Social Media Dialogue

A Strong Platform for Social Networking among Government Service Provider and citizen

Abstract

Easy accessibility and knowledge provision of social media have increased its user's and usage for diversified purposes. In the present time, countries are now proactively use networking opportunities to flourish in economic, social and development sector. This study has been conducted to visualize an innovative approach "Social Media Dialogue" which uses social network websites that has been arranged by government offices, citizen and citizen journalists. In social media dialogue government officials from different departments discuss about their good practices and give solution to various problems in decision making process. Social Media Dialogue has created a strong platform for social networking among Government Service Provider and citizen. Here, it has been broadly discussed about the contribution of social media in expanding networks between government and citizens and innovative usage of e-Participation to serve citizens. Different data were collected by using observation method as well as by analyzing two social media dialogue. Study findings shows that social media dialogue has successfully brought diverse stakeholders and officers of departments to solve different issues of the community. They exchange their views about their good practice and innovative approaches. Every department shares knowledge and implement initiatives in their own department. Social media Dialogue has become a communication platform between them and it has created strong social network among the departments. Researchers, Policy makers will get more knowledge about different department's activities and good practices which will help other departments to use this knowledge in their own departments.

Introduction:

Social media is helping to leverage a community in social, economic aspect. Utilization of social media can be seen in different countries. The government of Bangladesh with the assistance of a2i is developing its ICT sectors to fulfill the dream of the creation of Digital Bangladesh. Various departments of Bangladesh are using social media to provide citizen different public services. As social media has variation of good practices still the most useful characteristics of social Media is social networking. In this report, an analysis has been conducted about an innovative approach named Social Media Dialogue where different department officers come together in an online platform and shares their good practices and creates Social Media Networking.

Background

Social Media is mainly a tool to communicate with one person or a group of people. Different types of social media such as Facebook, twitter, Insta-gram, Skype etc are used extensively for the purpose of communication. Communicating with the group of people creates an opportunity to exchange views and knowledge of any subject and creates a better social network. Social Network between people and government organization vary from time to time.

In many studies, social media is identified as an important tool for government service delivery and public-service engagement. For example Freeman and Loo (2009) suggest that governments can improve their efficiency, user convenience and citizen involvement by using social media. There are varieties of social media application that can be used by the government departments for different purposes such as public hearing, departmental coordination, and public service innovation, experience sharing and problem solution. It is also widely recognized that the social media empowers the citizen asking questions to government and thereby it can help strengthening democracy.

These opportunities of social media usage encouraged a2i to enter into this arena in 2009 through launching of the Union Digital Centre (UDC) Blog. The widespread popularity of the UDC blog led to the introduction of departmental blogs in five important directorates. Four years later government departments started using Facebook by creating an open Facebook group named "Public Service Innovation Bangladesh" in September 2013. Now, 150 thousand government officials and over 100 thousand citizens are interacting with each other on a regular basis through 800+ public Facebook pages and closed groups. It is worth mentioning that Bangladesh one of the few Asian countries that is using Web 2.0 tools in the public sector for communication and information dissemination. Kuzma (2010) shows in her study that only 30 percent of Asian governments take full use of Web 2.0 social media technology to communicate and disseminate information to constituents, leading to missed opportunities to better serve their constituents.

Bangladesh Government has also taken an innovative initiative to use the online platform of Facebook to connect citizens with the Government. Facebook is connecting the citizens and the government officials. Every District Commissioner has been instructed to open a Facebook Page. Every department has also opened a central Facebook page where they post about their updates continuously. This innovative procedure has ensured Communication Bridge between them. As a result, communication has built up a social network in different department, different organizations and in different officers.

Social Media Dialogue is comparatively a very new initiative which has been started from…….. This is very different than hosting a meeting between the officers of the organizations. The uniqueness of this

initiative is that here subordinate officers of every district of one department can join in a video conference with their superior officers and they can directly address them on any issue and ask for their opinion and knowledge on it. Besides, different organizations and citizens also attend this conference. Different departments share their challenges and solution how they solve different issues and citizen can describe about the problems they usually face while having public services.

For this study purpose, here two of the case study has been explored. Both Social media Shonglap (Dialogue) has been observed by being actively present there. The live session of the Facebook has assisted to get the exact information from the citizen and the government officers.

Literature Review

Social media is such a platform, where people are staying connected throughout the world. Now, in Bangladesh, people from government level are also using social network for serving the general people of the country. There are a large number of studies, that has been conducted to find out the significance of using social networking especially for the government people. In this vain, in a study Linders (2012) stated "the potential implications for public administration, the remaining limitations and rising social concerns, and the possible emergence of a new social contract that empowers the public to play a far more active role in the functioning of their government." In another study, it has been found that social networking has significance in day to day life, where it is focused that first developing social networking sites (SNS) has become one of the most significant elements by which people can develop their personal networking (Lin & Lu, 2011).

There is a large number of study that has been conducted for focusing the use of social networking, where Bonsón et al. (2012) stated that most of the local government has been using Web 2.0 and social media tools for the purpose of enhancing transparency. However, in general concept corporate dialogue and use of Web 2.0 for promoting e-participation at the local level. For examining the significance of using social networking Mergel (2013) has identified three distant factors that influences the adaption decision of social media directors; representation, engagement, and networking.

In another study, Kavanaugh et al. (2012) explained that "Government officials seek to leverage these resources to improve services and communication with citizens." They also added that "Significant potential exists to identify issues in real time, so emergency managers can monitor and respond to issues concerning public safety." However, there are many studies that have been conducted for identifying the significance of social networking, but no significant study has been found that focuses from this beneficiaries' perspective. In this regard, the study has been conducted to analyze how Social Media Dialogue can be used as an innovative tool to expand Social Networking.

Objectives

The main objective of this paper is to analyze how Social Media Dialogue can be used to create a Strong Platform for social networking among Government Service Provider and citizen. Other objective includes:

1. How Social Media Dialogue contribute in expanding Social Networking among officers of one department.
2. Role of Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue) in playing to get connected with each organization to other organizations.
3. How Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue) is extending social networking between Government and the citizen.
4. Discussing the role of Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue) in ensuring e-Participation.

Methodology

The study is based on qualitative and quantitative analysis of the role and importance of social media as a tool of effective communication. In order to study the effectiveness of social media, survey method was used for investigation, as this was found to be the most appropriate method to carry out a survey in order to find out the growing usage of social media in public service delivery. Observation method was also used for the present study. Representatives were present on the Social Media Dialogue to analyze the conference themselves besides the conference was broadcasted live on Facebook, TV and so on.

For this study, the data has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data has been collected from observing Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue) and secondary data has been collected form exploring the case studies. The live session of the Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue) on Facebook has assisted to get the exact information from the citizen and the government officers.

Government of Bangladesh organizes Social Media Dialogue every month. Mentioned Social Media Dialogue had been hosted in 16 April 2017 and 5 June 2017.

Discussion

a2i programme has initiated Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue). Which is an innovative and new platform for communication, connections and it is also a platform for sharing innovation culture to all of the departments of the government. It has also started to implement the approach of e-Participation.

 "Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue)" is a programme where government officials exchange their views and good practices with other departments, common citizens and citizen journalists in video conferences, which have been broadcasted, live in Facebook. "Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue)" is an initiative of a2i using social media to accelerate more social movements. This initiative has created unprecedented example of solving citizen related issues quickly by using social media. It connected field administration with central level administration. It is sharing good practices of one organization to another, communicating with other government organizations to provide better services to the public. Although Social media Shonglap is a new concept, which has been directed by a2i, the success stories are inspiring government officers as well as citizens to do more community work to make prosperous Bangladesh.

Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue) is an innovative method of creating social network among citizen, citizen journalists, stake holders and government officers. It's an innovative method of making a bridge between government and the citizens. Understanding the Potentiality of Social Media, the Government of Bangladesh has taken many innovative initiatives to utilize the social media among government offices. As a result every government offices of Bangladesh are currently active on Facebook. All…. Department has opened Facebook pages, they discuss about different issues and

the higher officials give instruction and solve many problems. It's also creating strong social network among citizen and officers. Two of the Social Media Shonglap has been discussed here,

Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue) on Corruption Free Bangladesh: Good Practices and Innovation:

The conferences were held on 16 April 2017 in Dhaka. Mr. A K M Shahidul Hoque, (BPM, PPM, IGP) Mr. Abu Md. Mostofa Kamal (Secretary, Anti- Corruption Commission) and Mr Safiqul Islam Loshkor (Director General, Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection) attended this social media Shonglap as guests.

In this dialogue, Sub-ordinate Officers of Bangladesh Police, Anti-Corruption Commission, Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection and the Comptroller and Auditor General Office, Deputy Commissioners from all the districts Division and Sub-Division discussed and shared about their adopted good practices and innovative initiatives for serving better public service. The conference ended with the forward-looking speech from Mr. NM Jiaul Alam, (Secretary, Reform and Coordination).

This program shows Good practices and innovative initiatives taken by the government officials to make Bangladesh bureaucratic system corruption free. Comptroller And Auditor General Office of Bangladesh, Anti-Corruption Commission (Dudok) Bangladesh, Bangladesh Police, National Consumer Rights Protection Directorate Bangladesh and every Deputy Commissioners office collaborated and come together to discuss about the progress and future task to have more effective methods to serve the citizens.

Eight Deputy Commissioner Offices were participated with Prime Minister's Office through video conference. Deputy Commissioners from all the districts, Sub-ordinate Officers of Bangladesh Police, Anti-Corruption Commission, Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection, Comptroller And Auditor General Office, Division, Sub-Division, Governmental, non-governmental organizations, Representatives of the community, Media persons, Citizen Journalists, Local public representatives and news journalists joined the Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue). BTV and a2i FB TV has broadcasted this Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue). More than 32,000 people joined in this social media Shonglap (Dialogue) from inside and outside of the country through Facebook. They gave comments consisting questions, advice and suggestions.

Some of the opinions of the guests have been described here,

Inspector General of Bangladesh Police Mr. A K M Shahidul Hoque said that from the past 3 month, online police clearance certificate has been handed over to 60,000 citizens. On the other hand, He talked about a police service where information is being stored on tenant properly. Information has to be collected in three days from local resident and from his permanent address. In these three days, one sub-inspector will gather detail information through his mobile phone; an OC will verify all the information. A system should be introduced to monitor this whole procedure. With the help of Police effort, different districts of the country have taken initiatives to rehabilitate drug dealer as well as drug users. He also invited citizens to assist and take services from police officers through police helpline. He also advised his sub-ordinate officers to implement more innovative ideas so that they can serve citizens.

Director General, Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection spoke about the citizens of the country to become more aware of consumer rights and at present, they are receiving citizens' complaints through e-mail, Fax, Post. In 2016, 1622 complaints were received but because of the availability in the ICT section noteworthy changes occurred. In the past three months, **28,683** complaints came through online. Chief Co-coordinator of SDG stated that, Awareness should rise in public where they can complain and know about the procedure of complaints in online regarding protection of consumer's right. The website address of the national consumer right protection and the

contact number should be advertised more so that citizen can complain whenever their right as a consumer will get hampered.

In this Conference, discussion and planning were taken on procedure of **how to create Corruption Free Bangladesh: Best Practices and Innovation, these are:**

1. In May 2017, Comptroller and Audit General Office, Anti-Corruption Commission, Bangladesh Police, Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection will conduct Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue) with every official of other organizations, Citizens, Citizen Journalists, Representatives of Civil society, Public representatives and press.

2. Four organization which were discussed above will have "social media and innovation showcasing programme" within August 2017.

Good Practices mentioned in the Social Media Shonglap are:

- A citizen journalist named Ashraful Islam wrote during the live dialogue exchange session that a betrayed consumer was paid back his money from consumer right organization, Comilla .Two pictures were given on the post , in one picture he is taking back 25% of his fine, and the other one is about his reaction after getting back his money.

- Senior Sp officer, Sayed Monirul Islam, Mymensingh stated some extra ordinary innovative initiative taken by their police department, From Gazipur Balad to Mymensingh where 65 km long road has been undercover by cc camera, which has been preventing road accidents, robbery, roadblock etc.

- Online police certificate can be found in the online webpage of Jhinadpur, if one applies for the certificate a hardcopy will be sent on his address by a representative. This has saved time, cost and visit. This whole procedure takes four days only, which used to take some times more than one month.

- In Mymensingh, police officers gave their one-month salary to help drug addicted so that they can be rehabilitee. Drug dealers are given money to start small business, which will eventually lessen the supply and demand. Awareness seminars are held in the rural areas in every week.

Social Media Shonglap on the Good practices adopted by the Department of Social Services.

The conference held on 5 June 2017 at meeting room, Prime minister's office. Mr. Kabir Bin Anwar, the Director General (Administration) of the Prime Minister's Office and Project Director of a2i Programme graced the Conference with an opening speech, whereas Md. Abul Kalam Azad, Principal Coordinator (SDG Affairs) presided over the Conference. Among others, Md Zillur Rahman, (Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare) Assistant Commissioner, Gazi Mohammad Nurul Kabir, (Director General, Department of Social Services), Richard Kerby, (Senior Inter-Regional Advisor, e-Government Branch, DPADM, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Prime Minister's Office) and Wai Min Kwok, (Governance and Public Administration Officer, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations) were present at the conference. Also, all the other officers of social service department of six districts were also present in the conference.

The programme was discussed on the online activities of DSS with the purpose of;

1. Showcasing DSS's strategy and plans on how they are delivering services and works online.

2. Inspiring different departments to use social media on delivering public services to the citizens at fast speed.

3. Raising awareness about the impact of citizen journalists and to outreach other citizens through Online.

4. Accelerating social movements to help underprivileged citizens of the society.

5. Identifying issues that need to address implementing different SDG's.

a2i is working via social media especially in delivering public services. This is ensuring the involvement of the journalists and the citizen journalists through social media on different issues of the community. This online procedure is assuring the term "Leaving No-One Behind" by taking the underprivileged citizens under their services. In the past, Manual procedure of giving allowances had many challenges; many deserving citizens were left out. In the past, the administration took many initiatives to prevent it, but it would take long time to solve the issues. Today, In Digital Bangladesh anyone can get involved in the welfare of community or society through online. In one hand, this is encouraging an innovation cultures in different departments of the government on the other hand, a2i is showcasing this initiatives by social media which is inspiring citizen journalists to participate in the welfare of citizens.

Some of the opinions have been enlisted here,

Kabir Bin Anwar, Director General, (Admin) Prime Minister's Office, and Project Director of the a2i Programme in his commencement speech stated that a2i is working via social media especially in delivering public services. This is ensuring the involvement of the journalists and the citizen journalists through social media on different issues of the community. This online procedure is assuring the term "Leaving No-One Behind" by taking the underprivileged citizens under their services. In the past, Manual procedure of giving allowances had many challenges; many deserving citizens were left out. Administration took many initiatives to prevent it, but it would take long time to solve the issues. Today, In Digital Bangladesh anyone can get involved in the welfare of community or society through online. In one hand, this is encouraging an innovation cultures in different departments of the government on the other hand, a2i is showcasing this initiatives by social media which is inspiring citizen journalists to participate in the welfare of citizens.

Gazi Mohammad Nurul Kabir, Director General, Department of Social Services explained that, a project has been launched with the assistance of a2i to train the marginalized citizens so that they can earn their living expenses. Already a project piloting has been finished in Gopalgonj, Tungipara. In the future, 80 units and 2 socio-economic centers all together 82 centers will be opened for giving skill development training which will help to create the beneficiaries as an asset for the country.

Md. Abul Kalam Azad, Principal Coordinator (SDG Affairs) highlighted three points in his statement, 1. Citizen Journalists could be given incentives for their good works which will eventually encourage them. 2. Social Welfare Department of Bangladesh is fulfilling women empowerment, assistance for freedom fighters, Social Safety Net initiatives. In that case the officers should work with sincerity. The government officers should also assist with the citizen journalists. Good practices should never stop and other departments should also follow the example of DSS.

Findings from the analysis

This Social Media Dialogue has unprecedented results in achieving social network among the citizens and the government officers. In this study we have found many more achievements, it has been discussed below:

1. Social media Shonglap have diverse audience such as citizen journalist, citizens, and government officers from different districts which has spread the networking more. Such as, Sub-ordinate Officers of Bangladesh Police, Anti-Corruption Commission, Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection and the Comptroller and Auditor General Office, Deputy

Commissioners from all the districts Division and Sub-Division discussed and shared about their adopted good practices and innovative initiatives for serving better public services and joined in the Social Media Dialogue on Corruption free good practices in Bangladesh. Four organizations and their officers from every district joined the programme and it was broadcasted live on Facebook. The live programme ensured that citizens also can take part on this event; Citizen also gave their opinion on Facebook comments section. On this Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue) …. Citizens were attached in the Facebook group.

2. This initiative has inspired the sub-ordinate officers as the higher officials gave many solutions to solve their problems which have also motivated all the government officers to add more good and innovative approaches in their service delivery process.

3. Intra-Department collaboration has ensured sharing of the innovative ideas of each- other. As a result, it has made the ideas more sustainable.

4. Transparency and accountability can be seen in this initiative because sub ordinate officers are giving follow up in front of their supervisors as well as citizens. If there is any inconsistency in their provided answers citizens can give their valuable comments in Facebook which can be seen and answer instantly as the program was live on Facebook.

5. It's ensuring public service delivery to be faster, accountable and clean. This initiative ensured the term "Leaving No-one behind" by helping the marginalized citizens of the society.

6. Different stakeholders came under one roof to discuss about various issues at once by using modern technology, thus this has reduced time, cost and visit of the officers as well as the citizens.

7. Different Organization is taking initiative by following this Social Media Shonglap method.

8. Highlighting the good practices of Social Media and visualization on how DSS is using Social Media to serve the citizens. Aware citizens on DSS activities and how they work and how can citizen journalist also contribute in this initiative.

Way Forward

Bangladesh government is already ahead of many other developing countries in the usage of ICT and modern technology in the bureaucratic system. One of the examples is Social Media Dialogue, still some improvements are needed. These are

1. More incentives should be given so that officers of the department get motivated and inspired.
2. As Social Media Dialogue is a video conference programme, the quality of the video and the sound needs to get more modernized.
3. Every department of the government should held Social Media Dialogue once in a month, this will ensure accountability of the higher officials and it will also have transparency in providing services.
4. Engagement of the citizen journalists should be given more importance, as they are representing their community.
5. Social Media Dialogue is creating social networking thus more organizations should be involved in different dialogues as it will have diverse solutions from multi- stakeholders.
6. Organizations should be emphasized on reaching the SDG goals comparatively
7. More incentives should be given so that officers of the department get motivated and inspired.

Conclusion

Social Media Dialogue has great potential characteristics that it could be used as a very effective tool to communicate with the mass citizen and to ensure democracy in every sector. Social media dialogue is assisting in building strong social network between the citizen and the government officers. It seems as an excellent example in ensuring accountability, transparency, knowledge sharing, views sharing, and providing citizen's good services on time. Social Media dialogue is an excellent example of social networking for public good. It's a visionary initiative. More Social Media Dialogue in different departments will create more inclusive government procedure in providing services which will help to fulfill the requirements to have successful democratic government.

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