

Exercising Control: A Comparative Study of Government Agencies and their Relationships with the Public Using Social Media

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Abstract

We frame the exercise of control through social media not as *power-over* or *oppression*, but in its broader sense, as “purposive influence toward a predetermined goal”. We focus on one growing channel of control; social media use for official communication between government agencies and the public. This paper introduces a framework for analyzing social media use and interaction between government agencies and the public, focusing on a comparative analysis of two consumer protections agencies; one, the *Konsumentverket* in Sweden, the second, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau in the US. Contrasting the efficacy and practices associated with social media as a communication tool for citizens and their governments in different societies may lead to important insights regarding local and global applications of new media. The proposed framework is grounded in the concept of active co-construction of reality via Giddens’ structuration theory, as expanded on by Orlikowski. While this provides a useful lens for understanding the construction of government and public interaction, it does not

provide a methodology for examining the discourse in action. To do this we embed critical discourse analysis in structuration theory and use algorithms and methods from social media research (group informatics and TwitterZombie) to collect data and identify social networks. The analysis includes examinations of the written policy as well as the discourse or text published via Twitter and Facebook. In this paper we present our synthesis of structuration theory, computational social science and social media research that emerges from our dozens of empirical studies in these domains over the past seven years. We introduce the resulting approach to the study of technologies of control as a proposed foundation for future empirical work designed to validate the proposed methodology. Future work will implement the methodology and ask how social media is being used to help government agencies achieve their goals.

Keywords

digital government; social media; structuration theory; critical discourse analysis.

Since the late 1990s, digital government, eGovernment, eGovernance or electronic Government has been the primary tool for change in the way government officials interact with the public and each other (Bertot, Jaeger, & Grimes, 2010). Prior to this, much of the information technology used by government was employed to automate internal operations and did not focus heavily on information dissemination or interaction (Osterweil, Millet, & Winston, 2007; Unsworth & Townes, 2012). While extensive studies into the relationship between email and organizations have been carried out (Meijer, 2008), the use of social media as a means to communicate within an agency, intergovernmentally, or and with the public have not been widely investigated. Internationally, the use of social media by government agencies is one of the most recent tools for sharing information with the public and within the government. In the

US, social media is one of the ways agencies are addressing the call for a more open government, as mandated by US President Obama's Open Government Directive¹. The European Commission also clearly outlines the rules and regulations for using social media to address varying goals: informing citizens, sharing experiences, promoting policies or campaigns and engaging with stakeholders². Analyzing the varied forms of discourse between government and the public is critical in order to gauge the efficacy of social media use for open government as well as to gain a better understanding of the way language is a social practice that is part of "a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), and institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it" (Norman Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

In order to illustrate our framework for analyzing social media use for government and individual engagement we selected two representative consumer protection agencies: one in the US and one in Sweden, because of their official, conceptual mission of advocating individuals. In concept, we would expect these agencies to be the most progressive in their adoption of new technologies for communicating with citizens.

Digital Government, eGovernance, eGov and Social Media

In Sweden eGovernance is a highly prioritized area in which digital inclusion and transparency are key issues³. For example, the Swedish government has had, since the mid-1990s, a clear agenda with the aim of making official services easily available to citizens, including income-tax returns, sick leave, and parental leave applications. As a part of that the Swedish Agency for Administrative Development published the report in 2000: *The 24/7 Agency - Criteria for 24/7 Agencies in the Networked Public Administration*, proposing an approach towards fulfilling the aim of enhancing

¹ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/open>

² http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/go_live/web2_0/index_en.htm

³ <http://www.epractice.eu/en/document/288377>

accessibility and providing service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week⁴. In 2009, the *Delegation for eGovernment* was established, in order to, as it says “strengthen the development of eGovernment and create good opportunities for inter-agency coordination⁵”. In line with this work, which goes hand in hand with the infrastructure development in Sweden, many Swedish government authorities now also use social media tools as platforms for their communication and information activities. In 2010, the delegation carried out a survey among Swedish government agencies, regarding eGovernment and social media, in order to map the use of social media and identify problem areas⁶. The survey showed that of 256 government agencies, about half of them were using some kind of social media: Facebook 30%, Twitter 20%, YouTube 18%, and blogs 18%. However, only 5% of the survey sample responded that they had a policy regarding use of social media. As a response to the survey, the delegation formulated a policy for Swedish government agencies, in order to guide their future use of social media⁷. On its website the delegation makes a clear statement, directed to Swedish agencies, regarding why and how social media should be used:

Using social media can be a way of picking up/identifying the needs of the users and involving them in various processes /.../ Use social media, but regard, beforehand, how they [social media tools] can support the agency’s mandate and consider the legal aspects (author’s translation).

While many government agencies are associated with traditional conceptions of bureaucracy, power and control; consumer protection agencies in the two societies we examine are formed with the aim of bridging the obstacles that consumers face when dealing with official agencies as well as private businesses. For this research we examined the way two of these agencies are using social media to interact with others. The research is cross-cultural and comparative; looking at these practices in the

⁴<http://www.statskontoret.se/publikationer/2000/the-247-agency-criteria-for-247-agencies-in-the-networked-public-administration/>

⁵ <http://en.edelegationen.se/page/summary-of-the-remit>

⁶ <http://www.edelegationen.se/sida/enkatundersokning>

⁷ http://www.edelegationen.se/sites/default/files/imce/filer/publikationer/Riktlinjer_sociala_medier_v1_0.pdf

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) in the United States and the *Konsumentverket* in Sweden. Both organizations have related goals; “to safeguard consumer interests⁸”; “to make markets for consumer financial products and services work for Americans⁹”.

Education is a key practice for each organization and each asserts the goal of providing individuals with financial information. While the CFPB’s focus is on financial issues the *Konsumentverket* serves a broader range of concerns; including finances, safety regarding goods and services as well as “consumer interests within the EU.”

Control in this sense is exercised through the rules and regulations that have been adopted by the organization. While the common understanding of the term *control* may indicate *power-over* or *oppression*, we use the term in its broader sense as defined by Beniger as “purposive influence toward a predetermined goal” (Beniger, 1986, p. 7).

This definition enables a broader understanding of the way power and control are exerted and have the potential to be exerted by many actors. Giddens’ refers to this as the “dialectic of control” and define the interaction as:

The two-way character of the distributive aspect of power (power as control); how the less powerful manage resources in such a way as to exert control over the more powerful in established power relationships (Giddens, 1984, p. 374).

While technology is not a focus of Giddens’ structuration theory, we use Beniger’s conception of “control” to further develop the theory. Beniger writes;

...inseparable from the concept of control are the twin activities of information processing and reciprocal communication...[B]ecause both the activities of information processing and communication are inseparable components of the control function, a society’s ability to maintain control –

⁸<http://www.konsumentverket.se/otherlanguages/English/About-the-Swedish-Consumer-Agency/>

⁹ <http://www.consumerfinance.gov/the-bureau/>

at all levels from interpersonal to international relations – will be directly proportional to the development of its information technologies (Beniger, 1986, pp. 8-9).

Technology is paired with communication and we extend this to mean the discourse created via adoption and use of social media as a technology for interaction between government agencies and the public. We can refer to Giddens’ depiction of the characteristics of rules relevant to subject analysis (see Table 1) and include technology and in this case social media, into the model. Doing so can further our understanding of how rules are enacted and how, ultimately, this action or agency may result in shift of the power structures embedded and established through the rules. As Giddens’ writes, “the discursive formulation of a rule is already an interpretation of it” (Giddens, 1984, p. 23).

Table 1 - Characteristics of rules relevant to subject analysis (Giddens, 1984, p. 22)

Intensive		Tacit		Informal		Weakly sanctioned
	:		:		:	
Shallow		Discursive		Formalized		Strongly sanctioned

As clearly discussed above, one of the primary driving roles of these agencies is to exercise some kind of control, whether it is as a “watchdog” agency to protect the public’s interests or as a resource for education. Social media use by these agencies demonstrates the control they have as gatekeepers to specific types of information as well as mediators to the discussion itself. In the next section we will focus on the two agencies used for this analysis.

Consumer Protection Policies in Each Society

Konsumentverket

The Swedish Consumer Agency, *Konsumentverket*¹⁰, has the Swedish government's mandate to work with consumer issues. The overall objective of Swedish Consumers Agency is 'to safeguard consumer interests'. Its explicit objective is to empower "aware and secure consumers"¹¹. More explicitly that means that the agency performs proactive work, providing consumers with information about certain products, how to avoid fraud online, and how to lower one's energy costs, to mention a few areas. In a case where the consumer requires support in a dispute with a corporation, the consumer representative (or consumer 'ombudsman') will assist the individual consumer in court.

In June 2012, a report titled *The Consumer in the Centre – Future Consumer Protection*¹², was published by the Swedish government. It presents an investigation of how the Swedish Consumer Agency manages to support consumers today and provides recommendations for how the agency should be organized and work in the future to better serve consumers.

When it comes to the Swedish Consumer Agency's activities and interactions with consumers in social media, the report describes the current situation as follows:

The Swedish Consumer Agency is nowadays present also in social media like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Twitter. The social media mainly function as channels for sending, but also for observation for action within the area of supervision. The Swedish Consumer Agency may also sometimes be active in the sense that they interact with the target group and give advice and act guiding (p. 102, author's translation).

The report goes on to state that in the future it will continue to be:

¹⁰ <http://www.konsumentverket.se>

¹¹ <http://www.konsumentverket.se/otherlanguages/English/About-the-Swedish-Consumer-Agency/>

¹² <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/19/59/18/fd6c1ec9.pdf>

...relevant to use social media in order to reach out with consumer issues /.../ According to the investigation government agencies should also in the future use social media as communication channel, something which is in line with the government's view. The investigation's expert group has emphasized the importance that the consumer has the possibility to communicate with the agency through the channels in which the consumer is present. The report shares this viewpoint (p. 215, author's translation).

There appears to be an acknowledgement of the potential for social media to give citizens a different level of access to the agency. Primarily, however, social media is considered to be a tool for education and information provision.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB)

The CFPB is a relatively new agency within the US Federal Reserve System and was established through the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, Public Law 111-203, Title X (P.L. 111-203). The Dodd-Frank Act was enacted to help promote the financial stability of the US through accountability and transparency in the financial system. The Bureau was established to enforce consumer protection law and is independent, meaning the Director of the Bureau, its officers and agents are not beholden to the legislature in order to carry out their duties. According to the Dodd-Frank Act, the Director of the CFPB is required to establish a unit within the Bureau that is responsible for providing "information, guidance, and technical assistance regarding the offering and provision of consumer financial products or services to traditionally underserved consumers and communities" (P.L. 111-203 p. 124 STAT. 1969). Its stated purpose is, "to implement and, where applicable, enforce Federal consumer financial law consistently for the purpose of ensuring that all consumers have access to markets for consumer financial products and services and that markets for consumer financial products and services are fair, transparent, and competitive" (P.L. 111-203, Title X. Sec. 1021).

In many ways, the CFPB can be seen as an example of structuration theory in practice. The organization was created out of the need for financial oversight following

the crisis of 2008. The purpose of the organization is to interact with the public through multiple venues such as education, outreach and information provisions. In addition, the Bureau is authorized to monitor financial organizations. The Bureau is defined via the actions it carries out.

[t]o make markets for consumer financial products and services work for Americans — whether they are applying for a mortgage, choosing among credit cards, or using any number of other consumer financial products¹³

While interaction between the agency and the public, via social media seems limited, the bureau directs users to email complaints and concerns to whistleblower@cfpd.gov. This is interesting in that one of the stated purposes for social media use by the Bureau is to collect and analyze complaints made by the public. While this is not an example of dialogue, there is an element of reciprocity; the complaints have a potential to have an effect on policy. Whether or not this occurs will be addressed in future work.

Theoretical Framework

The idea that technology and control are associated with each other as been discussed by intellectuals for most parts of the 20th century. The British authors HG Wells and Aldous Huxley both argued this connection but from very different positions. In 1989, James Beniger wrote the now classical book ‘The Control Revolution’ about how the modern information society started to take shape as early as in the 1830s, as a response to the early industrialization with its increased production and growing markets. In order to produce, transport, and sell goods at a fast pace and with a high level of accuracy, technologies and techniques of control, such as such as industrial standardization systems, rail traffic management systems, and management systems for manufacturing industries were developed and employed (Beniger, 1986).

¹³ <http://www.consumerfinance.gov/the-bureau/>

Another significant, and much earlier, development towards an information society is the formation of and maintenance of the nation state, as described by Anthony Giddens (Webster, 2002). The nation state, Giddens argues, builds upon the idea that its members are willing to defend the nation, and in return are provided ‘membership services’, such as health care and transportation infrastructures. In order to design the services to suit the citizens, the state needs information about its citizens, such as health conditions and travel habits. With information technologies, information about individuals is collected and analyzed in a highly efficient way.

The step is not far from nation states collecting information about their citizens to corporations collecting information about their customers. Corporations want to get to know individuals in order to offer them suitable products and services. In that sense an increased amount of information about individuals serves consumers in the same sense as census data serve citizens, providing them improved and personalized service. For this purpose, information technologies are ideal tools, both collecting information about individuals product preferences by monitoring online consumer behavior, and displaying and offering these preferred products, in the same online environment. Monitoring customers is, however, only one of the many information related activities that help management gain insight into how products can be more efficiently designed, produced, advertised, and sold. Giddens goes as far as stating that “surveillance in the capitalist enterprise is the key to management” (1987, p. 175).

The agencies we have chosen for this study occupy an interesting position between the nation state and corporations. While it is widely accepted that individuals participate in the structuration of the nation state via adherence to laws and social norms, corporate activity often transgresses these norms; as can be seen on a large scale in the current, international financial crisis. However, these types of lapses in accepted social norms also occur on smaller levels. Consumer protection agencies have been established to help monitor and expose suspect activities and to provide individuals with some recourse in dealing with these larger entities through education and outreach. Social media is an additional venue for these activities.

Structuration Theory

As discussed above, techniques of control are implicit in the information society. Yet it is critical to acknowledge that this type of control is not an external force but is part and parcel of the articulation of societal interaction. According to Giddens' structuration theory, it is important to study interaction, or the "co-constituting complicity in action" of both agents / agency and structure in society (Giddens, 1984). We can think of this as social practices that are carried out through space and time rather than physical structures of society. Considering this, social media use and technologies of control can be seen as a type of "praxis" or as multidimensional and exerting force throughout the system while at the same time creating the system.

two of the primary modes of praxis are reflexivity and technologically mediated relations that enable markets, bureaucracies, and cultural media to stretch across the globe and back again into our local workplaces, homes, and everyday lives (Cohen, 1998, p. 285).

This mediation is one of the potentially enabling features of social media. Which are actualized Beniger's conception of *control* (Beniger, 1986, p. 16).

Adoption and use of social media can be studied using Giddens structuration theory as a guide (Table 2).

Table 2 - The Duality of Structure (Giddens, 1984, p. 25)

Structures	System(s)	Structuration
Rules and resources, or sets of transformation relations, organized as properties of social systems	Reproduced relations between actors or collectivities, organized as regular social practices	Conditions governing the continuity or transmutation of structures, and therefore the reproduction of social systems

Translating the summarization to depict social media use (Table 3), it is possible to see the applicability of structuration theory to the praxis of social media use by government agencies and the public.

Table 3 - Duality of Social Media

Structures	System(s)	Structuration
Consumer protection agencies; Bureaucratic rules and regulations; law	Communication practices	Discursive negotiation of practices followed by patterns of reification
Bank practices	Authority / legitimacy between financial institutions, government agencies and the public	Social media as form of communication and surveillance. Control is reflexive - control of banks by government agencies, control of complaints from the public by agency, control of agents use of social media by policy, policy being part of structure

Orlikowskian Lens for Studying Technology

Orlikowski (2000) builds on Giddens' structuration theory to:

augment the existing stucturational perspective on technology by proposing a view of technology structures, not as embodied in given technological artifacts, but as enacted by the recurrent social practices of a community of users" (p. 421).

Using this conception of the complicity of action in constituting structures in society we analyze the use of social media platforms, Twitter and Facebook, by two government agencies and the public.

It is clear that elements of control are evident throughout the enactment model illustrated in Figure 1. Embedded in each box are constraints that both limit and enable certain activities, which in turn have the potential to change the nature of control or the "rules of the game." This is what Giddens refers to as the "dialectic of control in social systems" (Giddens, 1984, p. 16).

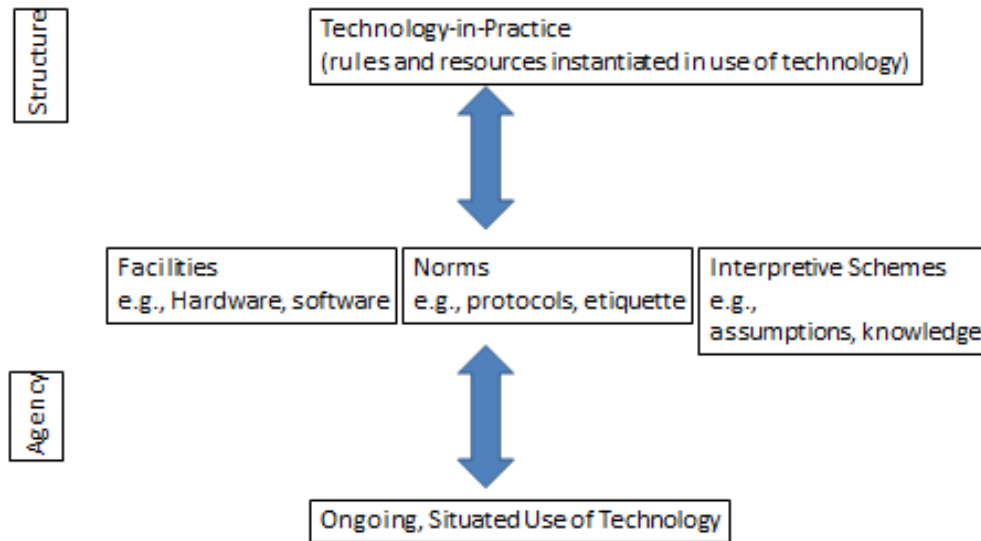


Figure 1 - Enactment of Technologies in Practice (Orlikowski, 2000)

In Figure 2 we insert text specific to our case study to illustrate how we can better understand the use of social media by government agencies and the public. The resultant model indicates both the complexity of social media use in this scenario and the potential for actor interaction. Of particular interest is the area of “interpretive schemes” (figure 2 – middle, right). Using tools from critical discourse analysis, we will be able to determine assumptions and expectations of the interaction via language use. Numerous questions arise here: including, does the public seem to be operating with the same set of assumptions about the use of social media with government agencies as the agencies? Is there a mismatch between the standard definition of social media as a tool for sharing, dialogue and reciprocity and the agency’s use of social media for broadcasting information and data collection? Can we see examples of a mismatch and / or negotiation to bridge it or create a new structure of communication? These questions will begin to be answered in analysis of the data we have collected thus far.

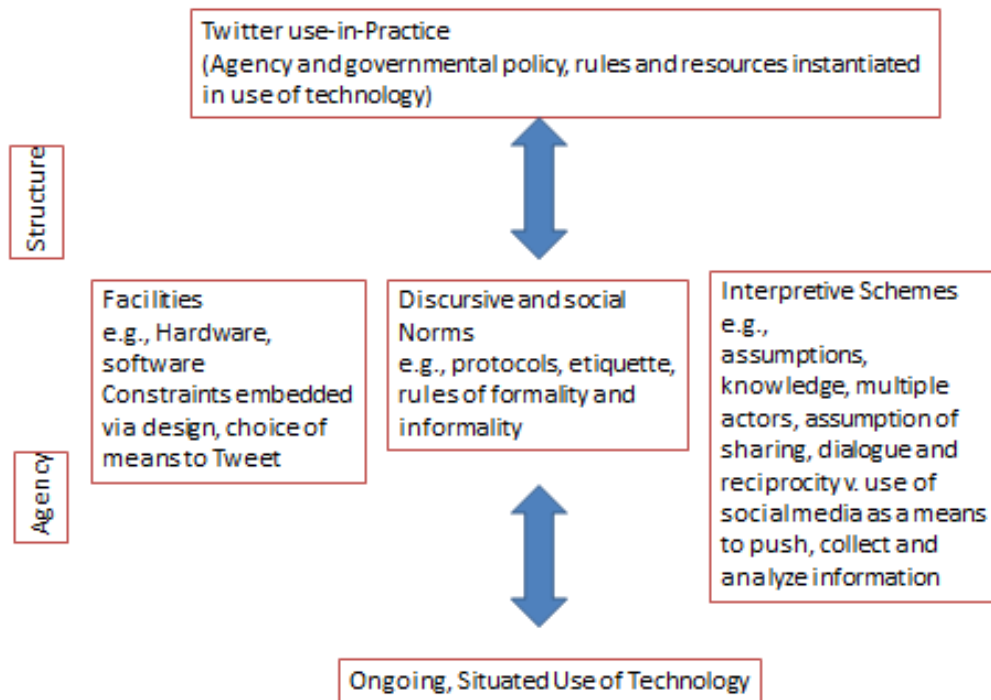


Figure 2 - Enactment of Social Media

Methods and Data Collection

This research examines Twitter and Facebook data collected from the Swedish consumer protection bureau (*Konsumentverket*) and the US Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) over a six month period, in the first half of 2012.

We collected Facebook data with Robertson (2012) as part of a larger data collection project.

Twitter Zombie

Twitter data was collected using a combination of methods. The Twitter timelines (@CFPB and @Konsumentverket), which are a collection of the tweets contributed by the two agencies, were collected using the *twitteR* package in the statistical computing package R. This package allows for the collection of the 3200 most recent tweets contributed by the individuals in charge of the account. The other

portion of the Twitter data was collected using the TwitterZombie infrastructure (Black et al. 2012) querying the Twitter SEARCH API once a day for tweets that mentioned the two agency account @CFPB and @Konsumentverket. Following the collection of the data, the data were parsed using a set of custom-built scripts that parse out relevant social science information (Mascaro & Goggins, 2012: APSA paper).

The syntactical features of the tweets collected by TwitterZombie are provided in tables four and five. There are significantly more tweets that mention CFPB and this is likely due to the fact that Twitter is much more popular in the US and CFPB makes an orchestrated effort to promote its social media presence. Even though there are significantly less tweets that mention @Konsumentverket, some of the syntactical utilization is similar such as the percentage of links. In total, the Swedish dataset has more instances of all of the syntactical features compared to the US dataset.

One of the most interesting statistics relative to other Twitter research is the high number of Reply-to's. We operationalize a reply-to as an @-mention that occurs at the first position of a tweet. This action on behalf of the user signifies that the message is directed to another Twitter handle and indicates the presence of conversational intent. Prior Twitter research (Mascaro & Goggins 2012; Honeycutt & Herring 2009) has identified that the percentage of reply-to's to be significantly less than the percentages reflected in these two datasets indicating the presence of conversational intent in the context of @CFPB and @Konsumentverket.

Table 4 - Swedish Dataset

Tweets	Link %	Hash %	Mention %	Reply-to %	Retweet %
89	78.65%	76.40%	100.00%	19.10%	69.66%

Table 5 - US Dataset

Tweets	Link %	Hash %	Mention %	Reply-to %	Retweet %
2331	76.66%	46.37%	100.00%	13.34%	44.53%

Group Informatics

In our analysis of Facebook and Twitter, we follow a methodological approach we refer to as Group Informatics (Goggins, Mascaro & Valetto, 2012), which suggests that each social media platform and the interactions that occur within them do not constitute one specific technical, social or cultural context; nor are the global cultures that participate in social media easily isolated in social media studies. We view each social media platform as a transport protocol for public discourse, and systematically examine the presentation and emergence of control through discourse from a number of perspectives. Group Informatics includes network analysis of electronic trace data, ethnography, interviews, content analysis and other qualitative research methods. The data are then systematically integrated to tell a more comprehensive and multivalent story than most social media studies, particularly those that examine phenomena in a single social media platform. Prior studies do not systematically study the reflexive relationship between governments and their citizens across different social media platforms as a new type of control and the expression of existing, traditional notions of control through social media using the lens of negotiation of discourse policies and policies of control. Until the dawn of social media, and the routine interaction between Governments and their societies in this less formal, more democratic style of media, arguably the examination of its utility for control was not a salient phenomenon and, therefore neither feasible or identifiable as an area of inquiry.

Descriptive Statistics: Facebook Use

Approximately 50% of US and Swedish citizens have a Facebook account at the time of this writing. Swedish government policies encourage the response by government officials to Facebook posts on the Swedish Government page, while US policy does not presently require this. Though the population of Sweden is approximately 0.25% that of the United States; the total number of posts from the Swedish agency, on Facebook, was more than twice the number of posts made by the US government agency during the period of study. Comments posted on the Swedish site occurred four times more frequently than those in the US. Here, we see evidence

that Facebook is an active vehicle for communication and control in Sweden, but plays a less significant role in the US.

Descriptive Statistics: Twitter Use

Approximately 15% of US citizens and 3% of Swedish citizens have Twitter accounts at the time of this writing. This difference in citizen utilization of Twitter is reflected in the data we gathered examining tweets that mention each government agency (@Konsumentverket). During the period of study, we gathered 89 tweets mentioning the Swedish government agency and 2,331 tweets mentioning the US government agency (@CFPB).

Figures three and four (below) illustrate the top 40 accounts referencing the US (Figure 3) and Swedish (Figure 4) agencies. In the case of each country, we see that the agency itself has a central role, and that each country has political leaders outside the agency who participate in the Tweet network. In the US, we see the President (@BarackObama) and Vice President (@JoeBiden) participating. In Sweden, a politician currently serving as the “Consumer minister” and Minister for European Union Affairs (@BirgittaOhlsson), a member of parliament (@lundhsammeli) and two journalists (@Bcintanders and @mickep2) are among the active participants who reference Sweden’s consumer protection agency. People with public control and information roles are among the leaders in the Twitter networks for both societies.

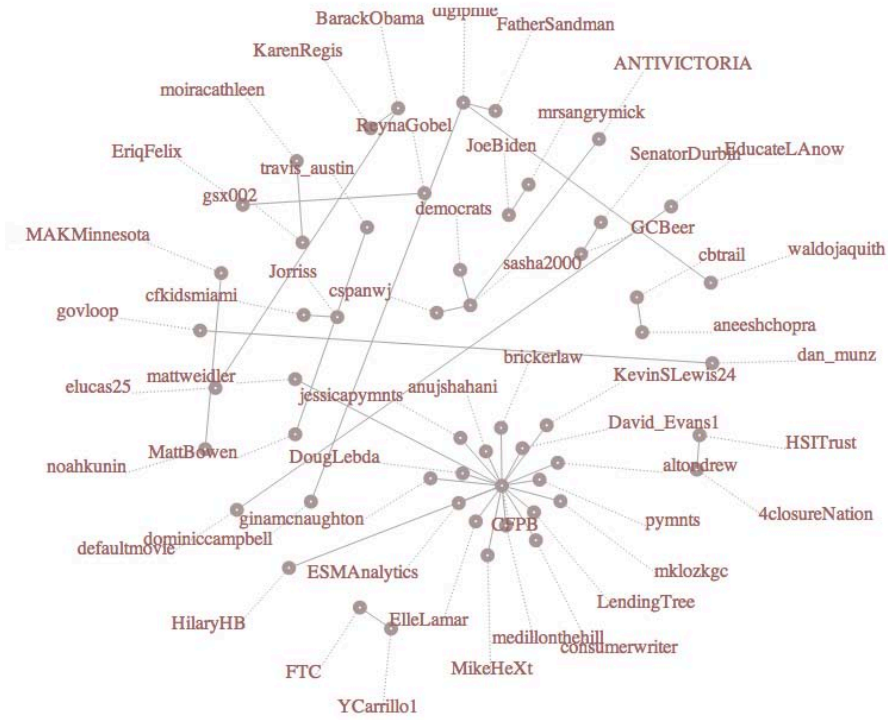


Figure 3 - US Government Agency Tweet Network

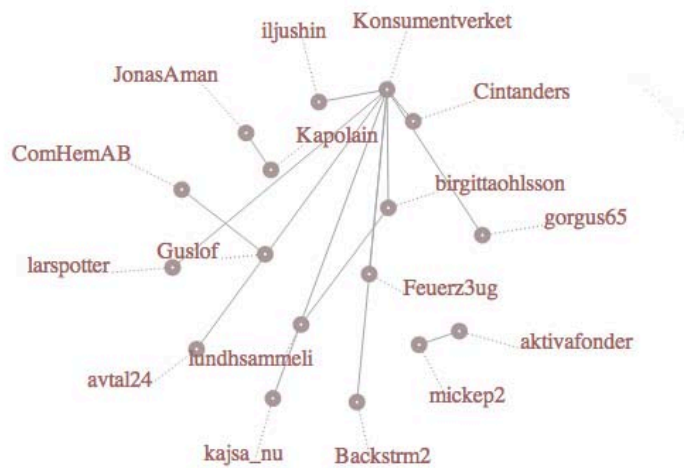


Figure 4 - Swedish Government Agency Tweet Network

Analysis

One critique of Giddens' structuration theory, that was partially addressed by Orlikowski (2000), is how to operationalize the theory in order to use it as a baseline for analysis. We propose a combination of critical discourse analysis, based on the work of Norman Fairclough (N. Fairclough, 1992, 2001, 2003) and M.A.K. Halliday (Egging, 1994; Fawcett, 2008; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). While critical discourse analysis is often mistakenly considered to only focus on power imbalances and the potential for emancipation, it is actually an effective tool to better understand a wide range of social phenomena. Wodak and Fairclough write:

CDA sees discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of 'social practice.' Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), and institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and the relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997 p. 258 in Ruth Wodak & Meyer, 2009, pp. 5-6).

Following data collection both the Tweets and Facebook exchanges must be closely examined in order to identify features of the discourse. While Wodak, van Dijk, Fairclough and others have done extensive work in discourse analysis, little research has been conducted that uses methods of critical discourse analysis to better understand social media (N. Fairclough, 2001; Teun A. van Dijk, 1993; T.A. Van Dijk, 1995, 1998; van Leeuwen, 2007; R. Wodak, 2001a, 2001b).

Discourse Analysis of Social Media

Like most, if not all texts, social media discourse contains linguistic features, that provide a rich ground for CDA. To understand the technical aspects of language use and linguistic features, we propose drawing on Norman Fairclough's implementation of the work of British systemic-functional linguist M.A.K. Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) is important for CDA because it focuses on the interaction between language and other aspects of social life (N. Fairclough, 2003, p. 5). Understanding how language is used in social media is methodologically tractable with electronic discourse like that in social media, enabling and making CDA an apt methodological tool for exploring elements related to structuration theory. Critical discourse analysts argue that a close reading of a text is not enough in itself to understand the way the text works in society. With this in mind, combining the theoretical framework of CDA with the grammar of SFL suggests a robust toolkit for analysis. A systemic functional analysis attempts to uncover *how* a text means what it does, not just *what* it means (Eggins, 1994). Quoting Halliday from an early discussion on the use of systemic functional linguistics, "the linguistic analysis of a text is not an interpretation of that text; it is an explanation" (ibid.). A thorough analysis must include an explanation of the way meaning is made in the clauses that make up the text. This must consist of a broader analysis that includes contextual analysis, an examination of the specific discursive practices surrounding the text and its production, and analysis of the intertextual relations as well as the socio-cultural factors influencing the text itself, its production, and the audience (Huckin, 2002, p. 157).

When we analyze specific texts as part of specific events, we are doing two interconnected things: 1) looking at them in terms of action, identification and representation and how these are realized in the various features of texts (their vocabulary, their grammar, etc.) and 2) making a connection between the concrete social event and more abstract social practices by asking, which genres, discourses, and styles are drawn upon and how are they articulated together in the text (N. Fairclough, 2001, p. 28)

Texts are produced and understood intertextually in a web of interaction. Because of this, a number of themes can be identified through their analysis: shifts in power and control, ideology, processes of legitimation, and obligation some that may be relevant of analysis of social media use.

Much social media analysis begins with the data found in social media. To characterize technologies of control, however, we argue that the most theoretically grounded place to start is with an analysis of government policy, rules and regulations as they relate to social media. The following section demonstrates some of the analysis of social media policy.

Policy Analysis – A Comparison of US and Swedish Government Social Media Policies for Consumer Protection Agencies

Konsumentverket

As a government agency, the Swedish Consumer Agency adheres to federal rules and regulations. The eDelegation has, as previously mentioned, on the request of the Swedish government, developed guidelines for government agencies' use of social media¹⁴, particularly in regard to the legal aspects that should be considered. The guidelines are detailed and build on a number of previous rules and regulations (the Freedom of the Press Act, the File Act, and the Privacy Act, to mention just a few).

The Swedish Data Inspection Board (*Datainspektionen*) is another Swedish government agency which has clarified, to other Swedish government agencies, their responsibilities particularly in relation to correct handling of personal information in social media. This is described in a specific report from the Swedish Data Inspection Board¹⁵. However, despite the general rules and more specific social media guidelines, the Swedish Consumer Agency seems to have a certain freedom when it comes to social

¹⁴http://www.edelegationen.se/sites/default/files/imce/filer/publikationer/Riktlinjer_sociala_medier_v1_0.pdf

¹⁵ <http://datainspektionen.webhotel.qd.se/Documents/faktablad-sociala-medier.pdf>

media use. In the very recent report, *The Consumer in the Centre – Future Consumer Protection*¹⁶, it is concluded that:

[H]ow and to what extent social media are used by government agencies for communication of the consumer support depends on the agency's task and activities and should therefore be decided by each agency respectively. The Consumer agency has worked out its own policies for the use of social media (author's translation).

The Swedish Consumer Agency clearly declares the purpose of its presence in different social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc) and what can be expected in terms of how the agency communicates and interacts with consumers¹⁷. As an example, if the agency requests information or receives comments of posts which can be considered as material in a certain case, these will be registered in the record of the agency.

CFPB Policy

As an US government Executive agency, the CFPB adheres to federal rules and regulations (P.L. 111-203, Sec. 1011). Chief among these is the Privacy Act of 1974 (see: 76 FR 45760), which governs the recording of personal information supplied through citizen interaction with the agency. According to CFPB policy, the purpose of the CFPB Social Networks and Citizen Engagement System is to facilitate interaction between individuals, the agency and the various agency programs. It is hoped that social media platforms will, “increase collaboration and transparency with the public, as well as employees and contractors” (76 FR 45760). In addition to this it is hoped that through use of social media the agency will have a greater opportunity for “effective and meaningful” interaction with the public and ultimately, “encourage the wide sharing of consumer financial information and the strengthening of an online community of consumers, and ensure that critical information about the agency and key consumer finance issues is distributed” (ibid). According to the Dodd-Frank Act one of the

¹⁶ <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/19/59/18/fd6c1ec9.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://www.konsumentverket.se/omkonsumentverket/Konsumentverket-i-sociala-mediekanalet/>

primary purposes of the CFPB is to collect, maintain and analyze complaints that the Bureau receives (P.L. 111_203 Title X. Sec. 1016c4). This information is compiled based on analysis comments posted to the Bureau via social media sites. The personal information obtained through this process is protected through regulations in the Privacy Act of 1974 and discussed above. Each year the list of complaints is shared with Congressional committees: the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Financial Services and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives.

Group Informatics Analysis of Government Social Media Use

Twitter and Facebook are two different social media platforms, and we examine them across two societies. Though the differences in update and use of each platform provides a striking contrast at the time of this writing, we argue that these descriptive phenomena, like uptake of other technologies over time, are likely to more closely mirror population as technologies are adapted. The Swedish and US societies do not have substantial differences in their economies, and access to technology. As the trends of use converge for Facebook, Twitter and government agencies, we expect to see contrasts in the texts, as noted above, but also contrast in the nature of individuals who participate in social media discourse with and about government agencies. Group informatics provides a methodological foundation for integrating SML, CDA and social network analysis to describe and analyze these differences. For example, the use of time distance, interaction type and measures of discourse intent all influence how the connections between people are illustrated in a social network using group Informatics (Goggins, Mascaro & Valetto, 2012). One caution we offer for analysis of government social media use as a technology of control is that the form of social media analysis that takes place in the larger literature on social media must adapt to and recognize the structuration and control oriented nature of government information dissemination.

Discussion / Conclusion

It appears that there is a discontinuity between the government agency's use of social media and that of the public. Social media norms are based in the assumption that use of the platform will enable greater sharing opportunities among participants. There is an implied reciprocity between actors within the same network of social media users. The CFPB on the other hand appears to be using social media primarily as a tool to publish information. While individuals are urged to post to the agency's Twitter or Facebook account, it is not so that someone from the agency can then engage in dialogue with this person, but rather so that the agency has a record of issues and complaints that can be analyzed at a later date. These are two distinct uses of technology and how they are appropriated to continually develop "digital Government" is still unfolding.

eGovernment, particularly the use of social media, may hold the promise of shifting the structure of government and citizen communication from one that is one – *directional* from agency to citizen in the form of a "reproduced permanence" (Cohen, 1998) to one that actually involves participation, dialogue and communication. There are two perspectives to consider in this analysis. First, the relationship between policy and agency interactions is fundamental for understanding the reflexive relationship between the two. Analysis of policy in the absence of rich, available data could miss the rare opportunity for government researchers to observe how policy evolves through discourse. Focusing analysis on the social media streams themselves, without reference to policy, could lead to analysis that mirrors other social media studies, ponders what is going on, but misses this rare case where policy is structuring communication. The extent to which future research examining social media from both perspectives takes these specific phenomena into account will likely influence the utility of the resulting scholarship to society at large.

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