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# Political Will and Strategic Use of YouTube to Advancing Government Transparency: An Analysis of Jakarta Government-Generated YouTube Videos

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**ABSTRACT.** Government transparency is critical to cut government bureaucracy and corruption, which diminish political accountability and legitimacy, erode trust in government, and hinder citizen engagement and government performance. Previously, Jakarta's local governments lacked government transparency, holding high-level meetings under a close-door policy, sustaining a critical and fundamental flaw in policy-making and fueling government inefficiency and corruption. Social media radically increased the speed, reach and transparency of information. Yet, social media-enabled government transparency has not been sufficiently investigated. This research presents strategic use of YouTube by Jakarta's new local government to "open doors" to high-level political meetings and other reform-oriented government activities for greater local government transparency. We conducted an analysis of 250 government-generated videos on YouTube viewed and liked by Jakarta's 7.8-million net-savvy citizens. We conclude transformational leadership's political will and strategic use of YouTube are the keys to advancing local government transparency and facilitating citizen engagement with government's reform initiatives.

**Keywords:** Local government transparency, social media-enabled transparency, YouTube, bureaucratic reform process, political will, net-savvy citizens

## 1 Introduction

Government transparency is critically important to cut government bureaucracies and corruptions. Government bureaucracy and corruption diminish political accountability and legitimacy [19], erode trust in government [14, 19], discourage citizen engagement [12, 19] and hinder government performance, including the provision of effective and efficient public services [14]. Berlin-based Transparency International found that two-thirds of countries being surveyed had the Corruption Perceived Index (CPI) below 50, indicating a serious corruption problem [28]. With the 2012 CPI of 32,

Indonesia faces a very serious corruption problem. Indonesia's central government has identified bureaucratic reform and governance as the top priority of national development in 2013 [23]. While the central government did not specifically mention government transparency, Jakarta's new local government won the 2012 elections by promoting "The New Jakarta" to create a transparent local government that can deliver citizen-centric public services through bureaucratic reforms and corruption eradication. Previously, Jakarta's local governments held high-level political meetings under a closed-door policy, sustaining a critical and fundamental flaw in policy-making and fueling government inefficiency and corruption.

The effects of government transparency have been heavily examined in the literature [11, 16, 20]. The e-government research has also emerged to examine the potential benefits of social media to promote government transparency [3, 17, 22]. Yet there has been very little research focusing on how government actually promotes transparency and how government transparency is communicated to citizens for their support in the process of bureaucratic reforms. Social media have radically increased the speed, reach and transparency of information [25]. Yet, the power of social media in government to facilitate and advance government transparency has not been sufficiently investigated. This research, therefore, aims to answer the following central question: *How does government use social media tools to advance and communicate local government transparency?* In this exploratory empirical study, we conducted a content analysis of 250 Jakarta's local government-generated YouTube videos, which were viewed and highly rated by Jakarta's 7.8 million net-savvy citizens. Based on our analysis results, we conclude that both the new transformational leadership's political will to achieve its reform visions and its strategic use of YouTube as a mechanism for communicating bureaucratic reforms in action are the keys to advancing local government transparency and facilitating citizen engagement with government's reform initiatives.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the literature on bureaucratic reform, government transparency and social media-enabled government transparency. Section 3 presents a brief research context on government corruption in Indonesia and Jakarta's new local government inaugurated in October, 2012. Section 4 presents our central research question and describes our research methodology on sampling and content analysis of government-generated YouTube videos. Section 5 presents key findings of our analysis of 250 YouTube videos. Section 6 presents our discussion and the conclusion of this study, including our research limitations and future research directions.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Bureaucratic Reform**

Government bureaucracy and corruption diminish political accountability and legitimacy [19], erode trust in government [14, 19], discourage citizen engagement [12, 19] and hinder government performance, including the provision of effective and efficient public services [14]. When a new government is elected, a key factor influencing its success is the degree to which it can establish legitimacy among its citizens [9, 19]. New governments often initiate bureaucratic (or administrative) reforms for legitima-

cy or other reasons when their previous governments' bureaucracies and corruptions have been public issues. Bureaucratic reform in the context of government performance and new public management involves transforming government through strategic objectives of cutting the bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption and improving government responsiveness to citizen demands. Empirical studies show that bureaucratic reforms require institutional transformation, such as new transformational leadership [18], strategic use of e-government (or ICTs in government) and citizen participation [1, 3, 18]. The literature suggests that bureaucratic reform initiatives need institutional, technological and/or social mechanisms for producing desired outcomes.

## **2.2 Government Transparency**

In recent years there has been an increased interest in the institutional, social and economic determinants and the effects of government transparency. While conceptions of government transparency and their study focuses are diverse, government transparency encompasses policy-making transparency, openness of political process and public service programs priority transparency [10, 15, 26, 30]. Specifically, an empirical research on the effects of public service reform found that the institution's act of adopting administrative reform by itself produced the beneficial impact on government transparency in new Eastern European democracies [21]. Survey studies in East Central Europe explained variation in local government transparency as a function of the institutions, as opposed to socioeconomic development or locality size [8]. In another cross-national study, regression analysis found that telecommunications infrastructure and free press influenced the perceptions of government transparency in a positive and significant way [24]. Similarly, citizens' online information-seeking was positively associated with their increased support for government transparency [7] and citizens' e-participation seemed to be positively related to their assessment of local government transparency and their trust in government [16]. Despite the increased interest in government transparency, however, there has been very little research focusing on the mechanisms for advancing and communicating government transparency to stakeholders. Finally, studies on local government transparency are still very limited [26].

## **2.3 Social Media-enabled Government Transparency**

Open government policies, such as the US Open Government Directive [29], aim to create a new culture of openness in government for achieving greater government transparency, citizen participation and inter-agency collaboration through social media use in government. The policies acknowledge the rapid technological changes in societies across the globe. Social media, with the proliferation of multimedia data as well as multimedia mobile devices, including laptops, tablets, iPods, and smart phones, have become increasingly integrated in citizens' daily lives. In this dynamically changed information environment, "the political power of social media" [25] in providing new forms of organizing active forms of citizen political engagement was demonstrated during recent political upheavals that, for example, toppled dictatorial regimes in the Arab world. Social media in the hands of networked citizens who have no hierarchical organization have facilitated the leaderless 'social media revolution' in the turbulent aftermath of the 2009 Iranian Presidential election [6].

With regard to social media-enabled government transparency, e-government research on social media in government is emerging but still new. One of its first studies examined the ways in which social media and advanced ICTs were integrated into collaborative e-government initiatives at the state government level to facilitate greater government transparency [4]. However, the maturity of social media-mediated local government transparency is still at its very early stage [5]. There are institutional barriers to implementing a culture of government transparency. Not only the effective use of social media [12] but also political will of government leadership must be mobilized to overcome these challenges [3].

### **3 Research Context: Jakarta's New Local Government**

#### **3.1 Government Corruption**

Like many developing countries, Indonesia has been fighting a serious government corruption problem. It is public knowledge that politicians and public administrators have been engaging in wide-spread corruptive practices for their personal gains. Berlin-based Transparency International, a non-profit organization for the global coalition against corruption, uses Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) to measure the level of government corruption in a given country. The CPI measures countries on a scale from 0 for highly corrupt to 100 for very clean. While no country has a perfect score, two-thirds of countries being surveyed have the CPI below 50, which indicates a serious corruption problem. Indonesia scored 32 on the scale in 2012 [28], indicating a very serious corruption problem.

#### **3.2 "The New Jakarta": Transparency, Reforms and Corruption Eradication**

In terms of government structure, the province is the highest level of local government hierarchies in Indonesia. Provinces are broken down further into regencies and cities. Jakarta as a providence is officially known as the Special Capital Region of Jakarta, which geographically encompasses a regency and five cities. However, public services in the Special Capital Region of Jakarta are centralized, with government agencies such as public housing and public transportation to provide public services to all the people in the Special Capital Region of Jakarta. With its metropolitan population of over 28 million, Jakarta is not only the capital city but also the largest city and primary port city in Indonesia. Jakarta is the third largest city in the world based on metropolitan population [2]. As the economic center of Indonesia, Jakarta generates approximately 70% of Indonesia's capital flows.

On September 29, 2012, Joko Widodo and Basuki Tjahaja Purnama were elected as the Governor and the Deputy Governor respectively for the local government in Jakarta. The Governor won the second-round voting despite his absolute lack of experience in either national or state-level politics. Traditionally, the Governors of the Special Capital Region of Jakarta descended from Indonesian military or high politics. The Governor was the Mayor of Surakarta (a small city in the Java Island), whereas the Deputy Governor was the head of Belitung Regency (a small island in the Sumatra region). They (and the coalition of two political parties) won the second-round election over the incumbent who built his career in Jakarta politics since 1987, by promoting their shared reform visions, "The New Jakarta" ("Jakarta Baru" in In-

donesian), during the gubernatorial elections campaign. It promised the provision of citizen-centric public services through greater local government transparency and cuts in bureaucracies to improve government performance [13]. It also promised that the Governor would spend one hour in his office and the rest of the time for site visits to identify the bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption problems, provide timely decision-making and closely monitor government performance and quality.

## **4 Research Methodology**

This exploratory empirical research was undertaken in the context of Jakarta's new local government to examine the following central question: *How does government use social media tools to advance and communicate local government transparency?* As of March 17, 2013, Jakarta's new local government has uploaded a total of 473 government-generated videos on YouTube since its inauguration on October 15, 2012. YouTube is a video-sharing social media channel operated as a Google subsidiary since 2006. While unregistered users can view videos, registered users – individuals, media corporations and other organizations – can upload, view and share a wide variety of user-generated video content [31]. In this research we collected Jakarta's new local government-generated videos uploaded on YouTube through its YouTube account "PemprovDKI". The period of data collection was limited to 80 days from the inauguration day to January 3, 2013. The crawler retrieved information on both the number of uploaded government videos and viewers of the government-generated YouTube videos through the YouTube API.

During the data collection period, 266 government-generated videos were uploaded on YouTube, all of which showed the video title, with the same format: [upload date] [actor] [activity] [part]. The [part] was occasionally used to show long videos as separate parts. In this research, each part of a video is treated as a single video because it shows its own viewer-generated comments, rating and number of viewers. Four videos on inauguration and twelve videos showing other actors were excluded from analysis. Using the information contained in the video title, we selected a sample of 250 videos which showed the Governor and/or the Deputy Governor as actor(s) for analysis, because they are the two key drivers for "The New Jakarta" reform visions. We then classified political activities shown in the 250 YouTube videos into categories. For each of the categories, we collected statistics on videos and viewers. Of the political activity categories, we conducted a content analysis of "High-Level Political Meetings" category videos to identify the government's key political issues.

## **5 Analysis Results**

### **5.1 New Local Government's Strategic Use of YouTube**

The new leaders in Jakarta demonstrated strong political will to advance their shared reform visions by engaging in rapid-fire, energetic political activities: high-level political meetings with internal and external stakeholders and site visits with local citizens and government officials alike for fact-finding at various parts of the city. They then made strategic use of YouTube video-sharing social media channel to

capture and communicate their reform-oriented political activities to Jakarta's net-savvy citizens. Only two days after the Governor and the Deputy Governor were inaugurated, government-generated videos were uploaded on YouTube. All the videos show the Special Capital Region of Jakarta logo at the upper-right corner on video frames. Through the strategic use of YouTube, the local government aimed to "open doors" to its net-savvy citizens who could view the YouTube videos and assess the new leadership efforts to make government policy-making governance and political actions transparent. The videos were shot, accompanied by narration in the form of audio and/or captions and uploaded without a video frame edit. On one hand, no video frame editing can be viewed as a reflection on the new leadership's political will to demonstrate government transparency. On the other hand, the videos showing idle activities made the duration of the YouTube videos longer than necessary.

## **5.2 Reform-Oriented Political Activities Captured in YouTube Videos**

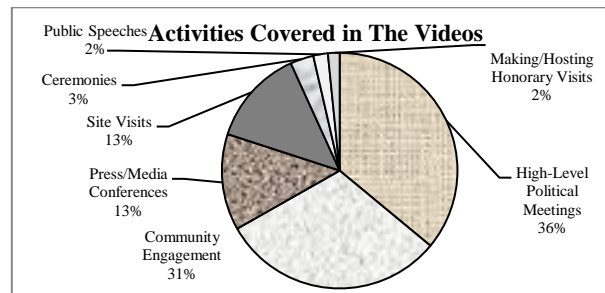
On average, 3.1 videos per day were uploaded during our data collection period of 80 days. Political activities captured in the sample of 250 videos on YouTube were classified into seven categories:

- *High-Level Political Meetings* refer to high-level internal meetings with internal and/or external stakeholders (e.g. policy makers, politicians, decision makers and senior public administrators) to discuss key political issues of interest to the public from perspectives of "The New Jakarta" reform visions.
- *Community Engagement* activities aim to promote informal social interactions and exchanges between the Governor (or less frequently, the Deputy Governor) and local citizens through community events.
- *Site Visits* are defined as direct observation activities for face-to-face fact-finding with citizens and government officials alike, engaged by the Governor (or on rare occasions by the Deputy Governor) outside his Executive Office.
- *Press/Media Conferences* refer to news media interviews given by either the Governor or the Deputy Governor.
- *Ceremonies* include activities of the government officials who represent the local government in sponsoring an official ceremonious event.
- *Public Speeches* include invited keynote speeches delivered by the Governor or the Deputy Governor at seminars and workshops.
- *Making/Hosting Honorary Visits* include official gubernatorial visits to a place or an event to represent the government to interact with other parties or agencies, as well as official gubernatorial receptions for other parties or agencies.

Of the seven categories, we consider *High-level Political Meetings*, *Community Engagement* and *Site Visits* clearly as bureaucratic reform-oriented political activities, whereas *Ceremonies* and *Hosting/Making Honorary Visits* are not reform-oriented in nature. *Press/Media Conferences* and *Public Speeches* are mixed in terms of reform-oriented activities that were briefed or explained during the media interviews.

Our analysis results on the 250 YouTube videos about the category of political activities are shown in Figure 1. Overall, the top four activities shown in the YouTube videos are: *High-Level Political Meetings* (90/250 videos, 36%), *Community Engagement* (77/250 videos, 31%), *Site Visits* (33/250 videos, 13%) and *Press/Media*

*Conferences* (33/250, 13%). On the one hand, the Governor still has engaged in the traditional gubernatorial activities such as *Ceremonies* and *Making/Hosting Honorary Visits and Making Honorary Visits*. However, these activities accounted for only 5% of the activities shown in the 250 videos. These traditional gubernatorial activities do not add value towards advancing the new local government’s strategic visions for bureaucratic reform and corruption eradication.



**Fig. 1.** Activities Captured in the Government-Generated Videos on YouTube

On the other hand, the Governor has engaged in the new and radically different political activities, such as:

- YouTube-hosted “open doors” high-level political meetings were held in which he raised pointed questions about some of the unrealistic budget proposals, corruption issues and political reforms.
- The Governor made his site visits to Jakarta’s “Marunda Flat”, apartment building blocks for the poor, with a recurring problem of very low-level occupancy rates among the poor.
- The Governor made his site visits to the local government’s Corruption Eradication Commission to call their involvement in monitoring the government budget misuse problem and implementing budget transparency.
- The Governor visited local communities and participated in social events for community engagement and listened to the citizens’ views and concerns.

### 5.3 Statistics on Government-Generated YouTube Videos

Descriptive statistics on the 250 government-generated videos on YouTube are shown in Table 1 below. For each category of political activities captured in the videos, Table 1 shows the number of YouTube videos (and percentage), the average length of a YouTube video (in seconds), the average number of viewers, the average number of viewer-generated comments per video and the average viewer-generated rating of a video. Our analysis results shown in the second column of Table 1 were graphically presented in Figure 1 above. The third column of Table 1 shows that the longest average duration of videos is 3,194 seconds (or 53 minutes) for the *High-Level Political Meetings*’ videos, whereas the shortest average duration is 485 seconds (or 8 minutes) for the *Press/Media Conferences* category. The average duration of the 250 videos across the categories is 1,862 seconds (or 31 minutes). The local government-generated videos across all the categories, except the *Press/Media Conferences* category, are much longer than the norm of YouTube video length. A large-scale



analysis of 2.5 million unique YouTube videos found that the average length of a YouTube video was 4 minutes and 12 seconds [27]. The remaining columns of Table 1 present statistics on the video viewers which will be discussed in the next section.

**Table 1.** Statistics on the 250 Government-Generated YouTube Videos

| Activities                     | Number of YouTube Videos (%) | Average Length of a Video (in seconds) | Avg. Number of Viewers | Avg. Viewer-Generated Comments per Video | Avg. Viewer-Generated Rating of a Video |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--|------------------------|--|---|
| High-Level Political Meetings  | 90 (36%)                     | 3,194                                  | 48,773                 | 310                                      | 4.96                                    |
| Community Engagement           | 77 (31%)                     | 2,195                                  | 29,161                 | 268                                      | 4.98                                    |
| Site Visits                    | 33 (13%)                     | 1,183                                  | 21,022                 | 212                                      | 4.95                                    |
| Press/Media Conferences        | 33 (13%)                     | 485                                    | 17,044                 | 222                                      | 4.97                                    |
| Ceremonies                     | 8 (3%)                       | 2,513                                  | 16,214                 | 130                                      | 4.98                                    |
| Public Speeches                | 5 (2%)                       | 2,600                                  | 24,296                 | 379                                      | 4.97                                    |
| Making/Hosting Honorary Visits | 4 (2%)                       | 1,134                                  | 15,936                 | 226                                      | 4.94                                    |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>250 (100%)</b>            |  | <b>7,815,549</b>       |  |   |

#### 5.4 Statistics on Net-Savvy Viewers of the Government YouTube Videos

The 250 government-generated YouTube videos attracted a total of 7,815,549 viewers during the 80-day data collection period of this research. Descriptive statistics on Jakarta's net-savvy citizens who viewed the government-generated YouTube videos are shown in the columns 4-5 of Table 1. Given the vast array of other user-generated videos available on YouTube for choice, we argue that the average number of viewers for the category may be used as a proxy for measuring the level of citizen interest and participation in the category of political activities captured by the government-generated videos on YouTube.

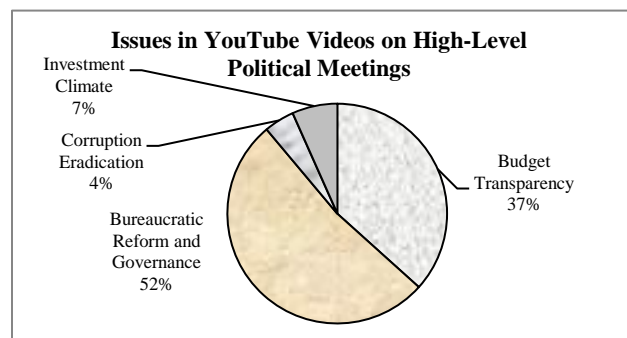
We found that the *High-Level Political Meetings*, the *Community Engagement* and the *Site Visits* categories attracted the highest (48,773), the second highest (29,161) and the fourth highest (21,022) average number of viewers. As we discussed earlier, videos in these three categories show the political activities that are bureaucratic reform-oriented. We also found that the *Public Speeches* category received the third highest average number of viewers (24,296), even though it is not reform-oriented and the number of videos was only 5. One of the videos showed that the Governor, who had been criticized by the oppositions for his lack of national and state-level public administration and political experiences, represented the Office of the Governor of Jakarta Capital Region when he interacted competently and confidently with Singapore's ambassadors and diplomats. Jakarta's net-savvy citizens must have liked these videos.

An analysis on the average number of viewer-generated comments per video

showed that the *High-Level Political Meetings* and the *Site Visits* generated the second (310) and the third (268) highest comments per video from the viewers. These two categories are bureaucratic reform-oriented. In contrast, one of the non-reform categories, the *Public Speeches*, attracted the highest average number of viewer-generated comments per video. Finally, YouTube video-sharing website provides users with a video rating function. All categories of political activities received an excellent average rating (out of the maximum of 5.0). Ratings ranged from 4.94 for the Ceremonies category to 4.98 for the Site Visits and the Press/Media Conferences categories. The overall high-level ratings mean that the viewers would recommend their friends to view the government-generated YouTube videos.

### 5.5 Issues Captured in the High-Level Political Meetings Category

We performed a content analysis of the 90 videos classified into the *High-Level Political Meetings* category to identify key issues captured and communicated by the local government. Figure 2 shows our analysis results. We found four categories of political issues: *Bureaucratic Reform and Governance*, *Budget Transparency*, *Investment Climate Improvement* and *Corruption Eradication*. There are 47 videos (or 52%) in which *bureaucratic reform and governance* issues were discussed. A prime example is a video in which the Governor told the Mayors and Heads of Districts and Sub Districts at the meeting about the need to transform the ways which they interact with local citizens, by adopting a new mindset of a public servant, away from their bureaucratic mindset. In another video, the Deputy Governor had a series of meetings with several government agencies in healthcare services for radically improving healthcare access for the poor through the new “Jakarta Health Card” program. The Deputy Governor discussed the coherent and fair governance structure and processes for enhancing agency readiness for the Jakarta Health Card program, which was one of his campaign promises. The governance structure and processes for better inter-agency cooperation seem to reflect the new local government leadership’s political will to better respond to the citizen needs.



**Fig. 2.** Issues in the High-Level Political Meetings category videos

There are 33 videos (37%) in which the 2013 *budget transparency* issues were discussed. A prime example is a video which was viewed by 1,470,188 viewers. In this video the Deputy Governor discussed 25% deep cuts in the 2013 budget proposed from the Department of Civil Works and others. In other videos, the Governor and the

Deputy Governor discussed the priority programs for the 2013 budget at the parliament. These videos made the political decision making process transparent regarding the priority programs and the budget allocation. There are 6 videos (or 7%) in which *investment climate* issues were discussed. A prime example is a video in which the Deputy Governor met with the labor union representatives during their street demonstration on October 24, 2012. The Deputy Governor discussed their demand for the 40% regional minimum wage increase, which generated strong responses from 90 companies in Jakarta, indicating the intent to move their investments out of Jakarta. Other videos show the Deputy Governor's meetings with businesses to create a new investment climate of transparency through a new public service office, "One Stop Service," to facilitate new business investment in Jakarta. Finally, there are 4 videos (4%) in the *High-Level Political Meetings* category in which *corruption eradication* issues were discussed. A prime example is a video in which the Governor visited the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) to discuss new measures for identifying the potential government corruption based on the KPK's analysis of the proposed 2013 budget. The Governor also discussed the KPK recommendations for better procurement process, better fraud reporting mechanism and enhanced public information access regarding government fraud cases. Another video shows the Governor's meeting with the Audit Board of Republic Indonesia (BPK) regarding the implementation of a new "e-audit" system for the local government. Using the e-audit, The BPK argued for the new "e-audit" as ICT tools for detecting budget misuse or corruption.

## **6 Discussion and Conclusion**

In this exploratory empirical research, we have addressed the central research question: *How does government use social media tools to advance and communicate local government transparency?* Our analysis results show that the local government-generated YouTube videos captured and dynamically communicated the new government's central message on greater local government transparency. Much of the leaders' political activities captured in the videos are value-adding towards advancing their shared reform visions of "The New Jakarta." This central message seemed to be well received, as the analysis results show that a total of 7.8 million net-savvy citizens viewed and highly rated the videos during our data collection period of 80 days. The viewer-generated comments and ratings suggest that the bureaucratic reform process and the necessary political activities to achieve the reforms were made visible, transparent and comprehensible to the net-savvy citizens through the visualization power of YouTube.

However, we argue that social media tools by themselves are not sufficient to demonstrate local government transparency. Jakarta's new local government leadership signalled and communicated strong political will to fulfil their "New Jakarta" visions through its rapid-fire reform-oriented political activities. Leadership's strong political will is important to align their political activities with the shared reform visions they promised during the elections campaign. Leaders also play a critical role in governing the government's strategic communication: what information is produced

and communicated to citizens in the manner which is in alignment with their reform visions. The inclusion or exclusion of certain attributes in content has important implications for signaling government transparency to stakeholders and building public trust in government. This new social media-enabled government transparency is radically different from the traditional Jakarta politics where high-level political meetings were held under a closed-door policy and the Governors engaged in non-value adding political activities.

Based on our analysis results we conclude that two enabling factors are important to increase transparency in government. Transformational leadership's strong political will to advancing its reform visions and YouTube tools for capturing and dynamically communicating reform-oriented political activities are the keys to advancing local government transparency and gaining the support from net-savvy citizens. This exploratory empirical research contributes to the emerging literature on social media-enabled local government transparency. As discussed, very little has been written in the political science and public administration literatures about effective mechanisms for advancing and communicating government transparency to stakeholders. Particularly, studies on local government transparency are still very limited [26]. E-government research on social media-enabled government transparency is emerging but still new [3-5, 12]. In this exploratory empirical research, we have addressed this research gap in understanding how governments are using social media to promote transparency and increase citizens' awareness and understanding of their reform activities. Our research limitations include our research attention on transformational leadership behavior as well as our limited data collection period of 80 days. Our future research directions include a longitudinal study of government-generated videos on YouTube and reviewer-generated comments and ratings to observe the potential changes in communicating local government transparency over a period of time.

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