

Understanding migrants' use of government social media: a comparative study of user interactions

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Abstract

The use of social media has now become a routine for governments around the world. Although government social media use was initially considered as an important vehicle of creating two-way dialogue between government and citizens, recent research shows that government use of social media varies widely: from “thicker” forms of citizen involvement in government decision-making in Iceland to “thinner” forms of customer service support in Canada (Homburg and Moody 2021). Despite burgeoning research on the topic, it remains unclear whether the social media presence of government agencies contributes to creating value for government social media users and/or enables their better engagement with government (Gintova 2019; Homburg and Moody 2021). Migrant social media users most certainly form a distinct group of government social media users with specific information and interaction needs. As literature demonstrates, migrants are actively present on social media and can benefit from information-sharing and connections it enables (Dekker and Engbersen 2014; Komito 2011). However, social media can also deter migrants from pursuing e.g. immigration opportunities (George and Chaze 2009; Zhao et al. 2010). This paper will examine and compare user interactions on immigration agencies' social media in Canada and the United Kingdom. Specifically, it will explore the following research questions: how social media users interact on immigration agencies' social media accounts and if government social media users are spreading misinformation.

Key words: social media, users, migrants, government, Twitter, Canada, UK

Biography

Maria Gintova is Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science and the Master of Public Policy in Digital Society program at McMaster University. She holds a PhD in Policy Studies from Toronto Metropolitan University. Prior to joining McMaster, Maria worked for federal and Ontario governments for 11 years. She held positions such as Senior Policy Advisor (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and Ministry of Long-Term Care), Senior Policy/Program Analyst (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services), Team Leader (Ministry of Transportation), and Immigration Officer (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada). Mari's research and teaching is focused on digital and open government, social media



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