

Factors Impacting Social Media Adoption in Public Sector Organizations: Case of Oman

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Abstract: Millions of people around the globe are daily interacting with each other and with organizations through social media platforms, which is a very convenient way of communication. Accordingly, public sector organizations around the world realized the importance of social media and thus are increasingly using it for communicating with their citizens. Although social media provides various benefits but risks also exist that are not only related to time, money, and effort losses; but also extends to include risks such as reputation and trust losses. Hence, it is critical for organizations to understand which factors impact the social media adoption most. Based on the literature review, this study initially identifies 20 factors that are important for social media adoption. We short-listed the identified factors to nine, based on the criteria that three or more researchers identified them as important in their studies. Then we asked experts in social media in Oman to rank those factors in the context of their importance. We used the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) method to rank those nine factors. Results of the AHP show that some factors such as Social Media Strategy, Training and experience of Staff, Community Influence and Top Management Support are more important in a developing country as compared to developed countries.

Keywords: Social Media Adoption, Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), Public Sector, Impacting factors, Oman.

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1. Introduction

Social media can be described as internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (UGC). It is built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 [1]. Social media includes a long list of platforms and applications but certain third party social media applications are at the top of the hierarchy. These include Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which are used by millions of individuals around the globe thus making them a fertile place for communication and engagement. In fact, Facebook for instance has almost 1.65 billion monthly active users, YouTube has about 1 billion users and Twitter has approximately 320 million monthly active users [2].

Realizing the success of social media, a number of private sector organizations used social media for attracting new customers, getting feedback from their existing customers, and soliciting new ideas for improving their products and services. Also, governments are increasingly adopting social media to improve their communication with the public and improving their services [3]. Despite the benefits, concerns also exist that social media may lead to

unplanned consequences. For example, it may lead to an increase in attention to public sector operations, which some would like to avoid. In addition, the communication must be trustworthy, reliable, and consistent which after all will require behavioral and operational changes within organizations [4]. Moreover, Social media consumes time and resources, and the failure to maintain it may lead to monetary loss, damaged reputation, and reduced public trust in government [5]. To get the benefits and avoid the risks of social media, a good implementation strategy is required [6]. Public sector organizations must evaluate their current implementation of social media to enable addressing strengths and weaknesses and therefore know where they are and where they want to be.

In Oman, the adoption of social media by the public sector is growing. Today, most of country level organizations use social media and the most used platforms include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and LinkedIn [7], but little has been done in terms of evaluating the factors that impact the adoption. This study aims to investigate the factors influencing social media adoption in a developing country; Oman. The research question therefore is

defined as; what factors significantly influence the adoption of social media in Omani public sector organizations.

This paper is organized in the following way. In the next section, we discuss adoption of social media in public sector organizations with special reference to Oman. We also discuss some of the challenges in social media adoption. In section 3, we review the literature and identify a number of factors deemed important in the adoption of social media. Out of 20 factors identified in the literature review, we selected nine factors that were reported by at least 3 researchers as important. Section 4 reports results of ranking those factors in Omani context. Finally, we conclude with the major findings of our study in section 5.

2. Context of Social Media

2.1 Social Media Adoption by Public Sector Organizations

Social media creates new possibilities for the public to engage with the government [5]. Individuals are extensively using social media in both professional and social life and consequently they look forward to interacting with modern, open, and effective government organizations [5]. Governments adopt social media because of the various benefits offered by it such as improving services, aiding communication and interaction with citizens, increasing citizen's engagement, facilitating information exchange, and improving governance [3]. Moreover, social media enables transparent, interactive, participatory, and collaborative public engagement [8, 9]. It is seen as a powerful tool that helps reinvent government-citizen relationships and can also help in the transfer of best practices between public sector organizations. However, along with the benefits, risks and barriers also exist. For example, legislative requirements are a concern that must be understood when planning social media adoption. Moreover, along with the technical requirements, there are concerns regarding organizational changes required for successful adoption such as personnel training [6]. Public sector organizations must keep in mind the challenges and risks of adopting social media as unsuccessful implementation may lead to monetary loss, damaged reputation, and reduced public trust on government [5]. Vela et al. [6] argue that social media is new and organizations need to have a better understanding of its benefits, risks, barriers, and strategic use before adopting it.

2.2 Social Media and Omani Public Sector Organizations

The primary reason for Omani public sector organizations to adopt social media was the directive sent by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in April 2011 for government entities to develop communication channels with citizens [8]. Most of the organizations

have adopted social media regardless of the fact that some are very active while some are not. Moreover, in a personal interview with Mrs. Zawan AL-Sabti, an administrator in Information Technology Authority (ITA), she noted that some organizations have not yet adopted social media. The main reason for this is that their top management is not convinced of its benefits and they are also apprehensive about the risks associated with social media. The Information Technology Authority (ITA) leads the implementation and use of social media by government organizations as well as providing advice and training [8]. The ITA has established the electronic participation guidelines for using social media in government entities as a direct response to HIS Majesty's directives, which suggest that social media uses include raising awareness of certain issues, building credibility with specific audience groups, engaging the public in policy consultation and using it as a collaborative tool between government entities [8]. The guidelines emphasize the concepts of transparency, participation, and collaboration between government entities and the public.

Based on a list of public sector entities published by ITA [10] along with Google search, we identified 72 public sector organizations that are using social media. In order to avoid any false or impersonated accounts, we first visited the official websites of these organizations and then collected social media accounts from the websites. Results showed that out of the 72 analyzed organizations, Facebook and Twitter are the most used platforms by 94.4% and 91.6% of the organizations respectively. YouTube is used by 70.8% of the organizations followed by Instagram 52.7%. Table 1 shows the distribution of usage between 11 platforms.

Table 1. Social media usage by 72 Omani public sector organizations

Social Media Platform	Usage Percentage
 Facebook	94.4%
 Twitter	91.6%
 YouTube	70.8%
 Instagram	52.7%
 Google+	9.7%
 LinkedIn	5.5%
 Whatsapp	2.7%
 Vimeo	1.3%
 TripAdvisor	1.3%
 Google Picasa	1.3%
 Panoramio	1.3%

2.3 Social Media Adoption Challenges

Private and public sector organizations have adopted social media for different reasons. Despite that, the adoption is not always based on a long-term strategy but rather on trial-and-error, that consumes many organizational resources [6]. Investments as well as commitment are required for new skills, training,

technology purchases, and network infrastructure upgrades [5]. According to Mergel et al. [11], organizations adopt social media by either first establishing the policies and then adopting social media, or by adopting social media first and later establishing the policies through trial-and-error. Furthermore, the adoption practices used by organizations from different industries evolves from informal bottom-up practices and experimentations by different individuals in the organization [11]. These practices need resources and to get the resources, tangible impacts are shown to top management. The process then turns to top-down decision making. Nevertheless, because it is not clear on how to reach superiority in using social media, organizations usually overlook potential threats and begin using social media in an unorganized way [12]. Public sector organizations are expected to quickly implement transparency, participation, and collaboration. Therefore, these organizations tend to introduce many projects, which eventually cannot be supported due to current inadequate resources and capabilities. In the United States, federal agencies responded to the open government directives by introducing public engagement through several social media initiatives but many of the intended outcomes could not be delivered due to technological and financial challenges. Moreover, Public engagement through social media is a new area and public sector organizations have little knowledge and experience regarding social media implementation [5].

According to the above literature review, the adoption of social media by public and private sector organizations is characterized as a process that evolves through trial-and-error and is implemented in an unorganized way. In addition, it begins as a bottom-up initiative and then turns to top-down decision making after positive tangible impacts are seen. This process is time consuming and uses up various organizational resources. Consequently, positive tangible impacts are produced slowly. Therefore, organizations must understand what factors have the greatest impacts on the adoption of social media, which will help on adjusting the organization's focus towards these factors. This will help establishing organizational and technological capabilities in an organized way and also avoid the consumption of resources caused by trails-and-errors, which will also cause the delay of attaining tangible results.

3. Factors Influencing Social Media Adoption in Public Sector

We conducted an extensive review of literature on social media adoption. Based on the literature review we identified 20 Critical Success Factors. Table 2 below summarizes the 20 identified factors. Although in reviewed literature very little studies have empirically investigated factors, therefore we also

included exploratory studies [13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20]. For the purpose of this study and to select a fewer number of factors, we selected a total of nine factors that have been identified as important by at least three researchers. Next, we discuss these nine factors.

3.1 Top Management Support

According to Sharif et al. [13], top management support or management drive is a critical factor that ensures a successful social media adoption. It refers to management providing resources and encouraging employees to explore and use social media. Hoffmann et al. [15] refers to top management support as “the willingness of top-level managers to facilitate and promote entrepreneurial behavior, including the championing of innovative ideas and providing the resources people require to take entrepreneurial actions”. Along with the resources, Rosacker & Olson [20] add that authority also must be present. Furthermore, Keong [22] notes that management support is seen as a critical factor for a successful IS implementation and is a key factor for an increased level of success and satisfaction. Zheng [18] explores social media usage in Chinese government and found that management provides support by words but no personnel, financial, and material resources are provided. This shows that top management support should not be only words of encouragement. It must also provide concrete financial, personnel, and other required resources.

3.2 Training, Experience, and Staff Resources

Several authors have emphasized the importance of training and experience for a successful social media implementation along with designating a full-time staff. According to Hoffmann et al. [15] experience in using social media is an important variable as employees who have prior experience will face less challenges and will regard social media as something that is easy to use. Regardless of that, Hoffmann et al. [15]. find that many of the employees who are involved in social media have no experience, which results in greater fears in terms of privacy and security issues.

Table 2. Critical Success factors of social media adoption.

No.	Factors	Authors														Frequency					
		Seigler [27]	Davidson [21]	Sharif et al. [13]	Feeney & Welch [31]	Ganapati & Reddick [24]	Jetzek , Avital and Andersen [23]	Gharawi et al [14]	Hoffmann et al. [15]	Khan, Swar & Lee [26]	Oliveira & welch [30]	Rosacker & Olson [20]	Sharif, Troshani & Davidson [16]	Uthayasanakar [17]	Zheng [18]		Garrett [42]	Amin et al [43]	Mousavi & Demirkan [33]	Keong [44]	Gimoi [45]
1	Top Management Support		X	x				X			X	x		x	X		X	X			9
2	Training, Experience, and Staff Resources					x	x	x	x		x	x			x	x					8
3	Perceived Risk			x	x			x		x		x	x	x						x	8
4	Financial & Technical Resources	x				x							x	x							4
5	Relative Advantage			x	x							x							x		4
6	Community Influence			x						x		x		x							4
7	Social Media strategy and Policies		x	x								x			x						4
8	Compatibility											x				x			x		3
9	Centralization	x			x									x							3
10	Organizational Innovativeness	x									x										2
11	Complexity of Social Media														x				x		2
12	Costs																x		x		2
13	Autonomy	x						x													2
14	Bandwagon Effect			x									x								2
15	Formalized Culture														x	x					2
16	Self-Efficacy		x					x													2
17	Time Resources							x							x						2
18	Performance Expectancy							x													1
19	Job satisfaction				x																1
20	Social Influence							x													1

This suggests that having experience in using social media helps reduce fears and skepticisms. In his exploratory study, Gharawi et al. [14] find that staff resources and training resources represent the most critical factors that face government agencies when adopting social media. Similarly, Oliveira & welch [30] note that staff skills and abilities are the most applicable capabilities required when using social media by local government in the U.S. Oliveira and welch [30] find that the existence of a dedicated IT manager proved significant on most of the statistical models in his empirical study which are information dissemination, feedback, participation, and collaboration. They conclude that an IT manager is critical for the success of using social media in the investigated models. In addition, Rosacker & Olson [20] investigate critical success factors of information systems implementation in public sector organizations and find that personnel is among the critical success factors. This refers to personnel recruitment and selection as well as training. Moreover, in his exploratory study, Zheng [18] find that most public sector organization assign existing staff to operate social media on a part time and rotation basis while only few organizations assign full time staff. An interesting finding by the author is that there is an uncertainty about the future of social media and therefore employees do not want to work on it full time because they are afraid that their positions might be

“marginalized” if their managers shifted their attention from social media. Another finding by the same author is the fact that social media operators lack the required skills and experience, which suggests the need for training. Jetzek et al. [23] refer to training as ICT training and on-job training that ensures improving employees skills. The authors find that the lack of technical skills and abilities as well as the lack of data literacy are among the major obstacles for an efficient open government data dissemination in public sector organizations. In addition, Ganapati & Reddick [24] investigate the use of ICT for open government in U.S municipalities and find that employees lack suitable training, which came as the second most important factor after adequate funding. Moreover, Garrett [25] investigate successful social media implementation and find a significant relationship between training and expertise and the number of social media platforms used. He justifies this relationship by noting that in order to use more social media platforms, more training is required. Regardless of the results, he find that most of the respondents in his survey did not have any training in the use of social media. He further notes that the staff uses informal expertise such as family and friends, to help them with social media usage, as there is a lack of social media training. Interestingly, using informal outside expertise seems to be helpful and yields positive

impacts. Finally, he concludes that although training and outside expertise along with other factors do not guarantee successful social media implementation but they help to increase the probability of success.

3.3 Perceived Risks

Reviewed literature interprets perceived risks in different ways when it comes to social media usage by public sector organizations. Regardless of that, major risks include information security risks, privacy risks, and the influence of a closed and risk reluctant culture. According to Sharif et al. [16] and Sharif et al. [13], perceived risks include the fear of negative comments sent by the public, which may harm the organization's reputation. Moreover, employee's irresponsible use of social media as well as spyware, viruses, and malware, could harm the organization's network and are also considered as risks. Gharawi et al. [14] consider perceived risks as risks related to security such as the security of the organization's infrastructure, citizen's security, and the security of sensitive data. In their study, Khan et al. [26] investigate various risks such as psychological risks, which refers to the fear of uncertainty of social media usage that may result in having a negative effect on the user's feelings. They also refer to the effects of negative comments and complaints, which eventually affect social media usage in public sector. Another risk is the risk of privacy, which includes identity fraud, and the disclosure of user's personal information. They argue that when using social media, public sector organizations are concerned about the sharing of their information. Another type of risk noted by Zheng [18] who investigates social media usage in Chinese public sector organizations is "a closed and risk aversive culture". Zheng [18] notes the fact that a closed and risk reluctant culture is considered as an obstacle when managing social media in public sector organizations. In the context of the Chinese culture, the author for instance notes that openness and conversation with the public are considered sources of risks. He even found that government organizations fear citizen's negative comments and feel that criticism about the government will "challenge and weaken government authority". The author also discusses the risk of information security and confidentiality, which may lead government organizations to selectively post or remove information because they think it will reflect negatively on the government. Therefore, government agencies usually release information in their favor. Zheng [18] notes that in this way, any negative information will not be posted.

3.4 Financial & Technical Resources

According to Seigler [27], social media adoption requires financial and technological resources, which he refers to as organizational resources. These include having support and assistance for social media usage, financial resources, and access to software, hardware, and network services. In addition, Zheng [18] reports lack of funds, equipment, and professional support. It is

clear that funds and technical resources are used together when referring to social media adoption along with the reference to IT department. In fact, authors noted that open government initiatives are financed through IT funds [27]. Some explanations to this issue are found in Zheng's [18] study, that micro blogging "is a new task" and no budget is allocated for it. In addition, "Bureau of Finance" did not list this task in the budget list and therefore they cannot allocate funding for it. Eventually, Ganapati & Reddick [24] find that financial funding is seen as the main challenge for open government implementation although social media platforms are free but other costs arise such as labor costs. According to Zheng [18], costs include operation, personnel, training, equipment, and telecommunication costs. Despite this, Zheng [18] finds that financial funding depends on "leadership attention". That is, when the firm pays attention to "government micro blogs", then financial funding will not be a problem.

3.5 Relative Advantage

Relative advantage and perceived benefits or benefits of social media are terms that are usually used interchangeably and appear in studies by Sharif et al [16], Sharif et al. [13], and Gimoi [28]. According to Sharif et al [13], relative advantage is an important factor that influences social media adoption as well as being a key driver for the adoption by the government. Similarly, Gimoi [28] also find that social media adoption is most significantly influenced by this factor. A noteworthy finding by Sharif et al [13] indicates that active adopters are those who are aware of the benefits of social media. Some of the identified benefits by Sharif et al. [16] include ease of access, instant communication, low maintenance and operational costs and the ability to create a two-way communication with the community. The authors argue that these benefits help build an improve communication channel with the audience along with a wider reach, specifically with younger groups who are more involved with social media.

3.6 Compatibility

Ainin et al. [29] report that compatibility refers to the extent by which an innovation fits with the adopter's current values, practices, and needs. They also note that organizations are more likely to adopt a technology when it is perceived to be compatible with existing applications systems. In their study, which investigated Facebook usage by small and medium enterprises, the authors found that compatibility has a significant influence. They considered compatibility in relation to IT infrastructure, beliefs and values, and the business strategy. A similar finding by Gimoi [28] suggests that compatibility is a significant factor influencing the adoption of social media. The author considers the factor in relation to the consistency of social media with business and industry as well as the experience of employees using it. In addition, Sharif

et al. [16] investigate social media by public sector organizations and considered social media compatibility as being compatible with the current organization's IT infrastructure as well as with mobile devices used by the public. In spite of this, the authors note that compatibility plays a vital role in government's adoption of social media because it requires approximately no additional investment given the fact that social media can be used within the current infrastructure.

3.7 Community Influence

In their study that investigated the use of social media by U.S local government, Oliveira & Welch [30] used the term "civil society influence" to refer to citizens' influence. The authors include this variable under the "external stakeholder influence" dimension, which also includes local government influence and state & federal influences. Results show that civil society influence has significant and positive effects on the use of social media while local government influence and state & federal influences showed negative effects. The authors emphasize the importance of external influences and suggest that considering these factors promotes the use of social media. Sharif et al. [13] on the other hand, use the term "community demand" and note that it is considered the main drive behind social media adoption. The growing usage of social media by the community has made it acceptable for governmental organizations to also use it to enable communication and responsiveness. The authors find that community demand influences social media adoption as it depends on daily interaction. Therefore, government organizations are required to go beyond one-way communication and adopt a more participatory method to enable engagement with the community [13]. Zheng [18] who investigates social media use by Chinese government agencies, notes that citizen's interest in "participating in public affairs", has driven government agencies to use micro-blogging platforms to communicate and interact with citizens. According to the above, increasing social media usage by citizens is not the only reason for social media adoption by governments but also the fact that citizens are interested in participating in the affairs of the government.

3.8 Social Media strategy and Policies

Social media is new and the adoption of social media is not always based on a long-term strategy. Usually it is based on trial-and-error, which causes consumption of resources [6]. This statement is also confirmed by Mergel et al. [11], who add that organizations either first establish policies and then adopt social media or directly adopt social media and then establish policies. In addition, the fact that it is not clear on how to reach superiority in using social media, organizations tend to overlook potential threats and start using social media in an un-organized way [12]. According to Sharif et al. [16], respondents to their survey argue that perceived risks drive the development of social media policies in

the form of formal operating procedures. One interviewee explains that "When we have the guidelines, it simply describes what can and can't be done in the social media channel, how to handle negative comments and racist remarks, for example things like this surely help in building confidence among the staff as well as management" [16]. In addition, Sharif et al. [13] note that policies shape the procedures and guidelines relative to social media usage. The authors report that interviewees say "with no or incomplete policies the organization faces uncertainties in dealing with negative or offensive contributions or remarks, legal issues, security problems and even inappropriate use of social media by staff". The authors suggest that policies help handling issues as they emerge [13]. Furthermore, in their study, Sharif et al. [13] report that respondents say that without suitable policies, it will not be easy for them to attain social media benefits. To quote a respondent "the biggest challenge was the policies and guidelines in the organization and deciding how social media should be adopted and who should be able to use it; how strict we should be with it" [13]. The authors find that having social media policies is among the factors that influence social media adoption by Australian local government organizations and is considered as one of the organizational factors that drive the adoption. Similarly, Garrett [25] finds that having formalized processes as well as having a clear strategy are important factors that help in reducing the perception of the complexity of social media among other factors such as expertise and having sufficient time. In fact, the authors argue that having formal processes and a clear social media strategy indicates a "mechanistic culture" and helps viewing social media as less complex. The authors emphasize that even in small teams working in social media; a clear strategy is associated with effective implementation as well as being a critical predictor of successful implementation.

3.9 Centralization

According to Feeney & Welch [31], centralization is related to actions that cannot be made until a higher authority approves them, individual decisions are discouraged and where even small issues must be referred to someone with higher authority. The authors investigate the use of social media in relation to perceptions of e-government outcomes and find that respondents who work in centralized organizations report negative outcomes. This is possible because decisions of adoption initiatives are taken without engaging individual managers. Zheng [18] points out that the centralized review process applied in government, restrains micro-blogging. The author explains that in order to post information, some agencies use the old-fashioned content review process across different levels, which prevents timely interaction with citizens and emergency response. One of the author's interviewees notes how they get

approval only for critical information while other content is left for them to decide on. The interviewee says that “Then, there comes a new leader in our office, and he wants to review all messages posted on micro blogging. Our work is then stuck in trouble. The leader who is responsible for government micro blogs views operating micro blogs in the same way as editing a newspaper, and holds editing assemblies every morning and night” [18]. In contrast, Seigler [27] finds that decentralization does not lead into higher levels of social media adoption. In fact, the author finds that advanced levels of social media adoption are likely to take place in a more centralized authority. Therefore, even if a social media administrator believes in using social media, a decentralized organization would still lead to social media not being adopted.

Although Zheng [18] and Feeney & Welch [31] find that centralization has negative effects on social media usage, Seigler [27] on the other hand finds that it is likely to lead to more social media adoption. We think that complexity increases as we move into higher levels of adoption and thus centralization fits better in higher levels due to the fact that more complex activities as well as more resources are required. In addition, given that faster feedback and interactions are critical in the first stages of social media adoption, centralization will thus cause slowness, while in higher levels of adoption control and management are more important than speed due to complexity and increased usage of resources. Therefore, the higher the level of social media adoption the higher the complexity becomes and thus more centralization is required.

4. Factors Ranking

In the previous section, we identified nine factors that were reported by at least three researchers as important and that have an influence on social media adoption. However, we wanted to find out how the practitioners of social media in Omani public sector organizations rank these factors. Therefore, we asked experts in social media in Oman to rank these factors in order to understand their importance in Omani context. We used Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) [33] to rank those factors.

According to Goepel [34], the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) is a multi-criteria decision method. It is a way of measurement, which uses pair-wise comparisons and expert’s judgments in order to develop priority scales by which intangibles are measured. Satty [33] explains that the judgments are represented by “how much more one element dominates another with respect to a given attribute”. In

addition, he also notes that these judgments may be inconsistent, but with the help of the AHP method, improved and consistent judgments can be obtained [33]. Table 3 shows the used scale for the judgments according to Satty [33]. We used a software developed by Goepel [34], to analyze AHP results and ranked the factors based on the survey of Omani social media experts. We contacted Dr. Goepel through electronic mail for further explanations of the AHP method and he notes that the AHP is not a survey tool but rather a decision making tool where a smaller group of subject matter experts are involved to give their judgment. We therefore identified a group of 11 social media experts in Oman to participate.

Table 3 AHP judgments scale. Source: Satty (2008)

Intensity of Importance	Definition	Explanation
1	Equal Importance	Two activities contribute equally to the objective
2	Weak or slight	
3	Moderate importance	Experience and judgment slightly favor one activity over another
4	Moderate plus	
5	Strong importance	Experience and judgment strongly favor one activity over another
6	Strong plus	
7	Very strong or demonstrated importance	An activity is favored very strongly over another; its dominance demonstrated in practice
8	Very, very strong	
9	Extreme importance	The evidence favoring one activity over another is of the highest possible order of affirmation

Figure 1 depicts the results of collected data. The results will be interpreted in a simple way taking into consideration only the consistency ratio and the consensus percentage along with the ranking and weight of the factors. As a result, we will avoid interpreting the various measures and algorithms used. According to our communications with Dr. Goepel, his advice was to take the values as it is in order to avoid interpreting details. This is because these values are just part of the AHP method such as the eigenvalue for which he says that even in literature there is no simple interpretation for it.

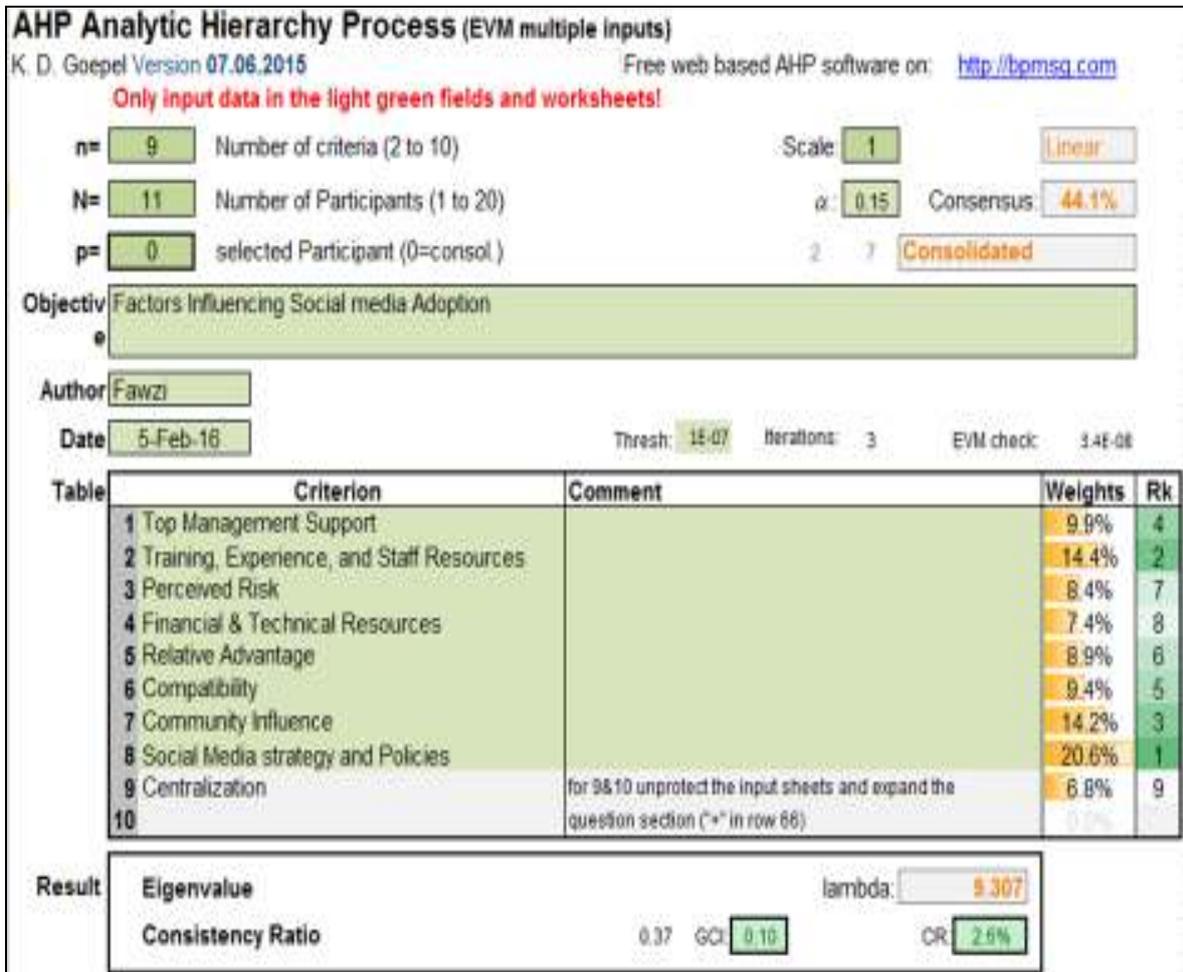


Figure 1. AHP Results

4.1 AHP Results

Results show an overall 44.1% consensus between the participants, which suggests differences in ranking the factors between individual participants. Despite this, the consistency ratio is 2.6%, which according to Dr. Goepel’s opinion is a good ratio when we contacted him. Therefore, despite the relatively low consensus, the results are considered as reliable judgments.

These results show that social media strategy & policy is the most important factor weighing 20.6% compared to the rest of the factors. Training, experience, and staff is the second most important factor weighing 14.4% followed by community influence (14.2%), top management support (9.9%), and compatibility (9.4%). Relative advantage ranks 6 with a weight of 8.9% and perceived risk ranks 7 at 8.4%. Financial & technical resources and centralization are the least important factors weighing 7.4% and 6.8% respectively. Table 4 summarizes the prioritized list of the factors.

Table 4. Prioritized factors based on AHP results

Rank	Factor	Weight
1	Social Media Strategy & Policies	20.6%
2	Training, Experience, and Staff	14.4%
3	Community Influence	14.2%
4	Top Management Support	9.9%
5	Compatibility	9.4%

6	Relative Advantage	8.9%
7	Perceived Risk	8.4%
8	Financial & Technical Resources	7.4%
9	Centralization	6.8%
Total		100%

Table 4 shows that the participants consider that social media strategy & policy is a critical factor that influences the adoption of social media. Most of the interviewed participants during the AHP data collection think that having a strategy and a policy will make things easier for them. In addition, one participant notes that having a strategy and a policy would have a positive effect on perceived risk. That is, it will reduce perceived risk due to the fact that the participant will be clear on how risk will be tackled as well as knowing what to do and what not to do. Similarly, interviewed participants also note the importance of having training and experience as these would also help reduce the fears of risks related to social media. A trained and experienced practitioner will know how to tackle different risks associated with social media better than the one who doesn’t such as negative comments, rumors, virus infected links, and so on. For the top management support factor, most of the interviewed participants note that they have great support from top management and one participant notes that this factor is very critical

and that some highly supreme organizations do not adopt social media mainly because top management does not see its benefits and has various fears related to social media. As far as community influence goes, most of the interviewed participants note that they are in social media because their audience is simply there and they want to reach the people.

5. Conclusions

From the review of literature, initially we identified 20 factors that were reported to have significant influence on social media adoption. We short listed these factors to 9 based on that three or more researchers reported them as important. Then asked a group of 11 social media experts in Omani public sector organizations to rank them according to their importance. We used the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) to rank those factors according to their importance in Omani context. We noted that these factors are important in developed as well as underdeveloped countries, however, some factors such as social media strategy, training and experience of staff, community influence, and top management support are more important in a developing country as compared to developed countries for various reasons discussed in the paper.

This study will help public sector organizations understand the factors that have the most impacts on social media adoption. This will help the organizations focus on the factors that can improve the adoption of social media. The study contributes to the body of knowledge theoretically and practically in terms of identifying the factors that impact social media adoption in general, and particularly in a developing country like Oman.

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