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Open data policy in social media industry, subjective viewpoints of policy maker

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Abstract

In recent years, the social media industry and the improvement of the policy environment have attracted the attention of researchers and policymakers. The neglect of the open data policy paradigm in the social media industry is one of the major challenges that have posed challenges to policy making in this industry in Iran. Therefore, in the study, we investigate to extract the views of policy makers on the potential adoption of Open data paradigm in the Iranian social media industry. Using Q methodology, four subjective viewpoints from the opinions of policymakers in this industry is identified and according to the ranking Q cards were sorted, and they were interpreted and analyzed as influential and dominant factors in open data policies in the social media industry.

Keywords: Social Media Industry, Open Data Policy, Media Policymakers, Q Methodology

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Introduction

This paper is aimed at exploring thoughts on if there is a possibility for the adoption of an open data policy for data harvested by Iranian governmental agencies on social media. These thoughts are those of Iranian policy makers and industry players. This paper has a great deal of significance to the social media industry in Iran. Like in other parts of the world, the government owns some of the influential domestic social media companies. Some of these companies serve more than 10 million users. As owners of these social network companies, the government by right is able to harvest data from these platforms. The purpose of the harvesting is to analyze trends and opinions that could aid in the efficient delivery of government services. Currently, the harvested data does have an influence on policymaking. As policymaking involves public consultation, it will be necessary for the public to have access to the same insights that do influence government agencies towards proposing a policy. Else there will be a disconnect in the sense that the people would not know that their opinions are taken into consideration in the policy making process. Hence, there is the need for an open data policy. Despite the novelty of this line of thinking from an Iranian perspective, the fact that data harvested from social media platforms could include personal and sensitive data cannot be overlooked. From an ethical standpoint and from the perspective of privacy, implementing an open data policy for all data extracted on social media for policymaking purposes could be difficult. In the same line of thought, it could probably have an impact on national security.

If these contrasting viewpoints are placed side by side, it is not clear if an open data policy is necessary for data from social media or not. Hence the research question for is paper is “Does Iran need an open data policy for data extracted from domestic social media?” To carry out the investigation, an explorative qualitative research method is adopted for the paper. Policy makers and industry players were approached to air their viewpoints. Those viewpoints are presented in this paper. This paper is divided into **5 sections**. The introductory section is followed by a review of the relationship between media policy, Open data and social. This is followed by a brief overview of the social media industry in Iran, the methodology of the paper, the analyzed results and the discussion/conclusion.

Media Policy, Open data Policy and Social Media Industry

Currently, media policies are now used to create new approaches towards the liberalization, and oversight functions for new media (Valtysson, 2011). Media policy, among other things is an attempt to develop principles in the media system such as freedom of expression, privacy, copyright, etc. (Ots & Krumsvik, 2016). Media policy enables public agencies to exert influence

on the operations of media organizations for the good of the public. (Jayakar ,2018). Finally, media policy is a regulatory activity in the media industry that takes care of the interests of the stakeholders and the control of power in the industry. Open data policy is a new approach to media policy. In recent years the concept has attracted the attention of academics and practitioners alike (Nugroho, 2014, Puppis, 2010). Open data is a data with open license. This means the data is not classified, anyone can use it as well as share or reuse it. Open data policy are policies aimed at promoting or facilitating open data either in a public or private organization (Zuiderwijk & et al, 2014). There are benefits for open data policies. These benefits include: the seamless facilitation of service provision, the creation of economic opportunities, and the encouragement of organizational innovation (World Bank, 2016).

Open data policies currently are aimed toward ensuring transparency in public governance. Its adoption in a private set-up will be problematic. This is especially so if the private set-up is not in possession of data that is for the good of the public. Based on this line of thought, open data policies would not apply to the global social media industry. This is because most data, aside personal data available on social media platforms are to a large extent open data. Obviously, there are cases where users of social media networks block access to their data. They do so because it is private to them and such data cannot be governed by open data policies because it would breach the individual's privacy. But in the Iranian context, the case is a bit different as described in the introduction. Furthermore, there is no clear and transparent policy regarding the processing of users' online data. Therefore, adopting open data policy in the social media industry in Iran could be of benefit to the policy making process as well as the social media industry. This is because people will feel their voices are heard and therefore contribute more to social networks. This will obviously lead to an be extensive social and political impact in the media industry. Perhaps the most important effect will be there definition of the nature of media for the citizens. This will imply that open data policies will facilitate public participation in redefining data processing by media companies (Kubaisi, 2014).

A brief overview of Social Media Industry in Iran

The social media industry in Iran began in 2007. The first market entrants were the international social media companies. These social media companies were widely adopted by Iranians. Domestic social media companies were not far behind in joining the market. Some of them include Soroush with 10 million users. Currently, there are nine national social media active in Iran. These are Soroush, Bale, eitaa, Gap, I GaP, BISFON, WISPI, SYNAA and NAVA. Patronage of these companies is growing at an exponential rate. The government is funding some of these social media are and the some without government support have been able to maintain their activities in the industry.

Although this industry is growing with the help of technological innovations, the laws and policies governing the industry are archaic. Currently, the press law is the basis for the media policy governing the social media industry. But now, due to innovations in the production and supply of content on social media, many of these policies do not have the required efficiency and need to be reviewed (Doyle, 2013). Hence there is the need for an overhaul of the existing media policies to cater for current innovations and changes in the industry (Rajendran & Thesinghraja, 2014). Such new policies include data protection policies and their relationship with open data policy in this industry.
Such reforms will have positive implications on the market and further public policymaking procedures. It will provide guidelines for the processing of user data which will enable market-defining decisions to be made in the industry that will result in the generation of requisite knowledge needed to gain competitive advantage as well as develop better company policies. As, there is no policy regulating this process. Appropriate decision making for adopting an open data policy approach should be considered both on the benefits of this approach (such as increased transparency, social trust, etc.) and its disadvantages (such as privacy breaches, data abuse, etc.) (Algemili, 2016). And for the public policy making process, it will promote democracy and transparency.

Methodology

In this research, the qualitative approach and Q method are used. Q method is used to derive objective facts from the mental perspective(Hutchinson, 2012). This method is recommended for policymaking(Hutchinson, 2012), due to its exploratory nature. The method also enables someone to extract objectivity from subjectivities. Therefore, it is suitable for extracting a policy mix in complex systems. In this way, the diversity in perspectives with respect to open data policy can be explained as it relates to the social media industry.

This study is a case study where the social media industry is the case. The purpose of this research is to extract different perspectives towards open data policy in the social media industry, so a primary model that is derived from a collection of Q Items from the discourse space (social media industry).

The first step in utilizing the Q method was to gather information from the source, in this case, the discourse (social media industry). The aim was to form the Q sample. At this stage, the data collected were via interviews with 21 respondents. Generally, a comprehensive policy mix should at least express the following attributes:
1) Appropriate policy tools
2) Key goals and approaches
3) Key actors and their roles, and finally
4) Governing institutions.

Therefore, in this paper, the discourse (social media companies) extracted and evaluated are divided into these four areas. The Q Items were then identified. The Q item here, are statements or phrases about the various aspects of the subject being studied (danaeefar et al, 2013: 30-33). It reflects the various dimensions of the breadth and diversity of discourse space.
In this phase, 96 items are selected from a set of potential items and from a variety of perspectives on open data policy in the social media industry. After editing and deleting similar phrases, 38 items are selected. The Q items are written on a card, and the Q sample was then designed.

In the second phase, the identification and selection of contributors in the evaluation of Q items was carried out. Studies (tuler et al., 2005) find that 20 to 80 individuals are considered sufficient to reflect the differences on a point of view on an issue (Akhtar-Danesh, baumann & cordingley, 2008). This is because Q methodology does not show the distribution status for each individual on the different subjective viewpoints. In order to prove its claims, the sample of the introduction of the statistical community is required, but it seeks to prove that there is a subjective viewpoint.

16 activists, managers and policy makers in the social media industry were sample for the research that were selected purposefully and via non-probability sampling. 38 cards were provided to these 16 persons. They were asked to ranking the cards in the charts. The cards were ranked from -4 to +4(indicating statement scores indicating a range from “least agree” to “most agree”). The sample performed the task by filling a table in a sheet of paper. The final table, after ranking of cards were identified as the Q samples.

After a factor analysis and the observation of the factor analysis matrix, the score is calculated from the point of view on each proposition or Q card. This analysis was performed to have the factors interpreted statistically. This step led to the creation of "factor scores" tables that exist in the software. Also, Cronbach's Alpha (Table 1) reflects the high degree of trust in Q card statements and in their completed charts, which is based on 95% of the research sample.

Table 1- Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach s Alpha	N of Items
.095	19

Based on the factor loadings and scores obtained, as well as attention to the final interviews, the final interpretation phase was conducted. The views were categorized in the form of subjective viewpoints. This was done, considering the purpose of the Q study and the interpretability criterion for the factors. Four subjective viewpoints of open data policy in the social media industry were identified. They were identified in separate categories due to the existence of similar opinions and views. In Table 2, the number of contributors in each factor or subjective viewpoints, and the factor contribution to their supplementary graphs are expressed.

Table 2- Factor Analysis Matrix (Fourth Classification of subjective viewpoints Participants in the Research)

participation	subjective viewpoints			
	1	2	3	4
P001	.611		-.755	.677
P002	.723		.887	
P003				
P004		.677		
P005	.850	.689	.435	-.765
P006	.654	-.745		
P007	-.712			
P008				
P009				
P010		.865	-.644	
P011				
P012		.543		.881
P013				
P014	.532			
P015	.430			
P016				

Also, the variance level of each subjective viewpoints and its specific value are specified in Table 3. The final analysis of the factor loads was derived from the graphs and the orthogonal rotation method was used.

Table3- The total variance explained for each factor or subjective viewpoints

subjective viewpoints	Orthogonal rotation		
	Eigen value	Variance	Cumulative summation
supporter of open data policy in the social media industry	2.641	20.543	20.543
Critics the analysis of user data in the policy of the social media industry	2.120	18.533	39.076
flexible	1.210	16.832	55.908
Confidence Builder	1.130	15.618	71.526

As seen in the table, the first subjective viewpoints have the highest percentage change or variance (20,543). The Eigen value expressed the degree of variance explained by the subjective viewpoints. In the factor analysis, the special value is equal to (1). Therefore; the main components which has an Eigen value greater than one are meaningful. the first subjective viewpoints, which has the highest Eigen value (2.641) and the highest variance (20.543) and the total variance of 71%, is recognized as the most significant mental pattern. Therefore, with respect to the values expresses in the patterns in the table, none of them is excluded from the analysis.

Based on software output, factor load values were compared and important factors or ideas that are more important are identified. The criterion for identifying the importance of one factor and its analysis depends on the magnitude (over 70%) of the factor load. This criterion is visible from the comparison in the percentage columns. In the table of factor-load factor matrix, the severity of each contributor's relationship is determined by the factor and subjective viewpoints to which it is attributed. Also for the factor analysis and factor interpretation, the criteria for important factors such as factor scaling and factor arrays are considered. In this way, the views of influencers in the social media industry, which are classified in the first to fourth patterns, can be construed. These views on open data policy in the social media industry in Iran ranked low-end cards at the highest level of agreement and the highest levels of disagreement, which plays a central role in the interpretation of those patterns.

Result and Analysis

Different Views Regarding Open Data Policy in the Social Media Industry

Based on, the described methodology, the content of the cards that are located at the end of the spectrum of the Q chart (4+ and 4-), the interviews with influencers in the policy making of social media industry, the interpretation and analysis of views and beliefs inform a very subjective viewpoint, the results are as follows:

Factor 1: The subjective viewpoints of supporter of open data policy in the social media industry

The members of this group believe that the realization of the open data policy paradigm in the social media industry, in addition to developing the knowledge of the policy-makers' to the views of the user, will lead to an active and effective user involvement in policy-making in this industry. To this group of activists and policy makers in the social media industry, the use of user data in policy making for the industry, will result in the realization of the policies of the industry. They perceived that extreme views with respect to the principles of confidentiality of user data as false. They further believed that user data could be used to determine policies such as content policies in the social media industry. One of the challenges in this regard is the lack of understanding of the complexity of policies in the social media industry. People in the group believed that policy makers in the new media industry, such as social media, were different from policy maker in the press industry and radio and television broadcasting. Therefore, there is the needs to analyze user data in these media. In this template, the most important views and most significant views about open data policy in the social media industry. Because the Eigen value (2.641) and variance (20.543) of explained this factor of total variance is 71%. hence a high score.

Factor 2: The subjective viewpoints of Critics the use of user data analysis in the social media policy

This group, in contrast to the views of the first group, was entirely opposed to the use of user data analysis in the creation of policies for the social media industry. The main reason given by these individuals was the lack of accountability of these institution or organization with respect to the quality and accuracy of data being analyzed. From the views of this group, the sense of ownership

of organizations and individuals to the data, the desire for confidentiality of the data, the dangers of repeated misinterpretation of open data, the lack of legal permissions to use data, and so on led to the rejection of the idea. This group based their criticism on the lack of legal mechanisms and the unwillingness of users to use their data. In this model, views are less important than model (1) and more important than other patterns (3 and 4) for the identification of the subjective viewpoints of influencers in the social media industry for open data policy. the Eigen value (2.120) and variance (18.533) of explained this factor of total variance is 71%

Factor 3: the subjective viewpoints of flexible policy maker

In this subjective viewpoints, the influencers on the social media industry considered the legal and institutional needs seriously considering the benefits of open data policy in the industry. On this subjective viewpoint the respondents believe that in Iran the laws related to the use of user data are not clearly drafted and with the lack of legal permissions to use user data, the open data policy paradigm cannot be implemented. The lack of open data indicators, the lack of standardized production processes and the current usage of user data in policy making were among the most important reasons for the failure to implement this policy paradigm in the social media industry in Iran. At the same time, they could see the efforts of policymakers towards the removal of legal and institutional barriers to the implementation of open data policy in the social media industry. In this model, views are less important than pattern (1 and 2) and more important than models (4) which identifies the mental models of influencers in the social media industry in the area of open data policy. the Eigen value (1.210) and variance (16.832) of explained this factor of total variance is 71%

Factor 4: The subjective viewpoints of Trust Builders

In this subjective viewpoints, social capital created by the loyalty of national social media to privacy is more important than the use of data analysis in policy making. This group of policymakers, emphasis on the sensitivity of the Iranian user to the privacy and confidentiality of their data on national social media. They believe that policymakers should not be able so implement an open data policy until they can explain to the users the benefits of using data in policy-making for the industry. They believe such a policy will result in a steep drop in the adoption of social media This group of policymakers were very sensitive to social capital derived from the user's trust in the national social media. In this model, views were less important than patterns (1, 2, and 3) in the identification of the subjective viewpoints of influencers in the social media industry for open data policy. The Eigen value (1.130) and variance (15.618) of explained this factor of total variance is 71%

Discussion and conclusion

By classifying views that were conducted through clustering, the views of each group of key actors were grouped into a common cluster. It can be argued that the views of policy makers in the social media industry are conflicted and there are contradictions on how to adopt an open data policy. According to the findings of this research, distinct views have emerged as influential subjective viewpoints which show different types of thinking and perceptions of the respondents.

In this way, the policy recommendations derived from this research do not produce an either optimal point of balance between views or a consensus. Rather a new perspective on the synthesis of opposing views. This is a dilemma which indicates that adopting an open data policy within the context of this paper will be a fiasco.
However, despite this dilemma, a glimmer of hope for open data policy for social media data harvested by the government can be found. The first viewpoint was that of optimism. It could be called blind optimism as they were blind to the consequences of processing user data. They found value in the adoption of an open data policy. It is a value that is not challenged by the three other viewpoints. This is the value that an open data policy will not only aid policy making in general but it will enable the development of policies that will enable user participation in policymaking. Furthermore, it will help in overhauling archaic media policies, which govern social media. However, three remaining viewpoints presents various degrees of rejection to the idea they do point to obstacles. The fundamental obstacle is the lack of trust by citizens on how their data is being handled or will be handled by the government agency. As expressed by viewpoint 4, the implementation of an open data policy without addressing the issues of trust from an institutional and social perspective, could result in the death of social networks in Iran.

Therefore, if there is a political will towards addressing the obstacles, there is the possibility that an open data policy can be implemented. The way forward would then be for the Iranian government to identify and assess the obstacles to an open data policy in the social media industry and find practical ways to solve them. They should also review the existing media laws and upgrade them to cater for the emerging new media industry. They should also embark on institutional reforms which will enable the processing of social media data under an open data policy for policy making purposes. Such reforms should be aimed at promoting transparency in the data processing process and the respect towards personal data.

Contribution

The value-added contribution of the present research is to model the mentality of factors with a qualitative and subjective approach. In this research, the views and ideas of policy makers of social media in Iran have been emphasized.

In this research, the views and ideas of policy makers of social media in Iran have been emphasized.

- Most of the research in the field of open data policy has been based on the premise of reaching consensus and drawing up common views among policy makers. The extraction of consensus views and the removal of opposing views is wrong in dealing with complex issues, such as open data policy in the social media industry. According to the dialectical approach, the diversity of perspectives should not be eliminated because they are an

- essential component of policy making. Policies should be created by combining views and not just by finding a balance between contradictions. Therefore, all views have been investigated in this research.
- Open data policy in the social media industry, in addition to developing the industry, is effective in increasing people's participation in media policy, as explained in this paper. Therefore, this research can lead to the development of this industry and increase public trust in social media in Iran.
- Open data policy, like any other phenomenon, is not risk free or less harmful, and these damages should be identified.
- The research, using the dialectical approach, has used different perspectives to try to stimulate policy-making in the social media industry. Based on this approach, policy making can be conceptualized as a process by which the social media industry engages with internal actors and environments to overcome the contradictions that the industry faces. This relationship between all actors brings the process of policy-making from the level of each cast to the level of industry.

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