

The mechanisms that make social media effective in building citizens' trust on local government

Running title: Building citizens' trust using social media

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Structured abstract

Purpose: Focusing on municipalities, this study examines whether citizens' engagement with local public administration activities on Facebook can have a positive effect on citizens' trust.

Design/methodology/approach: Using data from 333 citizens and resorting to structural equation modeling a conceptual model is tested.

Findings: The results show that communicating directly with citizens through social media can enhance the citizens' involvement in social issues and their identification with their city council. The effect of citizen engagement on trust propensity is mediated by citizens' identification with the city council and by citizens' involvement in social issues.

Practical implications: The study provides a conceptual model that can be used by practitioners to improve practices that enhance citizen engagement and build trust in the local government. City councils should promote activities on social media that encourage identification and citizens' involvement. Furthermore, the findings suggest that municipalities can increase trust by involving citizens in social issues.

Originality/value: This study contributes to a better understand the government social media phenomenon, highlighting and empirically testing the effect of citizen engagement on institutional trust. In doing so, a process to build citizens' trust in their city council through social media is unpacked. The findings show that communicating directly with citizens through social media can enhance the citizens' involvement in social issues and their identification with the city council. The important role of identification to build institutional trust is emphasized.

Keywords: Local public administration; city council; social media; trust; identification.

1. Introduction

Public administration institutions are increasingly using social media outlets, such as Facebook and Twitter, to communicate with citizens (e.g., Robinson et al., 2019). These third-party platforms enable social interactions among users and content (co)creation (Mergel and Bretschneider, 2013). Social media can radically change the relationship between governments and citizens (Morozov, 2013), but past studies show that municipalities do not make full use of social media (Kowalik, 2021). Moreover, despite social media importance, there is little research on the relationship between constructs of the government social media phenomenon, in particular regarding social media effects on general citizen engagement (Medaglia and Zheng, 2017).

Studying citizen engagement is relevant because it might lead to positive outcomes, such as trust in local governments, which is considered central for governments adequate functioning (Baldassare, 1985). Trust is a core concern for democratic governance and public administration (Tolbert and Mossberger, 2006). In social capital studies, the most frequent perspective suggests that civic engagement promotes institutional trust (e.g., Sivesind et al., 2013). However, the relationship between citizen engagement and trust remains ambiguous. For example, recent research found a negative relationship between citizen engagement and trust on municipalities, when analysing three Dutch municipalities (Siebers et al., 2019).

The link between institutional identification and institutional trust is also under researched (Campbell and Im, 2015). Institutional trust corresponds to an individual's expectation that a given institution will act with predictability and goodwill (Rousseau et al., 1998). Institutional identification is typically based on social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and reflects individuals' identification with an institution, such that they assimilate its core values and accept its goals as their own (Scott and Lane, 2000). Past research suggests that institutional trust can be

identity-based (Maguire and Phillips, 2008). Thus, institutional identification can also be important to build local government trust. However, to the best of our knowledge, this relationship is not empirically tested in the context of public administration.

The aforementioned knowledge gaps constitute an opportunity for investigating how government social media might influence local government trust. Studying how to build institutional trust is even more important nowadays, since citizens' trust in formal institutions is declining (Kumagai and Iorio, 2020; Lee and Schachter, 2019). The literature and the practice suggests that citizen engagement could be a solution to this challenge (Kim and Lee, 2012; Kumagai and Iorio, 2020); it is recognised that institutions should create a model of trust that ensures citizen collaboration and not mere compliance (Brown, 2020). This study aims to contribute to this debate and examines the following research questions: *RQ1) To what extent and how can citizens' engagement in city council activities on Facebook contribute to citizens' trust on the city council? RQ2) Does the citizen identification with the city council play a role in this process?*

The social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) may provide a new perspective on the relationship between municipalities and citizens. Self-expression, self-enhancement and self-esteem are considered important in developing meaningful relationships with organizations and brands (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Escalas, 2004). Likewise, these identity motives may be important in developing the relationship between citizens and their city council. Social identity theory advocates that individuals go beyond their personal identities to develop or claim social identities in articulating and constructing their sense of selves (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). The social identity perspective suggests that organizational membership contributes to the social identity of individuals and that organisational identification (i.e., the perceived oneness and sense of belonging to organizations) is important for a meaningful organizational identity (Ashforth

and Mael, 1989). Therefore, social identity can be a predictor of the relationship between citizens and municipalities.

2. Research model and hypotheses development

City councils aim to promote citizens' trust in order to effectively perform initiatives they believe to be of public interest and they are increasingly using social media. Facebook facilitates the communication among formal and informal groups of individuals that share the same interests and activities (Voorveld et al., 2018). Górska et al. (2022) suggests that by placing adequate and engaging content on social media local government can achieve higher involvement of their citizens in matters important to the city. However, previous studies not always found evidence of the positive outcomes of using social media (e.g., Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer, 2015). Thus, this study aims to contribute to clarify this issue. The conceptual model presented on Figure 1 aims to explain how the citizens' engagement with city council Facebook pages influences higher institutional trust.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

One important affordance of social media is engagement (van Dijk, 2012). The concept of engagement was originally studied in the field of organizational behaviour and psychology (Huo et al., 2009). Recent research suggests that the relationship between citizens and governments is similar to a marketplace relationship between customers and firms (e.g., Davvetas et al., 2022). Therefore, this study is also inspired in the marketing discipline. In the context of this study, engagement can be understood as a cognitive commitment, an emotional connection or a relationship (Mollen and Wilson, 2010) and describes one's motivational state when participating

in interactive activities (Hollebeek et al., 2014). The literature suggests that citizens' engagement can influence trust (e.g., Gregory, 1999), but the relationship between citizens' engagement and institutional trust is not clear.

Trust is important to create and maintain relationships not only at the individual level, but also at the collective level (Kim and Kim, 2021). Trust corresponds to the willingness of one party to expect other party to keep its commitments (Tonkiss et al., 2000) and incorporates a belief that others' motives will be beneficial to one's own interests (Turner and Valentine, 2001). Institutional trust (i.e., political trust) differs from social trust (i.e., generalised trust), since it is characterised by impersonality. Trust in government is considered a precondition for democracy (van der Meer and Zmerli, 2017) because it enhances legitimacy, validity, and sustainability of governments (Godefroidt et al., 2017). Higher trust in institutions is likely to facilitate citizens' cooperation with public institutions' actions (Rothstein and Uslaner, 2005). Furthermore, trust is considered to be crucial to maintain social order and when it fails it can have significant negative consequences. Political efficacy is linked to trust (Parent et al., 2005) and institutional trust is positively related with well-being (e.g., Hudson, 2006). Thus, building trust is on the agenda of many municipalities. Based on social capital theory (Häuberer, 2011), it is noted that citizen engagement can influence trust (e.g., Paxton, 2007). However, most studies consider social trust and not institutional trust; there is limited empirical data on how citizen engagement influences trust (Kumagai and Iorio, 2020).

Although the literature suggests that citizens' engagement with government e-participation initiatives through social media can strengthen the relationship between a government and their citizenry (e.g., Jiang et al., 2019), research on citizens' willingness to accept to participate in these initiatives is also scarce. An exception is the work of Alarabiat et al. (2021), which found that citizens' attitude, the participation efficacy, and the perceived control influence citizens' intention

to engage in government initiatives on social media. However, engagement in Facebook is a form of online sociability (Ross et al., 2009) and the intensity of social media usage is also likely to influence engagement in an organization social media activity (Dijkmans et al., 2015). Past studies link government social media activities to citizen engagement (e.g., Sandoval-Almazán and Gil-Garcia, 2014; Sumra and Bing, 2016). Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Higher levels of citizens' intensity of usage of Facebook are associated with higher levels of citizens' engagement in the city council activities in this social media network.

Institutions often used social media to enhance involvement (Harrigan et al., 2017), which can be understood as “a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests” (Zaichkowsky, 1985: 342). The collective involvement of citizens in addressing social issues is usually termed civic engagement (Warren et al., 2014), defined as individual or collective behaviour aimed at resolving social problems in the community (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012). Citizens' engagement in city council activities in Facebook is likely to lead to greater citizens' attention and interest in social issues. When citizens are engaged in the community activities, they tend to have more knowledge about the civic and political life and they are likely to share their own knowledge and experiences (van Doorn et al., 2010).

The social identity theory suggests that individuals define their self-concepts through their connections with social groups and organizations (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Identification with an organization is regarded as the foundation of “deep, committed, and meaningful relationships” (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003: 76). Identification with an institution corresponds to the perception of belonging to an institution, in which individuals define themselves in function of being (or not being) a member of the institution (Mael and Ashforth, 1992). Citizens that have a higher level of identification with an institution are likely to be more connected with that institution (Xiao and

Lee, 2014). When employees' identification with an organization is high a bond is formed, which is the basis of attitudes and behaviours in support of organizational objectives (Ricketta, 2005). Similarly, citizens' identification with the city council can lead to attitudes and behaviors that support public policies.

Citizens engagement in the city council social media activities involves greater information sharing by the municipality, which can lead to cues that aid in interpretation of several situations (Eisenberg et al., 1983). According to Campbell and Im (2015) constructive interaction with superiors can play a role in determining employees' identification with the organization. The city council is a source of information and authority. Hence, its interaction with citizens using social media can lead to higher identification with the institution. Furthermore, socialization experiences can influence the individual identities and values (Bardi et al., 2014), especially if these experiences affect personal narratives (McAdams and Olson, 2010). When individuals commit to a new social role, this involves the development of relations with other individuals in the new social network and the acceptance of the behavioural norms and expectations associated with the new role (Wood and Roberts, 2006). The same is likely to happen in social media networks.

Hence, the following hypotheses are formulated:

Hypothesis 2: Higher levels of citizens' engagement with city council activity in Facebook are associated with higher levels of citizens' involvement in social issues.

Hypothesis 3: Higher levels of citizens' engagement with city council activity in Facebook are associated with higher levels of citizens' identification with the city council.

A higher level of involvement can lead to a more positive attitude toward both the advertisement and the brand (Celsi and Olson, 1988). The same may apply in the context of public administration, generating greater propensity to trust. Trust propensity is "a stable within-party

factor that will affect the likelihood the party will trust...propensity might be thought of as the general willingness to trust others” (Mayer et al., 1995: 715). While the propensity to trust can be linked to a personality trait (Lucassen and Schraagen, 2012), it is formed through socialization (Gefen, 2000). Trust propensity may change over time, when a shift in an individual’s social network is experienced (van der Werff et al., 2019). Thus, citizens’ propensity to trust can be influenced by the involvement in social issues. The interaction with unknown people that civic engagement entails can activate trust propensity (Graddy and Wang, 2009). The trust-transference logic (Stewart, 2003) gives support to the notion that engagement in social media activities can influence citizens’ propensity to trust others because they are more involved in social issues. According to Warren et al. (2014), it is likely that individuals who participate in online civic engagement think alike, because they are involved in addressing common social issues, and, thus, are trusting others.

The identification with the institution can also be key in building trust (Dunn and Schweitzer, 2005). According to Albert and Whetten (1985), the identification will tend to focus on attributes that are core or enduring to the institution, such as values, goals, and beliefs. Following the Garcia-Falières and Herrbach (2015) perspective, the identification with the local government can relate to citizens’ cognition on the consistency between their own values and the values of the government. The identification with an institution reflects the perception of belonging to the institution (Mael and Ashforth, 1992). When citizens identify with an institution, they tend to be more connected with it (Xiao and Lee, 2014). Because this connection is the basis of supportive attitudes towards the organization (Riketta, 2005; Mael and Ashforth, 1992), it can be asserted that citizens’ identification with an institution is likely to lead to higher propensity to trust in that institution.

Trust corresponds to expecting that another person or institution will perform a given action (Colquitt et al., 2007), it is “a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another” (Rousseau et al., 1998: 395). This implies the perception that the organization has the intention to “do good” to the individual (the notion of benevolence), as well as the perception that the organization has values which are endorsed by the ones that experience trust in the organization (the notion of integrity). The trust literature (e.g., Colquitt et al., 2007) distinguishes trustworthiness (the ability, benevolence, and integrity of a trustee) and trust propensity (a dispositional willingness to rely on others) from trust (the intention to accept vulnerability to a trustee based on positive expectations of his or her actions).

When an individual identifies with an institution, he/she is likely to share similar values because his/her self-identity will be to some extent linked to that institution (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Identification can lead to trust (So et al., 2013) because it is linked with sentiments of safety (Rousseau et al., 1998). Higher propensity to trust can also influence trust in the institutions (Warren et al., 2014), it is a consistent determinant of trust (Colquitt et al., 2007).

The aforementioned arguments form the basis for the next hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4: Higher levels of citizens’ involvement in social issues are associated with higher levels of citizens’ propensity to trust.

Hypothesis 5: Higher levels of citizens’ identification with the city council are associated with higher levels of citizens’ propensity to trust.

Hypothesis 6: Higher levels of citizens’ propensity to trust are associated with higher levels of citizens’ trust in the city council.

Hypothesis 7: Higher levels of citizens’ identification with the city council are associated with higher levels of citizens’ trust in the city council.

3. Research design

3.1. Data collection and sample

The data was collected through a cross-sectional self-administered survey send via a link provided on Facebook and by email for all Portuguese city council with a Facebook profile. Participants were asked to identify whether they followed a city council on Facebook and to name that city council. From the 384 answers obtained, 333 were considered valid for the propose of this study. The cases in which the city council is missing or with a high number of missing values were deleted. All the participants included in this study have a Facebook profile and followed their council city on social media, otherwise the answers were also deleted. Female respondents accounted for 64.3% of the respondents. The majority of respondents' age (about 37%) were in the range of 36 to 45 years old, followed by the 46-55 and 26-35 years old groups, about 19% and 14%, respectively. The education demographics show that 60.1% of the respondents have a graduate or more. An overview of the demographic profile of respondents is presented in Table 1.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

3.2. Measures

The survey included multiple-item scales for each latent variable adopted in the extant literature, with minor adaptations. The survey instructed the respondents to rate their level of agreement with each item. For this purpose, a 7-point Likert-type scale was used ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”).

To measure *intensity of Facebook usage*, a scale adapted from Orosz et al. (2016) is used. For *engagement in city council Facebook activities*, the scale with two items adapted from

Dijkmans et al. (2015) is used. *Identification with the city council* was measured based on the scale adapted from Mael and Ashforth (1992). The constructs *Involvement in social issues* and *trust propensity* are measured using the scales by Pattie et al. (2003) and Pavlou and Gefen (2004), respectively, adapted by Warren et al. (2014). Finally, *trust in the city council* is measured by the three items scale adapted from Chaudhuri and Holbrookv (2001).

3.3. Common method variance

The same method is used to collect data: cross-sectional self-administered survey. Thus, it is acknowledged that common method bias can occur. This potential bias (usually named common method variance bias), arises when the variance of the responses is systematically attributable to the single measurement method used to collect the data (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To minimize this potential bias, several procedures before and after collecting the data are employed. Before, a pre-test of the survey was conducted in order to define ambiguous terms and avoid vague concepts and complex syntax, avoid double-barrelled questions, and keep each question simple, specific, and concise. In the first page of the survey, respondents are assured that the answers are anonymous and advised that there are no right or wrong answers to each question.

After, the common method variance (CMV) can be tested using different techniques (see Podsakoff et al., 2003). In this study, the Harman's single-factor test is used. CMV is problematic if an exploratory factor analysis with all variables show that first factor extracted (without rotation) accounts more than 50% of the variance of the original variables (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986). The exploratory factor analysis without rotation shows six factors with eigenvalues greater than one that accounted for 74.5% of the variance and the proportion of variance explained by each factor was as follows: 28.05%, 17.59%, 10.64%, 8.21%, 5.40%, and 4.61%. Following So et al. (2013), the CFA test is also used. The CFA test with all 24 items loaded on a single common factor, and

applying a chi-square difference test, the common factor model ($\chi^2 = 3,675.12$, $df = 252$) is compared to CFA results of the proposed measurement model with six constructs ($\chi^2 = 461.06$, $df = 237$). The results of the chi-square difference test show that the model with six constructs fits better than common factor model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 3,214.06$, $df = 15$, $p < .01$). Thus, both *before* and *after* procedures suggested that the CMV is not a major problem in this study.

4. Results

The proposed model comprises two components: the measurement component and the structural component. Following Anderson and Gerbing (1988), these two components of global model were estimated separately. These estimations were performed using the AMOS 25.0 software and the maximum likelihood (ML) estimation method.

4.1. Measurement analysis

The ML estimation method relies on the hypothesis of multi-normality distribution of the observed variables used to measure the constructs, but extant literature shows that this estimation method offers robust estimates for both parameters and standard errors if the departure of multi-normality assumption is not severe (Kline, 2017). The depart from normality hypothesis is assessed using the skewness and kurtosis of the observed variables distribution. The skewness varies from -1.45 and 1.15, and the kurtosis ranges from -1.30 and 2.07. Thus, considering the thresholds (skewness < 3.0 and kurtosis < 20.0) outline by Kline (2017), the departure from the hypothesis of multi-normality distribution of the observed variables is not a major problem in the use of the ML estimation method.

The scales were adapted to measure the constructs outlined in the conceptual model, hence, a preliminary data analysis is performed to detected items that are poorly correlated with the other

items of the same scale. For this purpose, an exploratory factor analysis is conducted. This analysis shows that all items loaded on the same factor. Tables 2A and 2B show the theoretical constructs, the items used to measure each construct, a summary of the estimated results of the measurement model (standardized loadings, the t -statistics, and the R^2), and global fit measures of the measurement model. The standardized loadings exceed the .50 threshold, with one exception and are all highly significant ($p < .01$), and R^2 estimates are above or equal to the .20 threshold. These results provided support for convergent validity of the measured variables.

The global fit of the measurement model is assessed using the most popular fit measure, namely, the chi-square (χ^2), goodness of fit index (GFI), incremental fit index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), and root mean square error approximation (RMSEA). Although the chi-square is statistically significant at the conventional significant level ($\chi^2 = 461.06$; $df = 237$, $p < .01$), the model performed well to the data collected considering the other most popular goodness-of-fit statistics (IFI = .96, GFI = .89, TLI = .95, CFI = .96, and RMSEA = .053).

[Insert Tables 2A and 2B about here]

Table 3 shows additional proprieties of the measurement analysis, such as Cronbach's alpha values, correlations between the constructs, composite reliabilities (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) estimates. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients range from .74 to .97 and the CR varies between .74 and .97 (both exceeded the .70 threshold). The AVE estimates for all constructs are larger than the .50 threshold. These results support that the scales are internally consistent (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The AVE estimates for all constructs are greater than the square correlations among the corresponding constructs (see Table 4), which provides support to the discriminant validity of the scales used to measure our constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

[Insert Table 3 about here]

[Insert Table 4 about here]

4.2. Structural results and hypotheses testing

Table 5 shows the results of the structural model (standardized structural coefficient estimates, *t*-statistics, and global fit measures), as well as, the summary of the hypotheses test.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

The different global fit measures provide supported for the structural model. Although the chi-square is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 473.51$; $df = 245$, $p < .01$), the remaining overall model fit statistics suggest an adequate model fit to data collected in the sample (IFI = .96, GFI = .89, TLI = .96, CFI = .96, and RMSEA = .053). All the paths estimated have the anticipated sign and are statistically significant at the conventional significant level. An inspection to the modification indices reveals that no other path is statistically significant at the conventional significant level, which further supports the proposed model.

5. Discussion

This study focus on how municipalities can build citizens' trust by promoting citizens' engagement in city council activities on Facebook. The results show that the intensity of usage of Facebook can lead to higher levels of citizens' engagement in city council activities, supporting the hypothesis 1. The positive direct effects of the citizens' engagement in city council activities on both their identification with the city council and on their involvement in social issues and the positive direct effects of these constructs on trust propensity, provide support for the hypotheses 2, 3, 4, and 5,

suggesting that the effect of engagement on trust propensity is mediated by these later constructs. The city council is a source of information and authority and its interaction with citizens using social media can lead to higher identification. If citizens assimilate the local government core values and goals as their own, they will be more prone to trust on the city council. The sharing of information can also contribute to raise more attention to social issues, which can lead to higher citizens' involvement in addressing social problems. The obtained results are consistent with the notion that a greater similarity with the trusted target will lead to higher trust (Stewart, 2003). This implies that social identification can lead to higher trust. By engaging in these activities, citizens' sense of self will be defined in terms of "we" and "us" rather than "I" and "me", which will reinforce trust. These findings contrast the ones of Siebers et al. (2019), who found a negative relationship between citizen engagement and trust on municipalities, when analysing three Dutch municipalities. The obtained results give empirical support to the notion that citizen engagement can be a solution for building trust in formal institutions (Kumagai and Iorio, 2020). Thus, this study contributes to better clarify the relationship between citizen engagement and trust, highlighting the important role of identification.

This study distinguishes trust propensity (a dispositional willingness to rely on others) from trust (the intention to accept vulnerability to a trustee based on positive expectations of his or her actions). The obtained results confirm the effect of trust propensity on trust in the city council, supporting the hypothesis 6. It is proposed that citizens' identification with the city council and citizens' involvement in social issues will lead to higher propensity to trust (hypotheses 4 and 5). It is also proposed that citizens' identification with the city council will directly lead to higher trust (hypothesis 7). Because identification reflects the perception of belonging to the institution (Mael and Ashforth, 1992) and the development of a connection with it (Xiao and Lee, 2014), citizens' identification with the city council can lead to higher propensity to trust, as well as higher trust.

The involvement in social issues will also lead to higher propensity to trust because the interaction with unknown people (that civic engagement involves) can stimulate trust propensity (Graddy and Wang, 2009). If citizens become more involved in addressing social issues, they are more likely to show higher levels of trust propensity.

These insights have several implications for both theory and practice. For scholars, the study provides a new framework to build trust on municipalities using social media networks, including a construct — “identification with the institution” — which is rarely used in the field of urban policy. By doing so, this study contributes to a better understanding of the government social media phenomenon, highlighting and empirically testing the effect of citizen engagement on institutional trust.

For public managers, the study provides a conceptual model that can be used to improve practices that enhance citizen engagement and build trust in the local government. The analysis performed in this study sheds light on the mechanisms through which social media networks can be used to build trust. City councils should promote activities on social media that encourage identification and citizens’ involvement. Municipalities should post on social media the social causes they are addressing, raising awareness to these causes, and should be clear about their values, describing the actions they are taking to support those values. If the values are aligned with the ones of the citizens, this will promote engagement and identification. Citizens can share these values and corresponding actions to build their own social identity and this will lead to identification with the city council, which will generate trust. Furthermore, municipalities should highlight on social media the importance of citizen’s involvement in social issues, which will raise trust propensity.

6. Conclusion

Despite the recognised importance of citizen's engagement to create and maintain institutional trust, researchers have rarely empirically explored this relationship. Building institutional trust is an objective of many municipalities and can be key to effective public policies. Nevertheless, trust in governments is declining. This study unpacks one possible process to build citizens' trust in their city council through social media. The findings show that communicating directly with citizens through social media can enhance the citizens' involvement in social issues and their identification with the city council. The study emphasizes the important role of identification to build institutional trust, suggesting that governments should be transparent about their core values and goals because if citizens assimilate them as their own, they will have a higher propensity to trust and they will be more likely to trust their local government.

As any research, this study is not without limitations, which could be addressed in future research. First, the context of the study is limited to local government and just considers one country. In the future, this study could be replicated in other contexts and applied to the national government to improve the generalization of the findings presented herein. Second, the specific characteristics of city councils (e.g., size) could be explored to check potential differences. Finally, the effects of publishing different content in social media networks can also be explored. In addition, future research could explore the relationship between citizen engagement and trust in municipalities, which may need further clarification. The results of the present study suggest there is a positive relationship between these constructs, but recent research found a negative relationship (Siebers et al., 2019).

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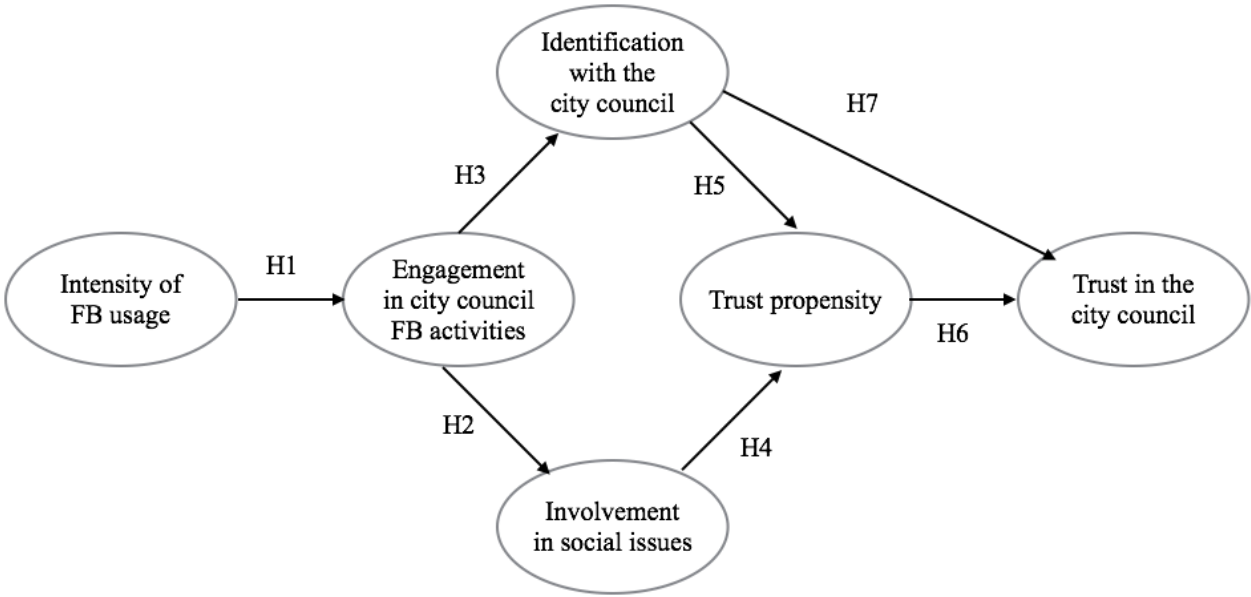
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Figure 1. Conceptual model and hypotheses



Legend: FB = Facebook

Table 1. Sample profile

Criteria	Number	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	214	64.3
Male	119	35.7
N/R	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>333</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Age</i>		
15 - 25	22	6.6
26 - 35	46	13.8
36 - 45	123	36.9
46 - 55	62	18.6
56 – 65	22	6.6
> 65	7	2.1
N/R	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>333</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>Education</i>		
High school or less	133	39.9
Graduate or more	200	60.1
N/R	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>333</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Table 2A. Standardised parameter estimates, critical ratio, and R² for the measurement model

Construct	Items	Stand. loads.	t-value	R²
<i>Intensity of Facebook usage</i>	If I could visit only one site on the Internet, it would be Facebook.	.45	8.70	.20
	I feel bad if I don't check my Facebook daily.	.56	11.52	.31
	I often search for Internet connection in order to visit Facebook.	.64	14.10	.41
	Before going to sleep, I check Facebook once more.	.75	18.34	.56
	If I'm bored, I open Facebook.	.88	26.90	.77
	Watching Facebook posts is good for overcoming boredom.	.89	28.22	.80
	When I'm bored, I often go to Facebook.	.95	---	.90
<i>Source: Adapt from Orosz et al. (2016).</i>				
<i>Engagement in city council Facebook activities</i>	I am following my city council Facebook page.	.78	---	.60
	I read the posts published in my city council Facebook page.	.75	6.63	.57
<i>Source: Adapt from Dijkmans et al. (2015).</i>				
<i>Identification with the city council</i>	When someone criticizes/praises my city council, it feels like a personal insult/compliment.	.83	---	.68
	I am very interested in what others think about my city council.	.78	16.00	.60
	When I talk about this city council, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'.	.84	17.82	.70
	These city council's successes are my successes.	.85	18.20	.73
	If a story in the media criticized the city council, I would feel embarrassed.	.59	11.14	.34
<i>Source: Adapted from Mael and Ashforth (1992).</i>				

Table 2B. Standardised parameter estimates, critical ratio, and R² for the measurement model

Construct	Items	Stand. loads.	t-value	R²
<i>Involvement in social issues</i>	Engaging in social issues is a must for every citizen if we want to reduce social problems for the benefit of our city council.	.62	11.46	.38
	Engaging in social issues helps bring the community together.	.90	11.41	.80
	Engaging in social issues improves my relationship with the community.	.85	---	.72
<i>Source: Warren et al. (2014).</i>				
<i>Trust propensity</i>	Most people keep promises.	.75	---	.56
	Most people are trustworthy.	.92	17.43	.84
	Most people keep commitments.	.89	16.96	.80
	Most people are reliable.	.86	16.16	.73
<i>Source: Warren et al. (2014).</i>				
<i>Trust in the city council</i>	I trust in this city council.	.97	36.40	.93
	I rely on this city council.	.97	37.44	.95
	This is an honest city council.	.93	---	.86
<i>Source: Adapt from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001).</i>				

Note: Stand. loads = standardised loadings.

Model fit: Chi-square (χ^2) = 461.06; df = 237; goodness of fit index (GFI) = .89; incremental fit index (IFI) = .96; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .95; comparative fit index (CFI) = .96; root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) = .053.

Table 3. Correlation matrix of constructs, reliability estimates, and average variance extracted estimates

	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄	X ₅	X ₆	CR	AVE
Intensity of Facebook usage (X ₁)	.90						.90	.56
Engagement in city council Facebook activities (X ₂)	.25	.74					.74	.58
Identification with the city council (X ₃)	.06	.37	.88				.89	.61
Involvement in social issues (X ₄)	.09	.10	.12	.82			.84	.63
Trust propensity (X ₅)	.13	.12	.34	.20	.91		.92	.73
Trust in the city council (X ₆)	.05	.32	.69	.20	.50	.97	.97	.91

Note: Diagonal entries are Cronbach's alpha coefficients; CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted.

Table 4. Discriminant validity analysis

	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄	X ₅	X ₆
Intensity of Facebook usage (X ₁)	.56					
Engagement in city council Facebook activities (X ₂)	.06	.58				
Identification with the city council (X ₃)	.00	.14	.61			
Involvement in social issues (X ₄)	.01	.01	.01	.63		
Trust propensity (X ₅)	.02	.01	.12	.04	.73	
Trust in the city council (X ₆)	.00	.10	.47	.04	.25	.91

Note: Diagonal entries are average variance extracted and the body of table are the estimated correlation square.

Table 5. Results of the structural model and hypotheses testing

Path	Stand. coeff.	t-value	hypotheses testing
Intensity of Facebook usage --> Engagement in institution Facebook activities	.25	3.67**	H ₁ (+): S
Engagement in city council Facebook activities --> Involvement in social issues	.11	1.67*	H ₂ (+): S
Engagement in city council Facebook activities --> Identification with the city council	.38	5.23**	H ₃ (+): S
Involvement in social issues --> Trust propensity	.17	2.85**	H ₄ (+): S
Identification with the city council --> Trust propensity	.32	5.38**	H ₅ (+): S
Trust propensity --> Trust in the city council	.31	6.52**	H ₆ (+): S
Identification with the city council --> Trust in the city council	.58	11.51**	H ₇ (+): S

Notes: Stand. coeff. = standardised coefficients; two-tailed significant testing: * $p \leq .10$; ** $p \leq .01$. S = Supported.

Model global fit: Chi-square (χ^2) = 473.51, df = 245, goodness of fit index (GFI) = .89; incremental fit index (IFI) = .96, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .96, comparative fit index (CFI) = .96; root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) = .053.