

## Governance in social media platforms of minority organizations

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### Abstract

*Social media platforms can offer a sense of social inclusion and equitable access to information for minority groups, including minority immigrants to Western countries. However, even as they empower minority community-based organizations (CBOs) to assist their members, these platforms can also create conditions for further exclusion and inequity if they are too exclusive (i.e., drift towards segregation) or too inclusive (i.e., drift towards dilution). This paper aims to extend prior platform governance research to understand how to govern minority CBO platforms featuring both minority and non-minority members in a way that maintains a balance between segregation and dilution, the two paradoxical forces of drifting. By adopting a longitudinal, grounded-theory study of three social media platforms in a minority CBO (one segregated, one balanced, and one diluted), I identify three categories of governing practices (ajar gatekeeping, opportunity manipulating, and output harmonizing), which maintain platform balance against segregational or dilutional drifting.*

**Keywords:** Social media, platform governance, community organizations, inclusion, minority.

### 1. Introduction

Despite their significant contributions to economic growth (Friedman, 2019; Government of Canada, 2021; Head & Ries, 1998), international immigrants continue to face acute challenges to their social inclusion in Western countries (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018; Voas & Fleischmann, 2012). This issue has led to the growth of minority community-based organizations (CBOs)—social enterprises (Ebrahim et al., 2014) that are collectively formed, owned, and controlled by *local* members of a minority group to

provide support to other members<sup>1</sup>. By relying on their own members and through altruistic information sharing and support, CBOs help their members address their immediate, intermediate, and integrational needs in a host country (Caidi, Allard, Dechief, et al., 2008).

In line with broader trends, CBOs have turned to social media<sup>2</sup> to facilitate their members' social inclusion (Caidi et al., 2010; Lee, 2009). Social media outlets such as WhatsApp and Facebook have increasingly empowered CBOs to provide their members with both informational (e.g., how to get a job) (Hirschman, 2004) and social support (e.g., finding friends) (Maliepaard & Phalet, 2012); (Caidi, Allard, & Dechief, 2008). Notably, these CBO social media platforms are typically open to outsider, non-minority<sup>3</sup> individuals as well in order to increase the quality of informational support. CBO support can reduce immigrants' information poverty (Caidi, Allard, Dechief, et al., 2008), leading to higher individual well-being (Byrd, 2018), social inclusion (Cortinois et al., 2012), and socio-economic integration in the host country (Mittelstädt & Odag, 2015), all of which represent key challenges faced by minority immigrants (Lloyd et al., 2013). Because of these benefits, minority CBOs increasingly use social media to improve information access and complement in-person gatherings with digital connectivity.

At the same time, however, managing social media platforms can present significant difficulties for CBOs, one of which is drifting. Drifting happens when a social media platform starts to be used for goals other than those originally intended by the platform's owners, eventually serving alternative user groups or needs. It occurs because social media's inherent characteristics (e.g., openness) enable users to create or promote new uses, which may not be in line with organizational goals and priorities (Rahrovani & Pinsonneault, 2020). While drifting is a frequent risk

<sup>1</sup>For example, "OCA Greater Chicago" is a CBO that focuses on promoting the economic, professional, and social well-being of Chinese-Americans locally in the Greater Chicago area. Alternatively, the Black Twitter community is not a CBO as it is not locally formed and controlled.

<sup>2</sup>"Social media" refers to Internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.

<sup>3</sup>We use the terms "minority" and "majority" (or "non-minority") to represent those within the CBO in question and those outside the CBO in question, respectively. The latter may, in fact, be members of another minority group relative to the larger society.

for both corporate (Rahrovani et al., 2022) and non-profit organizations (Rahrovani, 2020), it is more likely and costlier for the latter, including CBOs. Given the significant informational and social support that CBO social media platforms provide to minority individuals during various stages of settlement (Caidi, Allard, Dechief, et al., 2008), drifting can lead to myriad negative short- and long-term outcomes for these individuals (Caidi et al., 2010). It can also harm community cohesion (Mittelstädt & Odag, 2015) through marginalization (Pilipets & Paasonen, 2020) and alienation (Voas & Fleischmann, 2012). The question of how to steward CBO platforms toward intended goals and inhibit drifting is a crucial one.

In response to this question, existing management and information systems (IS) research has articulated formal and informal governance (i.e., control)<sup>4</sup> modes, including governance decisions and practices that aim to “encourage participation and to direct, coordinate, and control interactions among individuals in an online community that an organization hosts” (Reischauer & Mair, 2018, p. 221). This body of research has predominantly focused on reconciling the tensions between the interests of platform owners (who own a user base to share with providers) versus those of providers (or developers, suppliers, etc.; i.e., parties that offer products to users and share the benefit with platform owners)<sup>5</sup> through a variety of input, process, and output rules and policies—for example, curating the developers joining a platform by a review process (Cusumano et al., 2019; Thies et al., 2018), partitioning decision rights between developers and platform owners (Boudreau, 2010; Tiwana, 2018), or removing developers with low-rated outputs (Hukal et al., 2020). Yet, in examining the tension between platform owners and providers, this research has implicitly taken a uniform (i.e., homogeneous) view of users. As a result, past findings on platform governance and avoiding drift are unlikely to be effective in guiding CBO platforms, which typically feature user heterogeneity (i.e., both minority and majority users), for several reasons.

First, on the one hand, formal control modes (controlling outputs and behaviors) do not fit the CBO context as they are only effective when behaviors are known and outcomes are measurable (Ouchi, 1979). Contrastingly, minority behaviors on social media are neither pre-known nor easily measurable. In addition, the use of formal governance modes can differentially affect the behavior of minority individuals, who are more likely to self-censor (Noelle-Neumann, 1974) on

social media when their actions are visible to majority users (Chaudhry, 2017). On the other hand, relying exclusively on informal, clan control modes is also ineffective for CBO platforms, as these approaches are only useful when there is low turnover and low heterogeneity in the group (Kohli & Kettinger, 2004). Neither of these conditions is met on CBOs’ social media. Therefore, CBO platform governance cannot rely on either formal or informal control modes alone.

More broadly, recent reviews of platform research suggest that user heterogeneity has been largely ignored (Rietveld & Eggers, 2018; Rietveld & Schilling, 2021). This knowledge gap is problematic, as adopting governance strategies based on a majority’s characteristics and preferences can cause minority needs and preferences to be swallowed up by the majority’s dominance. In such cases, departure and exclusion of minorities from digital spaces may result, exacerbating the inequality, injustice (Amis et al., 2020), and social exclusion that continue to affect individuals, communities, and the larger society (Lloyd et al., 2013). Thus, we need to understand the governance dynamics in platforms with user heterogeneity in order to empower minority organizations to use social media to promote internal cohesion (social and informational needs) and maintain external integration in the larger society. The benefits of doing so extend far beyond minority organizations themselves, since failing to integrate minorities eventually deprives the society of benefiting from their full capacity (Byrd, 2018) such as greater proportion in entrepreneurship (i.e., 27% of all entrepreneurs are immigrants despite only 13% of the population) (Kelly, 2018), greater patenting rate, or faster growth rate compared to native-led companies in USA (Brown et al., 2018). This magnifies the potential impacts of CBO platforms and the importance of their proper governance in immigrant settlement and achieving immigration’s goals, such as winning in global economic competition (Pekkala Kerr & Kerr, 2020) while addressing falling birthrates and labor shortages (Caidi et al., 2010).

Accordingly, the paper seeks to address this knowledge gap by answering the following: How can minority CBOs govern their social media platforms to guard against drifting? To address this question, I triangulated interviews and archival data to conduct a comparative analysis of three minority CBO social media platforms that varied in the extent of drifting experienced: one drifted to segregation from the larger community, one remained aligned, and one drifted to

<sup>4</sup>As they share the same meaning in this context, we use “governance” and “control” interchangeably throughout.

<sup>5</sup>In line with the extant literature, we refer to the second (i.e., non-user) side of the platform using various terms, including

“providers,” “developers,” “third-party sellers,” “complementors,” and “suppliers,” as appropriate.

dilution in peripheral communities. The comparative analysis revealed three categories of governing practices (ajar gatekeeping, opportunity manipulating, and outcome harmonizing), each consisting of various formal rulemaking and informal activities. The findings suggest that minority CBO platforms must simultaneously engage with both formal and informal activities in all three governing practices to maintain a balance against two drifting trajectories: segregation (i.e., gradual overemphasis on minority-exclusive goals that separate the group from the larger community) and dilution (i.e., gradual overemphasis on all-inclusive goals that overexpose the group to the larger community). Contrary to the common view in control theory that perceives output and behavior control as formal and clan control as informal (e.g., Chua et al., 2012; Kirsch, 1997, 2004; Kohli & Kettinger, 2004; Ouchi, 1979; Tiwana, 2015), my findings suggest that CBOs must simultaneously engage with both formal and informal activities in all three governing practices in order to be able to resist platform drifting to either dilution or segregation. I find that while formal governing practices can help with “red-taping” around key minority values and boundaries, CBOs rely heavily on informal practices rather than hard control to influence their platform trajectory. Further, governing approaches that dominantly rely on formal practices cannot maintain a balance and eventually drift to either slamming the gate shut (segregation) or opening it too wide (dilution) instead of leaving it suitably “ajar.” These observations extend the existing focus on mostly formal control approaches and magnify the importance of informal practices to control open platforms, particularly those with user heterogeneity.

In the following, I briefly review the literature on control and governance. Next, I present the methods before outlining the results of my research. Finally, I discuss the implications of the findings and present my conclusions.

## 2. Platform governance literature

Existing management and IS research has articulated a variety of *formal* governance factors (Rietveld & Schilling, 2021) by which a platform owner can “encourage [users] to act in ways that further the interests of the platform (Tiwana, 2015, p. 269).” These factors can be classified into three categories: First, platform owners regulate platform input with policies to control the gateway and reduce heterogeneity among user adopters (Tiwana, 2015)—e.g., having a formal set of criteria for joining (e.g., license submission needed for joining physician’s social media SERMO). Second, platform owners

develop process policies that exercise control over behaviors—e.g., determining “what not to post” (e.g., illegitimate posts in Rahrovani, 2020), limiting posting frequency (Wareham et al., 2014), or partitioning decision rights between developers and platform owners (e.g., Tiwana et al., 2010). Finally, platform owners develop policies for platform outputs by standardizing certain core products whereas allowing variety in other products (Tiwana, 2015). However, formal control developed in the corporate or majority context are less or not effective in the context of minority CBOs for several reasons.

First, formal control mechanisms require a formal structure (e.g., a social media department) to monitor and enforce policies (Tiwana, 2015). However, CBOs mainly rely on individuals, personal relationships and informal structures in collective sourcing and control and are limited in financial, human, and knowledge resources (Vestrum & Rasmussen, 2013) necessary for sustaining a formal governance structure. Second, past research shows that formal control mechanisms are effective when uses are known, and the outcomes are measurable (Ouchi, 1979). However, social media uses, particularly for CBO’s minority immigrants’ needs, are neither pre-known nor easily measurable. Compared with corporate platforms (e.g., Amazon), minority uses emerge over time and vary significantly from informational (e.g., how to manage a conflict with a PhD advisor—from data) to social uses (e.g., finding a companion for a visiting mother—from data). Finally, factors that contribute to managing corporate platforms (e.g., platform openness or visibility) do not similarly affect minority user behaviors. Minorities are more likely to self-censor (Noelle-Neumann, 1974) on social media when their actions are visible to non-minority users. For example, the post 9/11 environment and Islamophobia created a deep mistrust against the media among educated Canadian Muslims (Caidi & MacDonald, 2008) and led to self-censor expression on social media (Chaudhry, 2017).

Therefore, our knowledge of formal platform governance mechanisms is less or not effective in helping CBO managers avoid drifting in their public-facing social media platforms, where there is a mix of minority and non-minority users. Scholars have significantly expanded our understanding of how established organizations contribute to the burgeoning of inequality and injustice (Amis et al., 2020) and, accordingly, how to improve their practices, e.g., neurodiversity programs in SAP (Krzeminska et al., 2019). However, scant scholarly attention has been devoted to understanding how minority organizations protect their membership and survive, particularly by using public-facing social media, to promote internal

cohesion and maintain external integration in the larger society. This is the focus of my paper, which explores, *"how do informal governance mechanisms inhibit drifting in CBOs' social media platforms?"*

### 3. Methodology

To address my central question of how minority platforms can guard against drifting, I adopted an in-depth, longitudinal, grounded-theory approach to theory building based on multiple platform cases in a Canadian CBO known as "MTS." MTS management adopted three social media platforms: Joomla in 2013, Viber in 2014, and Telegram in 2015. I uncovered similarities and differences among the three platforms in terms of their community patterns and underlying governing practices that explained their respective platform trajectories.

MTS, a CBO consisting of Iranian-Muslim university students and graduates, was founded in February 2012 by 10 graduate students who attended universities in Montreal. MTS started with 140 members who resided in Montreal and signed its constitution. Its mission was to create a unified "family" of immigrant scholars to maintain their religious identity while integrating into the city's larger society. In line with this mission, the MTS board adopted Joomla, a private social network similar to Facebook (offering the ability to create a profile, add friends, post content, comment on and "like" the posts of others, etc.). However, after two years, Joomla was only used by board directors, project managers, and a few active members. It failed to reach adequate adoption by MTS members and drifted toward segregation (i.e., it was only used by a few users for a couple of niche social needs). The board then moved to use Viber (an instant messenger like WhatsApp with a user cap of 200), which was successfully adopted and used. Later, due to increasing demands for platform membership, Viber was replaced by Telegram (another instant messenger), which offered no user cap (functioning with about 4,000 users as of 2022). Yet, this platform eventually drifted toward dilution (i.e., it was used by non-MTS users for only informational needs and community-specific uses).

As the primary source of data, I conducted 30 interviews with 25 individuals including MTS directors (D), platform administrators ("admins" hereafter), volunteers (V), and select users. Interviews focused on understanding the formal and informal governing practices that were adopted, as well as their evolution and impact on drifting. On average, interviews lasted more than 90 minutes each. They were audio recorded in their entirety and transcribed verbatim. I also retrieved MTS board meeting minutes

(292 pages; 2013–2016) and social media logs (2013–2021), which were key in providing us with first-hand observations of the organization's history of emerging uses and policies. Secondary data, such as archival data, and documentation were used for data triangulation (Yin, 2015) and reconstruction of platform community patterns. Data collection started in January 2016 and continued until April 2022 in different rounds to help us explore in-depth the evolution of platform patterns (in users, engagement, and outputs), adopted governance policies, and changes in platform trajectories to MTS's goals.

MTS is chosen for my empirical investigation for four main reasons. First, MTS is a minority immigrant CBO with a constitution, yearly elections, and a membership body of minority Canadian Muslims. Second, the organization has experienced contrasting drifting results in its social media platforms, which provides theoretical replication (Yin, 1994). Third, the author belonged to this organization and served as a director on its first two boards (2013–2015) before taking on a researcher role in 2016. This deepened his knowledge of the organization and its key informants and contributed to significant engagement of immigrant interviewees and MTS through trust (beyond formal individual and organizational consent), which has been recognized as a challenge in immigration research (Caidi et al., 2010).

I combined longitudinal case study (Yin, 1994) research and grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to identify governing practices and trace platform community patterns and drifting trajectories. Emerging insights drove additional rounds of data collection and iterations. As emerging insights drove additional rounds of data collection and iterations, I used the following four-stage abductive process.

In the first stage, I constructed a detailed chronology of each platform, starting from its inception and included the uses that emerged, the platform's governance, and its performance in addressing informational and social needs. Second, I engaged with multiple rounds of open coding to unpack governance-related constructs as interviews evolved. This step was conducted with heavy coding of archival data, particularly social media logs (e.g., types of uses emerging and the admin's reactions on the timeline), which guided my open coding. Figure 1 illustrates the emerged coding structure. In the third stage, I started to recognize three distinct patterns in the three social media platforms associated with different degrees of success in addressing informational and social community needs.

Finally, in the fourth stage of my abductive process, following recommendations for comparative case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989), I combined within-

case and cross-case analysis to develop an overall framework accounting for patterns of platform change, governing practices, and platform trajectories.

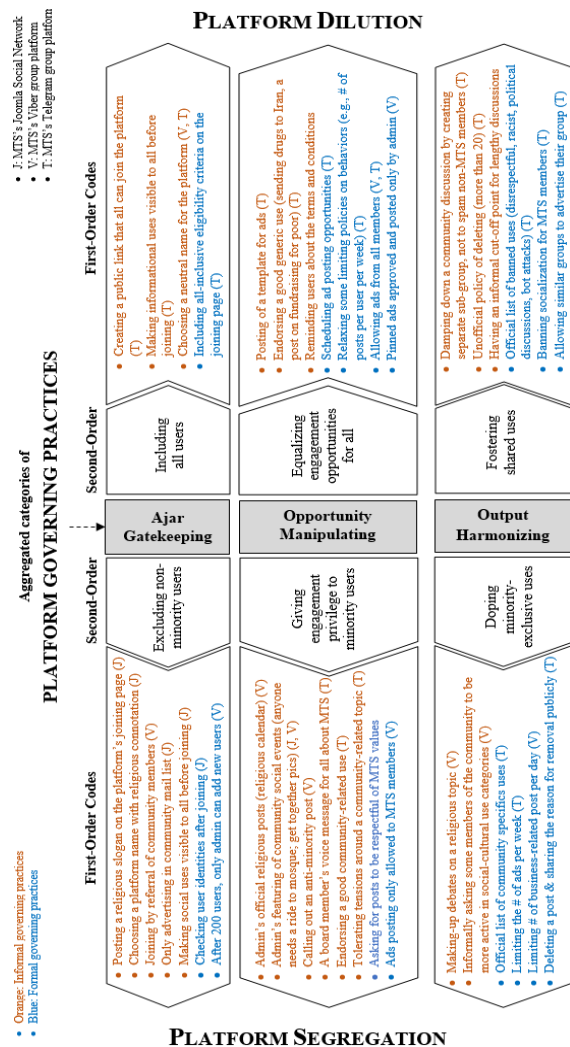


Figure 1. Emerged coding structure

## 4. Findings

The differences observed in the two paradoxical drifting trajectories (segregation vs. dilution) were underpinned by three categories of governing practices used by platform admins. These practices were intended to exert control over a platform's membership, behaviors, or outputs to ensure platform functioning was consistent with meeting MTS's goals. In the following sections, I detail how the three platform governing practices—ajar gatekeeping, opportunity manipulating, and output harmonizing—contributed differently to the two drifting trajectories.

### 4.1. Ajar gatekeeping

Ajar gatekeeping refers to governing practices around a platform gateway that aim to influence the patterns of user heterogeneity, consequently affecting the ratio of minority to non-minority users on a platform. Ajar gatekeeping practices were demonstrated in all three social media cases, and involved two tensional forces to open or close the platform gateway: *excluding non-minority users* and *including all users*.

On the one hand, platform admins sought to *exclude non-minority users* from the platforms through a range of formal rules that disallowed, or informal activities that discouraged, non-minority users from joining. These practices influenced the user heterogeneity pattern to the benefit of the minority users. **Formal** practices excluded non-minority users in a top-down fashion and mainly focused on a formal set of eligibility criteria, such as checking user identities and asking for a real picture after joining (in Joomla) or adding new users by platform admin based on certain criteria (in the early stages of the Viber group). In addition, platform owners engaged in a broader range of **informal** activities that indirectly discouraged non-minority users from joining through self-exclusion. Having a religious slogan on the platform's joining page (Joomla), choosing a platform name with a religious connotation (Joomla), joining Viber by referral of community members, only announcing the platform rollout in the community mailing list (Joomla), and making community-exclusive social uses visible to outsiders before joining (Joomla) are just some examples of how the platform owners conveyed a sense of “*a very tight-knit minority group*” (User7), which discouraged some non-minority members from joining.

On the other hand, the data showed that platform admins undertook contrasting practices to *include all users* (i.e., regardless of their minority status)—namely, through adopting formal rules to welcome, or informal activities to encourage, non-minority users to join and use the MTS platform. An example of a **formal** practice was having all-inclusive eligibility criteria on Telegram's info page with no mention of MTS membership. However, most all-inclusive ajar gatekeeping practices were **informal**, indirectly encouraging non-minority users to stay on MTS platforms via certain characteristics of the joining page, procedures of adding a new user, and the visibility of the platform timeline to outsiders before joining (e.g., choosing a neutral name for Viber and Telegram with no religious connotation on both).

## 4.2. Opportunity manipulating

Opportunity manipulating refers to governing practices by which platform admins aim to influence the *patterns of opportunities for engagement among diverse users*, consequently affecting the ratio of engagement opportunities for minority users to those of non-minority users. In the data, these practices emerged mainly on Viber and Telegram, which reached a tipping point of user adoption and engagement and involved two conflicting sets of practices: *giving engagement privileges to minority users* and *equalizing engagement opportunities for all*.

First, platform admins granted *engagement privileges to minority users* through a range of formal rules and informal activities that promoted a minority-exclusive environment. These practices influenced user engagement patterns to the benefit of minority users. **Formal** rules that favored minority users included limiting the opportunity scope to user activities that fell within the boundary of minority values (e.g., no advertising alcoholic beverages as “*any activity that is in contrast to Islamic values is prohibited*” [Telegram intro page 2015]) or regulating opportunities in favor of minority users (e.g., ad posting was only allowed by MTS members in the early stages on Viber [June 2015; Admin2]). Simultaneously, platform admins also used various activities to **informally** manipulate the opportunities to engage to the benefit of minority users. For instance, the admins proactively signaled that the CBO platform was a minority-exclusive environment by sharing coupons on Joomla exclusively for MTS members to buy products from small businesses (email newsletter 2013), posting religious calendar reminders or religious greetings on Viber (Admin2 2015), calling out the language of a post that used an anti-minority term in it on Telegram (Admin7 2017).

Second, platform admins reactively contributed to creating a minority-exclusive environment by making exceptions for and being tolerant of emerging uses that fostered a minority-dominant social media timeline. For example, despite the official ban on the same, admins allowed community socialization on certain occasions, such as in the case of fundraising for a community member in need or when a community member used the Viber timeline to organize a mass prayer for a terminally ill infant, which led to several sympathetic and emotional exchanges on the timeline (Admin2 2015). As another example, according to Admin9 (2017), after a heated debate arose regarding infant circumcision (a religious practice adopted in Islam and Judaism), the group admins decided to delete the posts of the objectors and allowed the minority-related discussion to conclude in favor of the

original pro-circumcision poster. Similarly, Admin2 narrated a story of when he deliberately let a contentious religious debate among three individuals proceed on Viber “*to remind all that the platform belonged to a minority group, not just like Kijiji*” (Admin2 2015). Individually or collectively, these informal practices manipulated the social media environment to benefit minority users and made them more comfortable than non-minority members about engaging with the group.

However, platform admins also adopted contrasting practices to *equalize engagement opportunities for all*. These practices included formal and informal activities that encouraged all users equally to engage with the social media platform, regardless of their MTS membership. **Formal** policies included admins reminding users of the universal values underlying the platform (e.g., a reminder on the timeline that “any activity that is in contrast to Canadian laws is prohibited”) and policies that allowed ads and ad pinning from all members for any paid content on Telegram (Admin8 and Admin10 2016; Admin10 2020). Platform admins also adopted activities to **informally** contribute in two ways to an environment that enabled all users to engage equally. First, admins proactively engaged in activities to signal an all-inclusive environment. For example, admins made decisions based on all users’ votes using Telegram polls or the Viber “like” button. Other examples included admins’ re-posting about an event that supported all Iranians (e.g., a campaign to object to delays in processing Iranian immigration applications) [2018; Telegram timeline 2018) and calling out a post about the quality of neighborhoods in Montreal that included a racist term (Admin7 2017). Second, admins reactively made exceptions to signal all users’ equality in engagement opportunities. For instance, admins allowed emotional message exchanges on Telegram for a limited time, despite their being against the rules, when the Iranian national football team qualified for the World Cup (Admin10) and when the mother of a non-MTS user was lost and later found dead, leading to a feeling of the Telegram group being “an environment that any user can count on for help and sympathy” (D14). These formal and informal practices contributed to equalizing engagement opportunities for all users.

## 4.3. Output harmonizing

The third and final category of practices that admins adopted in governing the platforms was *outcome harmonizing*. Output harmonizing refers to the governing practices by which platform admins aim to influence platform output patterns, and

subsequently, the ratio of community-specific versus useful-to-all outputs. Outcome harmonizing was observed in all cases and involved two tensional practices: *doping minority-exclusive outputs* and *fostering shared outputs*.

To *dope minority-exclusive outputs*, platform admins formally regulated or informally supported activities that protected the existence or expansion of minority-exclusive outputs on a platform. The evidence showed several **formal** rulemaking activities (e.g., reflected in social media's terms and conditions) designed to favor community-exclusive outputs. For example, Viber admin regularly posted examples of good community uses for users, such as news updates about local events or about members in need (e.g., "like what happened to our friend who got cancer" (Admin2 2017)). Formal rulemaking also included protecting community-related outputs against uses that appeal to all, such as limiting the number of ads posted per week (Admin8 2017) or narrowing the time bracket for ad posting on Telegram (Admin10 2018). Platform admins also engaged in various **informal** activities to fertilize the growth of community-exclusive outputs in an organic way rather than through official rulemaking. Other examples of informal fertilization include admin re-posting about a community social event (sharing pictures of a gathering) on Viber (User1 and Admin2 2015), posting coupons on Joomla and referring to the same in in-person discussion with community friends (D1, board emails 2013), or the board's decision to use Joomla (rather than email) for internal communication (Admin9 and D3 board emails exchanges 2013), to increase presence and use on Joomla.

Alternatively, however, admins also engaged in formal rulemaking and informal activities to *foster shared, useful-to-all outputs*. **Formal** rulemaking to support the growth of useful-to-all outputs included reminding users of the universal list of activities banned on Viber or Telegram (e.g., political discussions for or against anyone, use of stickers, GIFs, confirming another message, greetings, etc.), banning religious debates on Viber [2015; D5], or disallowing to continue discussions on religious topics on Viber [2016; Admin2]. In addition, **informal** activities that contributed to increasing the number and diversity of useful-to-all outputs included deviating religious discussions to another group (Admin1, Admin2, and Admin10 2017) to make the Telegram timeline more efficient for answering newcomers' questions after an influx of new members, banning socializations for MTS members on Viber (Admin2, Admin1, and Admin9 2016), having an unofficial policy for deleting contentious debates if they went over 20 messages on Telegram (Admin10 2019) or re-

posting to promote attention to a post about asking for help to send a drug in shortage due to US sanctions to a family member in Iran [Telegram timeline, 2021].

## 5. Discussion and Implications

International immigrants play a key role in economic growth of countries currently experiencing falling birthrates and shortages of talent (Caidi et al., 2010). However, they also face increasing challenges to their social inclusion and integration in these host countries (Voas & Fleischmann, 2012). The objective of this study was to uncover how to govern minority organizations' social media platforms in a way that facilitates immigrants' social integration and reduces inequality (Amis et al., 2020; Bapuji et al., 2020) by addressing their social and informational needs.

I identified three categories of governing practices (ajar gatekeeping, opportunity manipulating, and output harmonizing) that collectively influence three patterns in minority CBOs—namely, patterns of user heterogeneity, engagement opportunities, and output specificity to minorities. In combination, these patterns generate two paradoxical forces: (1) segregational drifting (inward/toward the CBO) and dilutional drifting (outward/toward the majority). The results suggest that the key to maintaining a CBO platform that aligns with its informational and social goals is balancing these two forces against drift in either direction. Hence, CBO platforms should be neither too inclusive (i.e., open and useful to all, like most corporate platforms) nor too exclusive (i.e., for community-specific use only) in the three categories of governing practices. Instead, they should adopt a variety of informal governing practices, in addition to formal policies, to be able to continue hosting both minority and non-minority users. In the following sections, I discuss the implications of these findings for research and practice.

First, this study starts by challenging the assumption of user homogeneity, which is dominant in governance research (e.g., Eaton et al., 2015; Ghazawneh & Henfridsson, 2013; Hukal et al., 2020; Rietveld et al., 2019; Tiwana, 2015). First, my findings show that minority CBO platforms are better off taking an ambidextrous approach to their social media governance. Past research suggests that clan control is a suitable approach when the controller does not have legitimate authority over the controllees. However, clan control can be ineffective for minority CBO platforms due to their user heterogeneity and clan turnover (Chua et al., 2012; Ouchi, 1979). The findings extend past research based on user homogeneity (Rietveld & Eggers, 2018; Rietveld & Schilling, 2021) by demonstrating that, in minority



CBO research context, excessively liberal governance (in Telegram) contributed to greater informational output quality, but at the cost of social outputs. Alternatively, excessively strict governance improved some unaddressed niche social outputs, but at the cost of informational outputs, when fewer people joined social media (in Joomla). As a third option, maintaining a balance between strict and liberal governance practices (in Viber) led to hosting several minority-specific users and outputs alongside a decent number of non-minority users who contributed to and benefited from the informational outputs. In sum, these findings suggest that managing minority CBO social media platforms is a much more nuanced and delicate process than managing platforms with user homogeneity, given the need to maintain both minority and non-minority users and a balance between addressing social and informational needs.

Second, my findings extend prior research by providing a detailed, grounded account of the three categories of governing practice (i.e., *ajar gatekeeping*, *opportunity manipulating*, and *output harmonizing*) that collectively contribute to attaining a complex combination of community-exclusive and all-inclusive goals. I find that the complexity and nuances of managing platforms with user heterogeneity and turnover could only be handled with a complex repertoire of practices, including both formal policy-making and informal activities that existed in all three categories of governing practices. As such, I suggest that focusing on controlling just one of these categories (e.g., input, process, or output in Eisenhardt, 1989; Kirsch, 1997; Kohli & Kettinger, 2004; Ouchi, 1979, 1980) would not be sufficient to steward a CBO platform with user heterogeneity (Rahrovani, 2020). The findings also implied the significance and precedence of the input (Cusumano et al., 2019; Gawer, 2021; Tiwana, 2015) over the process and output governing practices (Hukal et al., 2020; Wareham et al., 2014). For example, when the gateway was tightly controlled in Joomla, the platform did not reach the point of requiring any process or output control. In contrast, Viber's *ajar* gateway and Telegram's open gateway led admins to use various process and output policies to influence the platform trajectory. This finding offers an important takeaway for minority organizations: it is better to have a working platform with daily challenges that requires a complex set of governing practices (e.g., Viber or Telegram) than a *decayed* platform with a tightly controlled gateway (e.g., Joomla). Thus, to maintain a balance between too inclusive and too exclusive, CBO platforms must engage with all three categories of governing practices to steward joining users, user opportunities, and outcomes.

Third, by illustrating the role of *informal* policies in influencing a CBO platform's trajectory, my research also extends past platform governance research, which mainly focuses on *formal* policies to exert control (e.g., Ghazawneh & Henfridsson, 2013; Thies et al., 2018; Wareham et al., 2014). In part, my findings are consistent with existing research (Reischauer & Mair, 2018) showing that admins use formal demarcation of boundaries and penalizing mainly for important boundary crossings (e.g., disrespectful comments about Muslims, racist comments, or sexual jokes on the timeline). However, I extend this research by showing that CBO platforms rely heavily on informal practices to influence their platform's trajectory (e.g., choosing a platform name with religious connotations, admin's frequent posts about a religious occasion, etc.). Such informal governing practices led users who were extremely far from MTS values to *self-filter* themselves from participation or membership in the platform, similar to how speed bumps influence drivers' speed without the needs for physical police presence. In contrast, top-down, formal governance approaches (e.g., formal review processes in Tiwana, 2015) would likely deter many users who could benefit from the platform (and vice versa). It should be noted that using informal, manipulative governance is not always in favor of minorities, as in the Telegram and Viber cases (e.g., MTS chose secular names for the Telegram and Viber groups, deviated lengthy religious discussions to a second group). Thus, having some conflict around minority values may be an informal mechanism to exclude unaligned users via self-filtration.

Finally, the paper contributes to the literature on drift, particularly in minority organizations. This literature has highlighted commercialization as a common source of drift in non-profit organizations (Cornforth, 2014; Jones et al., 2021; Ramus & Vaccaro, 2017; Todd, 2009), focusing mainly on the tensions between addressing social and commercial objectives (Ebrahim et al., 2014). In contrast, my findings suggest a different type of drift—one that stems from imbalance between addressing informational and social needs, both of which fall within the scope of CBOs' social mission. Accordingly, drift occurs when a CBO platform fails to meet both of these needs and deviates toward one at the cost of the other.

## 6. References

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