant and timely information from the society to respond in time. This nature of these problems calls for crowdsourcing (Brabham, 2008). In web-based societies crowdsourcing on social media offers governments an effective means to source solutions from networked citizens.

Charalabidis (2012) writes that in the first generation of e-participation ushered by the internet, government agencies, government websites bundled e-services and information on government activities including plans and policies. The onus of participating in policy deliberations was on the citizens as they were expected to visit official e-participation spaces and take part in public debates on proposed public policies or legislations. The discussion topics in these e-participation forums were set by the government. Citizens were also expected to learn to work the cumbersome online capabilities. As expected, such participation remained limited.

The impact of social media in increasing transparency and participation of citizens in decision-making has also been recognised (Osimo 2008) and been studied by various scholars. However, government outreach under first generation of e-government did not automatically translate into transparency. According to Felten (2010), outreach is when governments tell citizens what it wants heard; but in transparency government provides information that citizens want; for Golbeck, Grimes, and Rogers (2010) while outreach is self-promotion and dissemination of information and ideas to public; with transparency information becomes free, open, and easily accessible to the public, and this can ensure accountability.

Researchers opine that the use of social media technologies by the government can help it traverse the e-government phase to the we government one. Bertot et.al (2012) have outlined these opportunities:

- Democratic participation and engagement, whereby governments can foster participatory dialogue and citizens can participate in discussions on policy development and implementation.
- Co-production, where government and the public work together on developing, designing, and delivery of services and policy.
- Crowdsourcing by which government can curate ideas, solutions and innovations available online from citizens and experts

In the US, driven by President Obama's “Transparency and Open Government” (OGI) mandate, government agencies and departments began using social media in real earnest. The OGI executive order (Mergel 2013) provides the following explanations:

- Transparency: Government provides information to citizens on what it is doing, interpreted as broadcasting of government information via social media sites;
- Participation : Enhanced opportunities for citizens in policymaking and providing benefits of collective expertise and information to government. Mergel looked at citizens' engagement in preparing policy making by providing their feedback through social media channels.
- Collaboration: Public feedback on collaboration to assess and improve it and to identify opportunities for further cooperation. Again, Mergel looked at social media channels that can be used to increase exchanges with citizens or collaboratively work with government stakeholders on innovative ideas to fulfill the mission of government.

Various studies conducted on the US agencies' use of social media in the light of the OGI mandate found them using it as one-way channels to push messages (Mergel 2013; Mossberger, Wu, and Crawford 2013). Similar studies were conducted in Mexico and European countries (Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia 2012; Mundy and Umer 2012; Hofmann, Beverungen, Räckers, and Becker 2013); in South Korea (Cho and Park 2012); and in Egypt (Abdelsalam, Reddick, Gamal, and Al-shaar, 2013) that highlighted the limitations of social media use by governments.

In India, a February 5, 2014 circular from the Secretary, the Ministry of Law and Justice Legislative Department, shows the Government of India's intentions to enhance citizen engagement and public participation in the policy domain in order to bring transparency and trust in the government. "In the modern context pre-legislative consultancy policy as a process supports many of the legitimate and growing expectations for transparent and better-informed government. The process tends to resolve contentious and complex policies and the areas where the government is seeking a policy to build consensus," reads the circular. The policy on pre-legislative consultation based on global best practices and the recommendations of national Advisory Council and National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution mandates is a set of decisions taken in the meeting of the Committee of Secretaries (CoS) held on 10th January, 2014 under the Chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary on the Pre-legislative Consultation Policy (PLCP). The policy lays down 12 mandates, the first three are given below for the purpose of analysis:

1. Every Department/Ministry shall proactively publish the proposed legislations both on the internet as also through other means; the detailed modalities of such publication may be worked out by the Department/Ministry concerned.
2. The Department/Ministry concerned should publish/place in public domain the draft legislation or at least the information that may inter alia include brief justification for such legislation, essential elements of the proposed legislation, its broad financial implications, and an estimated assessment of the impact of such legislation on environment, fundamental rights, lives and livelihoods of the concerned/affected people, etc. Such details may be kept in the public domain for a minimum period of thirty days for being proactively shared with the public in such manner as may be specified by the Department/Ministry concerned.

3. Where such legislation affect specific group of people, it may be documented and disclosed through print or electronic media or in such other manner, as may be considered necessary to give wider publicity to reach the affected people.

In responseto research questions 4&5, as the study of literature shows, the potential of social media for two-way communication that could enhance transparency and trust and promote participatory governance is yet to be fully exploited.

FINDINGS

For the purpose of this paper, the efforts of Telecom Authority of India in participative public policymaking has been studied. A randomized sample survey gauged the mood of the urban elite as regards transparency and trust in the government in the light of its Web 2.0 experimentations in participative policymaking. As our survey shows, the perception of Indian citizens regarding participatory governance, transparency and trust in the age of social media is definitely changing.

The survey sample comprised 82 urban professionals in the 35+ age group bracket from across industry verticals. 45.4% of the professionals are associated with an industry association/professional body/institution; 43.3% are aware of the pre-legislative consultation policy of the government of India though only 16.7% have participated in such an exercise. 38.5% of the respondents learnt about it online; 40.9% participated online. Though 44% feel the government values their feedback/suggestion; 32% were not sure. Pertinently 42.3% feel they now have a role in governance and for 38.5% it had increased their trust in the government. A whopping 61.6% feel their feedback is important in making laws and 46.1% feel the government values their feedback. 48% think three legislative consultation policy has made the government transparent against 12% who don't agree. 53.8% feel it has made the government responsible as against 15.4% who disagree.

SURVEY RESULTS HERE

The analysis shows that the government's foray into participative policymaking via online/social media has given tangible results with the majority expressing positive sentiments. However, the limitations of its approach are apparent from the low participation (only 16.7%). It is to be noted that the sample comprises senior professionals in urban centers of the country.

An analysis of Telecom Authority of India's pre-legislative consultation illustrates the above-mentioned results. TRAI has 298 closed consultations online as of September 19, 2018. For the purpose of this paper, the presenter has conducted a random analysis of six of TRAI's pre-legislative consultations conducted on its website.

TABLE I HERE

A content analysis of social media activities of the Telecom Authority of India on external platforms – Twitter and Facebook – align with the findings of Zheng, L., & Zheng, T's study of the performance of information and interactions in selected Chinese government microblog accounts. Majority of messages in Chinese government's microblog accounts were posted for self-promotion rather than service delivery. The forms, languages and timeliness of information posted tend to be monotonous, rigid and formal, and the interactions between governments

and the public in government microblog accounts are mostly insufficient and preliminary and government microblog accounts tend to avoid direct interactions with citizens.

TRAI's twitter handle @traif which boasts of 106K followers and 931 likes has just 1174 tweets and follows just 54. A content analysis of the tweets reveals:

1. Tweets are mostly selfpromotional, promoting events being chaired or interviews of its Chairman R S Sharma. they are like micro press releases of TRAI events.
2. The language is formal and is not conducive to starting a conversation.
3. With TRAI following just 54 accounts, it is obvious that the department is not interested in building a network with citizens/stakeholders or eliciting their feedback
4. The pre-legislative consultancy papers published on the website are not being promoted on external social media

The Facebook page of TRAI mirrors its twitter page in tone, language and content. 10,119 people like the page and 10,377 people follow it. There is no attempt to answer any queries put up by followers.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

As Web 2.0 social media evolved governments could see that it offered a window to solving wicked problems via a 'second generation' of wider and more inclusive e-participation, characterized by more intensive interaction with the citizens. Social media had become a hot space for political discussions, political information and news exchange and propagation, and for organizing movements and demonstrations offline. Governments felt the need to inhabit the same space in order to exploit them intensively and systematically, and communicate their positions and plans, justify their decisions and policies, and at the same time 'listen' to the citizens, solicit their opinions and comments and in general gain a better understanding of their needs and opinions (Charalabidis, 2012).

However, the attempts by various government including India are to exploit social media for participatory governance and inclusion remain half-hearted. In India, government websites have embedded social media functionalities where much action is taking place as mandated by the Government of India. However, their activities on external social media platforms remain formal, static and uninspiring. TRAI has failed to exploit external social media platforms to boost its activities on the website and to bring larger sections of citizen stakeholders within the ambit of participatory policymaking.

India must also counter its communication digital divide if it is to truly move into participatory governance and an become an inclusive society. Couldry (2008) and Unwin (2012) have thrown much light on this persistent digital divide. As increasing volumes of information and participative resources move online, the ability not merely to access but to use and contribute to these resources effectively becomes crucial to participation "in the life of the community" (Couldry, 2008). As governments struggle to understand the complex digital media environment, the must also ensure that those who do not have access to online resources have a "communicative entitlement" which needs to be fulfilled to ensure not only "access to media contents, but to networks, online forums, and various other means of expression online." This is absolutely non-negotiable in a participative democracy.

The second part of this conclusion takes us to the question six, whether government have appropriated the traditional space and role of media. Traditionally, governments shared information with the public either through a press release via the established media or through its advertisements again in traditional media. As governments begin to understand, explore and exploit the power of social media, they are stepping into the same Web 2.0 social media space as media and citizens to provide the “flow of information to the public, collaborate and co-producing content and solutions using all the tools of the “emerging media/journalism ecosystem” - blogs, online videos, podcasts, social media and social networks. In India, Government’s mygov.in is a vibrant social media space with all its functionalities embedded in the website. Social media have managed to dissolve the traditional barriers to G2C and C2G communications. Governments are now establishing a direct connect with the larger citizenry with regard to “the public policies they design and implement, and this has led to the development of public participation ideas and practices, which were initially based on traditional ‘off-line’ (i.e., non-electronic) channels (Barber, 1984; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2003; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, 2004).

Obviously, this paradigmatic shift in government’s behaviour and its vast citizen-user base have thrown up challenges in the designing, implementation, and evaluation of e-government 2.0. Further, the user communities in a democracy like India are pluralistic with unique sets of problems. There is a wide range of technical, language, and other expertise – or lack thereof – that creates a number of challenges regarding the interaction with and use of web 2.0 government services and resources (Bertot, 2003).

This paper just dips its toes into the vast world of governments and governance in the era of social media. While there has been considerable multidiscipline research in the area in advanced countries, no concrete conclusion can be drawn and they remain inadequate. The rapidly evolving technology space makes each research obsolete even as it is being conducted. As regards India, there is hardly any research that has explored the space. As such, it is important for Indian research to focus on the various facets of e-government 2.0 and specifically how Web 2.0 social media can help bridge the digital divide and ensure participatory democracy.

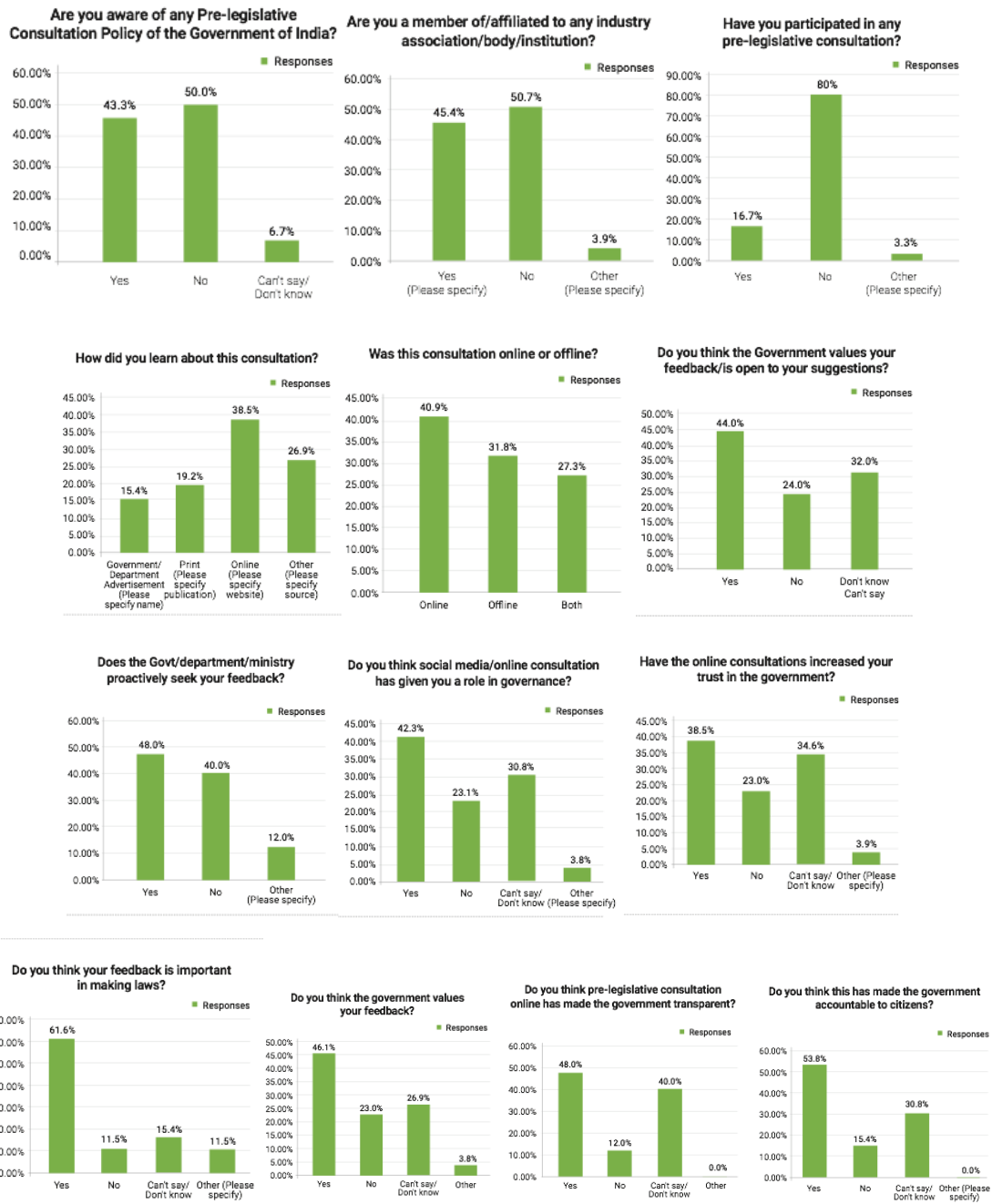
TABLE I

Serial No	Consultation Paper	Total No of Feedback	Stakeholder Type	Population
1	Consultation Paper on Making ICT Accessible for Persons with Disabilities. Telecom: Consumer Protection Date of Release:20/12/2017 Closing Date:12/02/2018 Division: Consumer Affairs Status: Closed Telecom & Broadcasting:	34	Associations - 3 Company/organisation/firm - 10 Service providers - 6 Consumer advocacy group - 2 Government - 12 Individual - 1	21 million disabled persons as per 2001 Census

	Consultation			
2	Pre- Consultation Paper on Net Neutrality Telecom: QOS Date of Release: 30/05/2016 Closing Date: 05/07/2016 Division: Quality of Service Status: Closed Telecom & Broadcasting: Consultation	66	Association - 9 Company/organisation/firm - 24 Individual - 21 Service provider - 11 Consultant - 1 Others - 1	In 2016, 24.3% of India's population had net access. internet users in India will reach 500 million by June 2018 - a report by IAMAI and Kantar IMRB
3	Consultation Paper on Differential Pricing for Data Services Telecom: Telecom Tariff Date of Release: 09/12/2015 Closing Date: 14/01/2016 Division: Economic Regulation Status: Closed Telecom & Broadcasting: Consultation	24 lakh approximately Service providers: 15 Service Provider Associations: 8	(i) Comments from the Service Providers - 15- (ii) Comments from the Service Providers' Association - 8 (iii) Comments received through https://mygov.in - 1100 approx (iv) Comments from other Stakeholders '@supportfreebasics.in' - 13.5 1 @facebookmail.com - 5.44 1 Save the Internet - 4.84 lakh Others 1. Comments from Organisations/Institutions - 42 2. Individual Comments (with attachments) - 47 3. Individual Comments (without attachment)-Part-1 - 99 4. Individual Comments (without attachment)-Part-2 - 5692	Urban India - 295 million internet users as on December 2017 Rural India - 186 million internet users as on December 2017
Serial No	Consultation Paper	Total No of Feedback	Stakeholder Type	Population
4	Consultation Paper on Unsolicited Commercial Communication Telecom: QOS, Unsolicited Commercial Communication Date of Release: 14/09/2017 Closing Date: 09/11/2017	27	Associations - 3 Company/organisation/firm - 10 Individuals - 5 Service providers - 9	21 million as per 2001 Census

	<p>Division: Quality of Service</p> <p>Status: Closed</p> <p>Telecom & Broadcasting: Consultation</p>			
5	<p>Consultation Paper On "Ease of Doing Business in Broadcasting Sector"</p> <p>Date of Release: 31/07/2017</p> <p>Closing Date: 11/09/2017</p> <p>Division: Broadcasting and Cable Services</p> <p>Status: Closed</p> <p>Telecom & Broadcasting: Consultation</p>	31	<p>Association - 7</p> <p>Company/organisation/firm - 4</p> <p>Individual - 2</p> <p>Service provider - 18</p>	<p>Presently the Television industry accounts for over 45% of the revenues of the Media and Entertainment (M&E) industry. It is expected that this industry will expand to the value Rs. 1,165.6 Billion by 2021 growing at a CAGR of 14.7% as per FICCI KPMG Indian Media Entertainment Report 2017</p> <p>A clarification in first instance is, therefore, required as to why Cable TV services broadcasting, over wire line medium, instead of wireless medium, using RF carriers, from one point(the Headend) to multiple viewers, as per definition of broadcast, is NOT broadcast. Next, if it is NOT broadcast, a Central Govt subject, then why is it under Ministry of Broadcasting?</p> <p>Service being run by around 60000 cable operators who are not service management literate, need spoon feeding. They cannot be expected to read to implement rules and regulatio</p>
6	<p>Consultation Paper on Tariff Issues related to TV Services</p> <p>Broadcasting: Tariff Orders, Cable TV</p> <p>Date of Release: 29/01/2016</p> <p>Closing Date: 25/03/2016</p> <p>Division: Broadcasting and Cable Services</p> <p>Status: Closed</p> <p>Telecom & Broadcasting: Consultation</p>	63	<p>Associations - 15</p> <p>Company/organisation/firm - 4</p> <p>Individuals – 7</p> <p>Service providers - 37</p>	<p>The survey report indicates a 7.5% increase in the number of TV-owning households across India to 197 million in 2018. The number of viewers also rose by 7.2% to 836 million.</p>

SURVEY RESULT



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