A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF IRANIAN FACEBOOK USERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF USING FACEBOOK IN IRAN’S EPARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

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Executive summary

Background of the study

Facebook was involved in many political activities in Iran in recent year; one Facebook group stated that there were approx. 150,000 Facebook users in Iran (Facebook group) in 2009. According to the Social Networking Websites Popularity Map (maps of world), Facebook was the most popular social networking website in Iran before it was banned. It was beginning used in the eParticipation context by users to discuss politics and political candidates to develop their networks; it enabled Iranian citizens more than ever before, to connect with one other, to discuss and organize political activities across traditional geography and political boundaries to express their political opinion and influence on government decision.

Aims/ Research questions

The purpose of this study was to explore how Facebook users perceive the eParticipation activities on Facebook can affect local democracy? And what were the benefits and drawbacks of using Facebook as an eParticipation tool in Iran?

Method used

A qualitative methodology in the form of semi-structured interviews was utilized for data collection; ‘six Iranian Facebook users were selected as the sample for this study; all results were concluded from their interview transcripts. “Social networking site” and “eParticipation” were the central concepts of this study; a literature review was conducted based on the two concepts to develop a concept frame work for finding the answers of the research questions?

Findings & Conclusions

This study concluded that Iranian Facebook user’s perception towards using Facebook for eParticipation was positive. From the analyzed interview transcripts, the benefits and drawbacks of using Facebook for online participation (eParticipation) in Iran were listed below:

The identified benefits include:
1. Facebook applications were easy and convenient to use for many people in Iran.
2. The design of Facebook was suitable for eParticipation initiatives in Iran.
3. Facebook can be used as an information channel to promote the communication between citizen and government.
4. Facebook can promote the online political participation, and enhance citizen engagement in decision making process.
5. Facebook can be used to create political equality, and increase government transparency.
6. Democratic practices were encouraged on Facebook platform.

The identified drawbacks include:
1. The digital divides and lack of privacy protection may hinder some population to use Facebook for eParticipation.
2. Unreliable information on Facebook may create negative effects on eParticipation.

The findings in this study would help the policy makers to reexamine the use of Facebook in Iran’s eParticipation activities. However, due to the limitation of sampling, more investigations are needed under a broader perspective of using Facebook in eParticipation activities.
Abstract

Facebook was involved in many political activities in Iran in recent year; it was beginning to used in the eParticipation context by Iranian users, it enabled Iranian citizens to connect with one other, to discuss and organize political activities across traditional geography and political boundaries to express their political opinion and influence on government decision. The purpose of this study was to explore how Iranian Facebook users perceive the use of Facebook on eParticipation activities, how can such a social networking tool affect local democracy, and what were the benefits and drawbacks of using Facebook for online participation (eParticipation) in Iran. A qualitative methodology in the form of semi-structured interviews was utilized for data collection. Six Iranian Facebook users were selected as the sample for this study; all results were concluded from their interview transcripts. This study concluded that Iranian Facebook user’s perception towards using Facebook for eParticipation was positive; the design of Facebook was suitable for eParticipation initiatives in Iran; citizen engagement, political equality, and government transparency were enhance by Facebook; the digital divides, unreliable information and lack of privacy protection may create negative effects on eParticipation. More investigations are needed under a broader perspective of using Facebook in eParticipation activities.

Key words: Iran, eParticipation, Facebook, Social Network Tool
I. Introduction

Facebook is a social networking website that was founded in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg with his college fellows Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes. The website develops technologies that facilitate the sharing of information through the social graph, the digital mapping of people's real-world social connections. Anyone can sign up for Facebook and interact with the people they know in a trusted environment. According to the website, Facebook currently has more than 400 million active users worldwide; its mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected (Facebook).

Facebook was involved in many political activities in Iran in recent year; political leaders such as Mir Hussein Moussavi and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad both have fan groups and party campaigns on Facebook; one Facebook group stated that there were approx. 150,000 Facebook users in Iran (Facebook group) in 2009. According to the Social Networking Websites Popularity Map (maps of world), Facebook was the most popular social networking website in Iran before it was banned. It was beginning used in the eParticipation context by users to discuss politics and political candidates who developing their networks; it enabled Iranian citizens more than ever before, to connect with one other, to discuss and organize political activities across traditional geography and political boundaries to express their political opinion and influence on government decision.

Although Facebook is currently banned by Iranian government due to internet censorship, it still worth to explore how Facebook users perceive the eParticipation activities on Facebook can affect local democracy? And what were the benefits and drawbacks of using Facebook as an eParticipation tool in Iran? The aim of this study was to find the answers of the above questions.
II. Methods and procedures

In order to answer the above research questions, focus was placed on Iranian Facebook users’ experiences of using Facebook in any political activity in Iran. A qualitative methodology in the form of semi-structured interviews was utilized for data collection.

Creswell suggested that when there is a problem or issue needs to be explored, and this exploration is needed because of a need to study a group or population, or hear silenced voices; it is appropriate to use qualitative research (Creswell, 2007, pp.39-40). Due to the sensitive topic, the sample size in this study was limited, hence, the qualitative method which is focused on understanding the essence of the experience and can better capture the rich experiences of a size limited sample, could be the best suite to conduct our research.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

In a broad view, this study should be conducted in the context of social networking site and eParticipation; hence, in order to build an appropriate framework for the study, the term of “social networking site” and “eParticipation” must be explained; so we conducted a literature review in the context of social networking tool and e-participation research guided by the Webster & Watson’s approach (Webster & Watson, 2002).

First, the two central concepts “social networking site” and “eParticipation” were used as keywords to search in the qualified information source “Elin@Örebro” to find relevant articles; “Elin@Örebro” was used as the only source for searching articles because its contents were provided by European and Asian Universities, and high quality publishers, as well as digital libraries (Sage, Oxford University Press, ACM Digital library, IEEE, and etc.) (ELIN@, 2010). Initially, “eParticipation” returned only 14 results; in contrast, “social networking site” returned 873 results, in order to find the most relevant results in the scope of this study, we used the advance searching function of Elin@Örebro searched again “social networking site” with two limitations: Facebook should be included in the article’s abstract and should be published in between 2009 and 2010, this time, 34 articles were sorted out.

The second step was to conduct a backward searching in the 48 results to determine prior articles. The abstract of each article was carefully reviewed; literature addressing the following topics was kept for further review: 1) the definition of “eParticipation” and “Social networking site”; 2) the impact of social networking site and eParticipation in general; 3) method or approach to evaluate eParticipation initiatives.
Finally, a total of 7 articles were kept for reviewing; concepts and key findings from the literature review were illustrated in a table (Appendix B).

In the articles, the term “social networking tool” in Shi’s article was defined as “a web-based platform which allows users to build their own profiles in a bounded system and share connections with their friends within this system”. (Shi et al., 2010) Macintosh defines the term “eParticipation” as “the use of information and communication technologies to broaden and deepen political participation by enabling citizens to connect with one another and with their elected representatives” (Macintosh, 2004).

Saebo stated that promoting participation could improve the efficiency, acceptance, and legitimacy of political processes; citizens may demand participation to promote their own interests, either within the established political system or outside it through activism and opinion forming (Saebo et al., 2008). Various applications such as online chatting, discussion forum, blogs on social networking sites provide means for different groups to participate in the value creation process; The rich and complex interactions among social network users, similarly to inter-organizational configurations, can create innovative forms of collaboration, which in turn can enable new value proposals. (Costa & da Cunha, 2010; Klym et al., 2010) However, besides the positive impact of social networking sites on eParticipation, in Scholl’s article he quoted a metaphorical expression to figure out the negative side of social networking site: “Social capital can be a double-edged sword because it can effectively mobilize people as well as complicating decision making, coordination and control.” (Schellong, 2008)

Based on Macintosh’s definition of “eDemocracy”:

“[eDemocracy] concerned with the use of information and communication technologies to engage citizens, support the democratic decision-making processes and strengthen representative democracy. The principal ICT mechanism is the internet accessed through an increasing variety of channels, including PCs, both in the home and in public locations, mobile phones, and interactive digital TV. The democratic decision making processes can be divided into two main categories: one addressing the electoral process, including e-voting, and the other addressing citizen e-participation in democratic decision-making.” (Macintosh, 2004)

And, combined with a rigorous study of OECD’s guiding principle for citizen engagement and relevant researches of eParticipation, Macintosh and Whyte were able to develop a framework for eParticipation evaluation. The framework evaluates eParticipation from two criteria: 1) democratic criteria which assess citizen engagement, transparency, conflict control, political equality, and link between citizen engagement and decision making processes;
2) eParticipation tool quality criteria, this criteria evaluate the tool from three aspects: social acceptance, usefulness, and usability. (Macintosh & Whyte, 2008)

From the literature review, in order to explore how Facebook users perceive the eParticipation activities on Facebook can affect local democracy? And what were the benefits and drawbacks of using Facebook as an eParticipation tool in Iran? Three criteria must be considered in the data collection processes: 1) democratic impact; 2) impact on citizen/society; 3) technical acceptance. These criteria were also used as a guidance to design interview questions.

2.2 Data Collection

Semi-structured interview was the primary method of data collection for this study. The reason to choose this method was because in semi-structured research, the researcher could develop a list of open-ended questions or topics as an interview guide, but there is no need for strictly following the interview questions outlined on the schedule, questions that are not included in the guide may be asked as they pick up things said by interviewers, lines of thought identified by earlier interviewees could be taken up and questioned to later interviewees. (Bryman, 2001, pp.314-315; Oates, 2006, pp.118) In this way, the researcher could get as much information as possible from a limited size of interviewees.

One of the most important steps in semi-structured interview is to decide what questions to ask. After literature review of the two central concepts of this study, we developed a set of questions that covered the criteria of democratic impact, impact on citizen/society, and tool quality; then, we conducted a pilot interview with the first interviewee to test if the questions were easy to understand by the interviewee and necessary for this study. Information gained from the pilot interview was used to finalizing the interview questions (See Appendix A).

There were 3 participants who felt inconvenient with face-to-face interview requested us to conduct email interview instead. The finalized interview questions as used in face-to-face interview were sent to them to collect feedbacks, the purpose of this study and the issues of data confidentiality and participant’s anonymity also explained at the same time.

The form of email interview enables interviewee to answer the questions at his or her own convenience; the chance of a spontaneous answer to a question is smaller, because the interviewee has more time to reflect on the question; the only risk is that the interviewee may forget to reply to questions,
but this can be solved by sending reminders at an appropriate time to the interviewee (Opdenakker, 2006).

2.3 Sample selection

Creswell quoted that the sample size for a phenomenological study can be ranged from 1 to 325, but a sample size from 3 to 10 was recommended (Creswell, 2007, pp.126); in order to find the appropriate interviewee, chain sampling (Creswell, 2007, pp.127) technique which could identify cases of interest from people who know what case are information-rich was used. The participating Facebook users were recruited with the assistance of a local Iranian student. Firstly, we arranged a brief introductory meeting with the Iranian student to explain the purpose of our study; then, the Iranian student contacted prospective participants through his Facebook page and email, at this point, we had no knowledge as to who agreed to participate in the study. Finally, we received 6 positive feedbacks from Iranian Facebook users who agreed to participate in our study, they were contacted via telephone by the researcher, at which time a more detailed explanation of the study was provided, and a face-to-face interview was scheduled if possible.

2.4 Interview

The interview process was designed and conducted according to the guidelines by Creswell. Before each interview, we explained in detail the purpose of the study and the interview process to the interviewee. In addition, we also asked the permission to use voice record device to record the interview for future transcription, at the same time the concerns of confidentiality and anonymity were discussed in detail.

The interviews were designed to obtain information to explore how did Iranian Facebook users perceive the use of Facebook on eParticipation activities, how can such a social networking site can affect local democracy, and in their opinions what were the benefits and drawbacks of using Facebook for online participation (eParticipation) in Iran? The questions presented in the interview guides were used for direction, and were not used exactly the same words or order. Completion of each interview required an average of about 50 minutes, field notes were taken during the interview to note down the valuable points.

At the end of each interview, the interviewer repeated the noted data to the interviewee to make sure the original concern was indeed justified; any questions the interviewee may have regarding the study were answered. The final validation of the collected data was done by sending out the transcripts to each interviewee to get their approval for using the interpreted material in the
study.

For ethical concerns, a plan for confidentiality of the data and anonymity of the participants in this study was carefully constructed. At the sample selection stage, the potential participants were contacted by one of their common friend; only those persons willing to participate were contacted directly by us. Before the interview, all participants were informed that their names and other identical information would be omitted in the study, and this precaution was followed. And upon participant’s request the interview records should not be published and need to be deleted after the study had been completed.

2.5 Data analysis

According to Creswell’s suggestion on qualitative study, the data analysis processes in this study were divided into four steps (Creswell, 2007):

Step 1: Transcribe the interviews for “significant statements that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007), in this study the significant statements refers to these that can help exploration participants’ perception of Facebook in Iran’s eParticipation, the interview questions were used as a guide to examine, conceptualize, and categorize these statements.

Step 2: Develop a list of significant statements, take the significant statements and then group them into larger units of information, called “meaning units” or themes. In this study, validated transcripts of the interviews were analyzed to identify emerging themes.

Step 3: Write a textual description and a structural description of “what” the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon, and “where” the experience occurred.

Step 4: Write a composite description incorporate both the textual and structural descriptions. This step concludes findings of the study, participants’ common perceptions related to the study were stated.

A total of 6 transcripts were analyzed (3 face-to-face interviews, 3 email interviews), the topics which were addressed by at least 3 of the participants were considered to be emerging themes, and identified themes were divided and categorized in table 1:
Table 1: Emergent themes and Sub-themes as identified from transcripts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMERGENT THEMES AND SUBTHEMES</th>
<th>Mentioned by how many participant(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Facebook as a tool</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popularity of Facebook in Iran</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of applications</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content design</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital divide</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust &amp; security</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual/Social impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form groups with common value</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote social communication</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote political participation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribute unreliable information</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase transparency</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage democratic practice</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political equality</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen engagement</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. Results

In this study, we interviewed 6 Iranian Facebook users who directly or indirectly involved in the Iranian political events. The results of this study were presented according to the three evaluate criteria of our research questions: 1) technical acceptance; 2) impact on local democracy and citizen/society.

3.1 Technical acceptance

5 interviewees (Interviewee #1,2,3,5,6) said that Facebook was a popular social networking site in many cities of Iran, it was very popular among educated people and young generation; most of our interviewees used to visit Facebook at least once a week. Two of them mentioned that “Iranian people like to talk about politics” (Interviewee #1) and “they use blogs and forums to discuss [political activity]. Facebook is used more for political discussion. There exist many political Facebook groups” (Interviewee #2).

From the tool aspect, the issues such as privacy protection, digital divide were mentioned by some of the interviewees. Four interviewees (Interviewee
said the privacy setting on Facebook was not clear, user’s personal information could be exposed to public without notice, and many Facebook users were arrested by the government during the 2009 Iran Election period. The digital divide was addressed by Interviewee #1,3,5 because “only educated people who have good computer skill can manage it”, “visit Facebook need high internet speed connection”, “in rural areas it is impossible to access”.

There were both positive and negative feedbacks on Facebook content design. The design of “instant message link to personal email address”, "friend searching" and “the page design” were highly recommended by Interviewee #1, 3, 6; “There is no clear instruction on how to use Facebook…and some of the Persian translations are hard to understand by native speakers” was mention by interviewee #2 as a negative side of Facebook.

All of the interviewees believed that Facebook as eParticipation tool was easy and convenient to use; one of them even addressed that “it is technically designed almost perfect and suitable for online participation for political events or other communication” (Interviewee #3). They think all the interacting functions on Facebook are sufficient for eParticipation, although there are some functions they don’t use.

Trust and security concerns were brought up by four interviewees while discussing the democratic impact of Facebook in Iran. Interviewee #2, 4 and 6 mentioned that information distributed on Facebook could not be fully trust because “the government can use Facebook as a means of its own political intentions”, “the reality can be exaggerated in the virtual world”, and “sometimes people can be misguided by rumors and wrong information”; interviewee #3 also expressed her concern about personal security, she said “Government monitored people on the Facebook, abused some users, arrest people who against the them”.

3.2 Impact on local democracy and citizen/society

All interviewees mentioned that Facebook could increase the transparency, one of them addressed that “Facebook can help the participants know the government’s decision; it can increase the transparency and democracy”, and another interviewee also said” Facebook online participation is changing the political game rules [in Iran]. Politics become more transparent with it.”

Most of the participants also addressed Facebook could promote citizen engagement, because Facebook “can gather the people who have the same [political] view together” (Interviewee #3), “[Facebook users] they use blogs
and forums to discuss [political activity], Facebook is used more for political discussion” (Interviewee #2), and “people can be aware of a wide range of political events and issues from quite different sources on Facebook” (Interviewee #4).

Three interviewees also believed that Facebook created political equality in Iran, “everyone on Facebook can be a reporter” (Interviewee #3), “from Facebook we [citizens] know as much as the government knows” (Interviewee #5), “everyone can express his or her political view on Facebook” (Interviewee #6).

Facebook encouraged democratic practice in Iran also addressed by three interviewees: Interviewee #3 said “Facebook is a good platform to educate people about democracy; many democratic practices which are not able to proceed in the reality can be done on Facebook, although it is virtual world, but it helps.” The other two interviewees (Interviewee #1, #6) also expressed their agreement on Facebook can enhance democracy or democratic practice in Iran.

V. Discussion

From the results, we found that Iranian Facebook user’s perception towards using Facebook for eParticipation was positive.

From the technical aspect, most Iranian Facebook users had no difficulty to use it, and most of the technical functions of Facebook were considered as very supportive for online participation in political events. It could be cheap and fast for many kinds of online participation. But compared to the traditional participation form, the digital divides and language bias of Facebook may hinder many people to use it for online participation.

From the individual and social impact aspect, the Iranian Facebook users believed that Facebook had a large social impact in the context of eParticipation in Iran, such as it could connect people who share the same political view; it was free to express one’s own ideology; information was instantly transmitted throughout the world.

From the democratic aspect, the Iranian Facebook users believed that Facebook promoted citizen’s engagement in political practices; it improved the transparency and democracy situation in Iran. But on the other side, due to the lack of privacy protection on Facebook, it could be used as a mean by the authorities to monitor and arrest the Facebook users that were against their wills; wrong and misleading information on Facebook may cause social chaos.
From the analyzed interview transcripts, the benefits and drawbacks of using Facebook for eParticipation in Iran were concluded as below:

The identified benefits include:
1. Facebook applications were easy and convenient to use for many people in Iran.
2. The design of Facebook was suitable for eParticipation initiatives in Iran.
3. Facebook can be used as an information channel to promote the communication between citizen and government.
4. Facebook can promote the online political participation, and enhance citizen engagement in decision making process.
5. Facebook can be used to create political equality, and increase government transparency.
6. Democratic practices were encouraged on Facebook platform.

The identified drawbacks include:
1. The digital divides and lack of privacy protection may hinder some population to use Facebook for eParticipation.
2. Unreliable information on Facebook may create negative effects on eParticipation.

VI. Limitation of study

Due to the sensitivity of our topic, the sample size in this study was limited, only six interviewees were selected from a very limited population, though Creswell stated that qualitative analysis lies in the richness of the data, not the size of sample, nevertheless, the results in this study could not be used to represent of the Iranian Facebook user as a whole.

VII. Conclusion

This study explored how Iranian Facebook users perceived the democratic impacts of eParticipation activities on Facebook; and the benefits and drawbacks of using Facebook as an eParticipation tool in Iran; results were based on a qualitative study on Iranian Facebook user’s experience of using Facebook in Iran. As one of the most successful social networking site, Facebook had played an important role for user’s widely participation and in promoting eDemocracy in Iran (Shahi, 2008).

Most forms of eParticipation in democratic context are dependent on social networking. This is because democratic systems favor the interests of larger groups of citizens – the more voices behind a political proposition, the greater its chances of success. (Saebo et al., 2008). Without citizen’s engagement
and a democratic environment, eParticipation tool cannot succeed. Facebook as a social networking site which provides a platform for free expression of different ideologies, group debating, social interacting, and information distribution, can be seen as a good tool for eParticipation.

Citizen’s participation is essential for any kind of governmental project, without the widely participation of citizens, we cannot imagine the success of such a project. The findings in this study would help the policy makers to reexamine the use of Facebook in Iran’s eParticipation activities. However, due to the limitation of sampling, more investigations are needed under a broader perspective of using Facebook in eParticipation activities.
Reference:


Appendix A: Interview questions

**Technical perspective:***
1. How often do you use Facebook? (Frequency)
2. How was the popularity of using Facebook in your country before it is banned?
3. How was the popularity of online discussion for political events?
4. To whom do you most communicate with?
5. Which group did you join?
6. Do you have any online discussion experience?
7. How do you think Facebook as a tool/channel for online participation? Is it convenient to use?
8. What is your opinion about the communication functions of Facebook (such as comment, fan group, online chatting, and etc.)? Do you think these functions can contribute to online participation for political events? Are they enough for a political participation?
9. What kind of difficulties do you usually have when using and/or accessing Facebook website?

**Social perspective:***
1. Do you think the discussion on Facebook about a political can represent the user’s real opinion?
2. What are your experiences of use Facebook in any political event?
3. What are the major factors that affect you to join political Facebook group?
4. How about the conflicts between different political groups? (The conflicts between different political aims or benefits).
5. What were the circumstances helped or stopped (hindered) them to achieve their goals?
6. How is the response of political leaders (or government) to the Facebook online participation in political event?
7. How were the outcomes of political events related to Facebook online participation?

8. Is there any individual or social impact caused by these Facebook groups?

9. What are your major concerns of use Facebook in political event?

Democratic perspective:
1. What is your opinion about the transparency of the Facebook online participation for a political event or decision?

2. Do you think Facebook can enhance democracy or democratic practice, and why?

3. Do you agree that Facebook can complement existing democratic structures and processes?

4. Do you think that Facebook group/campaign can affect government policy or election result? And to what extend did it affected? What kind of outcomes was caused?

5. What are the benefits of use Facebook in political event?

6. What are the drawbacks of use Facebook in political events?

General
1. What do you like about Facebook?

2. What do you dislike about Facebook?
## Appendix B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Key findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Towards an evaluation framework for eParticipation</strong></td>
<td>Macintosh &amp; Whyte (2008)</td>
<td>eParticipation</td>
<td>- Perspectives and methods to evaluate eParticipation initiatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **ICT expansion and the digital divide in democratic freedoms: An analysis of the impact of ICT expansion, education and ICT filtering on democracy** | Farid Shirazi et al. (2010) | eDemocracy ICT | - There is a growing digital divide in democratic freedoms.  
- In spite of rapid ICT expansion in some countries, Internet filtering is having a significant impact on democratic freedom. |
| **Government 2.0** | Schellong (2008) | Social network software | - SNS help creating, managing and expanding an individual’s social network, even maintaining weak ties.  
- Social capital can be a double-edged sword because it can effectively mobilize people as well as complicating decision making, coordination and control. |
| **The shape of eParticipation: Characterizing an emerging research area** | Saebo et al. (2008) | eParticipation | - EParticipation can increase the exchange of free political expressions and lead to formation of active cyber groups.  
- The Internet can contribute to revitalizing the public sphere, but may also lead to information clutter, and that political information may become distorted and simplistic. |
<p>| <strong>Building Social Services</strong> | Klym et al. (2010) | online social networking tools | - Social networking applications provide a means for groups of friends to participate in the value creation process. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who are the players? Finding and characterizing stakeholders in social Networks</th>
<th>Costa &amp; da Cunha (2010)</th>
<th>Social network stakeholder</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The rich and complex interactions among social network users, similarly to inter-organizational configurations, can create innovative forms of collaboration, which in turn can enable new value proposals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Continuance of Online Social Networks: How to Keep People Using Facebook?</td>
<td>Shi et al. (2010)</td>
<td>Social networking tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Motivations of using Facebook include: maintaining offline contacts, meeting new people, information seeking, and entertainment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>