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# **BRANDING AND GOVERNMENTALITY FOR INFRASTRUCTURE MEGAPROJECTS: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper explores subtle strategies that megaproject teams develop in practice to manage stakeholders external to the project team. A metro rail megaproject in India provides the case for the study. The strategies were identified through a content analysis of 640 project and non-project based Tweets posted by the metro rail organization. We augmented this dataset with the community's response through social media, as well as through semi-structured interviews that captured the project teams' responses. The findings indicate that the megaproject used various strategies: promoting the organization, giving progress updates, appealing to the community, as well as targeting of specific sections of the population. The effect of these attempts at governmentality through branding were observed in community discourses on social media platforms that echoed the strategic discourses projected by the megaproject while interviews enabled us to access the project team's responses. For the project community, the effects included a positive brand image, creating community brand advocates and building support for the project during contentious episodes. For the project team, the effects included job attraction, enhanced job perception as well as the creation of project team brand advocates. The relation between the governmentality instruments and their corresponding effects are theorized in six propositions.

## **KEYWORDS**

Megaprojects, Governmentality, Branding, Project Community, Social Media

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Infrastructure megaprojects (which are generally defined as those costing more than 1 billion USD) tend to have large numbers of project participants arranged within a pluralistic governance structure (Gil, 2015), in which conflicting logics co-exist with diffused power among the stakeholders (Biesenthal et al. 2018). The infrastructure industry generally experiences many more conflicts than occur in most other industries; in part, the high levels of conflict are due to structurally disparate interests on the part of various project parties over matters as fundamental as cost, quality and schedule (Black et al. 2000). In addition, there is a lack of a common organizational rationale and culture binding project participants and stakeholders from diverse organizations (Vrijhoef & Koskela, 2000). Moreover, external stakeholders such as existing land-owners, utilities and the community surrounding the project site need to be incorporated as well. These sources of difference, creating potential and actual conflicts, are exacerbated in megaprojects because of their increased scale, duration, complexity and, in particular, the wide range of external stakeholders (Flyvbjerg, 2014).

External stakeholders are more difficult to govern than those that are internal because they are not bound by contractual instruments and their relations with the project team extend across permeable boundaries (Mok et al., 2015). These characteristics of external stakeholders can make them demanding and sometimes unanticipated participants in projects (Szyliowicz & Goetz, 1995), often pursuing compensation in return for cooperation (Giezen, 2012, with demands that can lead to scope creep (Shapiro & Lorenz, 2000) and escalation of commitment (Ross & Staw, 1986). Governance instruments such as contracts cannot be used to manage external stakeholders so megaprojects have to rely solely on reactive strategic actions enacted in response to situations and definitions (Ninan & Mahalingam, 2017) as well

as proactive preparation for strategic contingencies that might arise. These strategies can be either directly observable or hidden. Both the literature on strategies-in-practice and the practice-based view of organizations emphasize the role of power and politics in framing strategic actions that are enacted and the ways in which order is produced in social settings (Nicolini, 2012). Consequently, we intend to use theories of power to study these strategies in practice.

Power theory encompasses both overt power and covert power (Clegg, 1989). It is said that power can be most effective when it is least observable (Lukes, 2005) and hence we rely on the theory of governmentality – a key construct in the literature on covert power (Milani, 2009). Foucault defines governmentality as an “ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power” (Foucault 1991: 20). The term, governmentality, is a fusion of ‘government’ and ‘mentality’ and means, actively, governing through mentalities (Muller et al., 2014). We research how governmentality of a project network is sought through branding that is aimed at making the exercise of power seem rational and natural (Lemke, 2002). The subtle and mundane branding strategies used in this infrastructure megaproject to manage external stakeholders will be explored. Attempts at governmentality relying on branding also have an impact on internal stakeholders, especially the project team in the way their normative universe is shaped as they deploy strategies to manage external stakeholders in the project community.

Structurally, we implicitly follow a framework suggested by Lange & Pfarrer (2017), who summarize the need for effective stakeholder management in megaprojects. It is this need that provides the common ground in which difficulty in managing external stakeholders ungoverned by contract can create complications. Arising from these complications, a

concern with underperformance in megaproject resulting from scope creep and escalation of commitment frequently results, as Flyvberg et al (2003) establish. The specific research objective for megaprojects is established in Section 2 in a brief literature review of governmentality and branding. The research methodology employed and the course of action that we followed is outlined in Section 3. Content analysis is the method that we chose and the findings that result from this analysis are discussed in relation to existing literature on branding and governmentality in Section 4) We then conclude by outlining what we take to be our contributions in a summary of the key findings. These take the form of six propositions which, along with a discussion of the limitations of the approach and proposed directions for future research, conclude Section 5.

In terms of specific research questions we address two central concerns: (1) How is governmentality through branding used to manage the megaproject community and the project team? (2) What are the effects of governmentality through branding on the project community and the project team? We address these research questions using a case study of a metro rail megaproject in India in which we discuss and analyze social media discourses surrounding the project and the branding that they create. In doing so, we link theorizing at the intersection of governmentality, branding and social media through understanding how these practices contribute to stakeholder management in megaprojects. Specifically we contribute to the discussion on community engagement practices in megaprojects by highlighting the subtle use of branding instruments to create governmentality effects that, in turn, allow for the management of project stakeholders. In the process we generate six propositions for further megaproject research.

## **2. GOVERNMENTALITY AND GOVERNANCE**

### **The specificity of governmentality**

Governance is a broad term defined as “the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs” (Carlsson et al., 1995). While corporate governance is the system of financial control through the board of directors, the term governance has also been used relationally. Relational governance aims at influencing networks to create innovation, reciprocity, trust and self-organization, recommended by Gorod et al. (2018) for organizations that require collective action, such as megaprojects (Gil, 2016).

The concept of relational governance comes closer to the meaning of governmentality than the more common term, corporate governance, while not capturing its subtlety. The concept of governmentality is attributable to the historian of ideas, Michel Foucault, particularly lectures given at the Collège de France during 1977-1984. Governmentality can be understood in various ways. Extending his earlier concern with instruments of power through which prisoners and students become self-governed (Foucault, 1977) he focused in these lectures on the processes of government, the art of government, looking at a broader range of strategies than those of the panopticon, the focus of *Discipline and Punish*. In thinking of governmentality Foucault's focus is very much on the practical arts of ‘government’, conceived in the broad sense, as management of a specific population through specific techniques and strategies. Governmentality focuses on techniques embedded in specific rationalities that are oriented towards creating certain sorts of subject mentalities. Essentially, the objective is to generate ‘liberal subjects’ whose compliance with governmentality is premised on their freedom to choose rather than their subordination. Such freedoms are socially constructed. Those subject to the normative control of governmentality, at best, believe themselves to be free of extraneous power and free to choose, a subtle type of concord that has parallels with Gramsci's prison notes on hegemony, which discusses ‘rule by consent’ (Anderson 1976), building on (Machiavelli, 1882).

Focusing on the analytics of governmentality helps us understand how political processes work and how they include cultural processes of self-formation and subjectivity (Barnett et al., 2014). Foucault (2007, 108) describes three processes as the core of governmentality. The first process involves creating taken for granted practices, drawing both from existing institutions and procedures as well as *de novo* reflections, calculations and tactics. Foucault (1997) emphasizes that these practices are not invented by the individuals but are imposed upon by their culture, society and social group. The second process involves deploying knowledge via a power-knowledge nexus that includes the state and the learned professions. Foucault (1980) calls this knowledge that is both the creator and creation of power. The third process involves developing ‘technologies of the self’ resulting, at best, in changed personal identity of those governed. These technologies revolve around the question ‘who we are?’ (Foucault, 1982), and represent a broader epistemological shift in seeing actors neither as autonomous nor as cultural dopes but characterized as being ‘entrepreneurs of their selves’ (Foucault, 2010). Together, these three processes help us understand the ways in which governmentality operates (Mitchell, 2006).

Governmentality is an alternative to reliance on governance with its emphasis on prescribed codes, often legally framed; by contrast to governance which tends to be regulated governmentality is often referred to as self-surveillance (Sewell, 1998) and subjectification, where the governed become subjects of an exercise of covert power (Fleming & Spicer, 2014) that achieves outcomes through attraction rather than coercion or payment (Nye, 2008). Governmentality can be seen as the culmination of “the search for a technology of government that can address the recurrent complaint that authorities are governing too much” (Rose et al. 2006). The aim in using what can be described, analytically, as a governmental approach, is for the personal ambitions of the governed to become enmeshed with those of organizations and their top management teams. For the latter, the intent is managerial control;

the former are designated as the targets of this governmentality, which is designed to create them as willing subjects.

Practices that often appear natural and seem neutral are problematized by a critical perspective on governmentality (Lövbrand et al. 2009). Research on governmentality focuses on micro-practices through a power perspective (Merlingen, 2011). The art of achieving governmentality involves the use of devices, including instruments, technologies and techniques, as forms of administrative powers and knowledge shaping everyday lives. Such instruments are frequently seemingly innocuous devices that penetrate deep into the fabric of social life (Merlingen, 2011).

The successful use of governmentality will have positive impacts on outcomes at both the project and organizational level (Müller et al. 2017). Project-based organizations are temporary; thus, the key attribute of project organization governmentality is the rapid ability to develop a team of self-responsible and self-organizing people (Müller et al. 2014) blended from a larger number of organizations members that constitute the project-based organization. In construction projects, Clegg et al. (2002) studied the practices of surveillance and control in alliance contracting and how they achieved governmentality within the project team. Subtle instruments were prominently displayed in the project headquarters, such as banners bearing images of the desired outcome of the project, slogans proclaiming team members to be guided by “whatever is best for the project,” as well as stories of the project from media reports and notices of project-related social events were used. While Clegg et al (2002) explore the practices of governmentality *internally*, within the project team, where the incentives of actors are interconnected through contractual obligations, in this paper, we explore how project teams use strategies in practice to infuse governmentality *externally* to



the project team, within the larger stakeholder community. One such practice of governmentality, adopted from the sphere of consumption, is branding (Binkley, 2007).

### **Governmentality through Branding**

The use of diverse forms of branding to influence consumers has some similarity to governmentality practices: both make the exercise of power seem rational and natural (Lemke, 2002), such as consumption of specific brands as a matter of brand loyalty becoming a part of everyday rationality, as Marcuse (1964) outlined in an early critical account. Branding extends a complex set of meanings, associations and experience which create emotional, relational and strategic elements in the minds of those perceiving and enacting dispositions towards brands (Aaker, 1996). Branding increasingly penetrates everyday life, ranging from business communications to interpersonal relationships (Lect, 2012). Branding techniques include various forms of organizational self-presentation and promotion (Scott, 2010), including product and corporate branding (Fan, 2010).<sup>1</sup> While product branding is largely oriented to improving sales, corporate branding aims to enhance reputation and is an apt vehicle through which to study attempts at governmentality.

Branding, when successful, can have a positive impact on employees by increasing job attraction (Dineen & Allen, 2016), enabling recruitment of a talented workforce (Tumasjan et al. 2016) and helping retain employees (*ibid.*). There is a dearth of literature on branding in construction (mega)projects. Langford and Male (2008) argue that the marketing and promotional approaches embraced by companies in other sectors should be championed by construction companies. They claim that in the construction industry, branding of

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<sup>1</sup> The ultimate goal of branding is to enhance brand loyalty (Shen & Bissell, 2013). There are many advantages of increased customer loyalty, such as customer's insensitivity to prices with the main game being an increase in company's profitability (Dawes, 2009).

construction contractor companies is difficult compared to design companies, where the design companies' output is on view to the public.

We aim to explore practices of branding as instruments of governmentality in a construction client company and the governmentality effects of these techniques on the project team and the project community by looking at social media discourses. Organizations can increasingly leverage the power of the Internet through social media (Geurin & Burch, 2017; Sivertzen et al., 2013). By using social media, organizations engage with audiences for their messages and influence perceptions of the brand (Brodie et al., 2013). Social media enhances the bond between the consumer and the organization by using user-generated content to achieve brand goals (Geurin & Burch, 2017); thus, social media creates opportunities for organizations to engage publics directly and on whatever occasion is desired. In commercial organizations, this direct communication is invariably oriented to sales promotion; in construction companies it is more likely to be oriented towards specific stakeholder publics whose potential impact on the progress of a project is significant. Hence, branding in construction is much more targeted, which makes it an appropriate vehicle for governmentality.

Clegg et al (2002) researched governmentality applied to the study of construction project organizations through the creation of a designer culture; however, the construct has not really been applied to understanding how stakeholders in the project community may be managed. Hence, this is an application gap in terms of Sandberg and Alvesson's (2011) framework. More specifically, the use of social-media and branding as tools to shape governmentality is generally relatively neglected and under-theorized. Addressing these gaps in the literature we ask how branding and the use of social media frame governmentality in the context of external (project community) and internal (project team) stakeholders of an infrastructure megaproject and how such governmentality is in turn used to manage the project community.

### 3. RESEARCH SETTING AND METHOD

To answer our research questions, we studied an infrastructure megaproject in India. Scholars claim that a single case qualitative study offers excellent opportunities to enhance contextual understanding because of the depth in data collection and analysis (Lundin & Steinthorsson, 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2006). The project that we studied is the first phase of a metro rail project and was budgeted to cost 2.2 billion USD spanning over 45 kms in length with both elevated and underground sections. The project was developed because of the city's rapid urbanization, which resulted in an increase in privately owned vehicles, road congestion and consequent air quality problems. The project was aimed at providing interconnectivity with existing public networks and an eco-friendly alternative to existing modes of transport. The project organization came into being in 2007 and in 2009, after funding was approved, construction activities commenced. The first phase of the project began operation in 2015. We chose this megaproject for our study since the project extensively used social media, which enabled us to study its role in terms of governmentality. Moreover, we also chose this project since we were easily able to access key personnel and data. Additionally, during the preliminary interviews, we heard quotes such as the following from the public relations officer of the metro rail project, which seemed to affirm our initial intuition about the link between social media and project governmentality:

*“It (the metro stations) was a hub for youngsters to come and see, take selfies. It became a tourist attraction. That's how we pull crowd”*

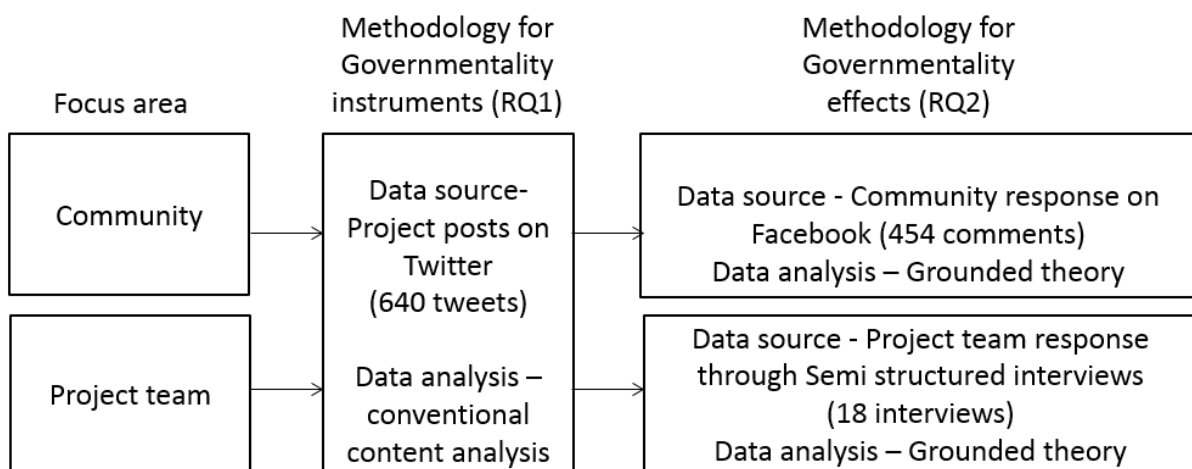
To understand the practices of governmentality through branding, we sought to capture and content analyse discourses engaged in by the megaproject with the community. Discourses are a powerful tool in the study of governmentality as subjects are governed both through and by socially constructed vocabularies, grammars and rationalities (Prince et al. 2006). To

enable the study of discourses, we adopted a qualitative research methodology using content analysis to focus on the contextual meaning of text (McTavish & Pirro, 1990) rather than merely ranking message variables based on the frequency with which they occurred. Social media data has been treated as a valuable resource for research into customer sentiments, opinions and relationships (Mostafa, 2013). In addition to social media networking the project deployed multiple communication instruments to communicate with the community, such as press briefings and direct interactions. The reason for focusing on social media interactions above other media is that, in the current context, social media are used to summarize interaction efforts in other media. There are posts of press briefings, public meetings, community events and information regarding annual reports to be found in social media interactions. Social media interactions are also more frequent than other media, often occurring on a daily basis. They act as giant word-of-mouth machines by catalyzing and accelerating the distribution of information (Gallaughar & Ransbotham, 2010).

The number of users in social media is increasing as people turn to it for entertainment, news, information, socializing, self-status seeking (Park et al. 2009) and maintaining friendships. The effect of social media in creating gradual political change, animating social movements (Ghobadi and Clegg, 2015) and sometimes even toppling governments, is accepted in the literature (Shirky, 2011). Social media are now a significant tool of governmentality, as Marwick (2013) argues. While she looks at the effects of social media in governing the body and appearance, we are focused on the ways in which it is used to govern stakeholder publics. We look at the governmentality effects of branding using social media as an extension of businesses' innovative use of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The metro rail organization's public relations team maintained social media accounts on websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. The posts on Facebook and

Twitter were similar, often with the same post echoing across both media. Twitter offered a better medium to develop an initial set of codes related to the branding efforts because each post on Twitter was limited to 140 characters and hence was crisp and easy to code as it contained only one message. While Facebook allows more active user participation, Twitter provides concise updates and noteworthy information (He et al. 2013). For this reason, we used Twitter to capture the interactions of the project to the community and Facebook for understanding community responses. Since social media posts did not allow for understanding of the effects of branding on the project team, we conducted semi-structured interviews with them. The research methodology used for addressing the two research questions are summarized in Figure 1. While we adopted conventional content analysis for analyzing the data collected for RQ1, we used open coding and grounded theory to derive categories from data for RQ2.



**Figure 1:** Research Methodology adopted for the study

The official Twitter page of the project organization had 5,137 followers, and the official Facebook page had 240,954 followers (3<sup>rd</sup> October 2017). Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) note that social media is largely used by younger age groups who have substantial technical knowledge and digital familiarity as well as a willingness to engage online. Since the metro

rail project is located in an urban setting with an increasing middle-class population, the income divide in the representations received is not so significant: the target stakeholders were the digitally aware rather than the digitally excluded. The Twitter page had 641 tweets from April 2012 (date of first posting) to August 2017. All of the tweets were in English, except one, which was a New Year greeting in regional language, which was not considered necessary to code. Parameswaran (1999) notes that after India obtained independence from British in 1947, the use of English has continued to grow not only in educational institutions but also in commerce and the mass media; hence, the use of English is common practice in India. A total of 640 tweets from the official Twitter page were considered for the content analysis. While the frequency of tweets varied, the project organization consistently tweeted every month. The construction activities of the metro rail project are still ongoing even though operation of a completed phase of the project started in June 2015. Since these tweets did not change significantly with the start of operations, it indicates that these continued to be aimed at the construction phase of the project to build support for construction activities.

The tweets were open coded into categories as shown in Table 1. The purpose of the content analysis is not mere counting of words used but an examination of the meaning of these words, thereby classifying a large amount of text into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings (Weber, 1990). We used conventional qualitative content analysis wherein the coding categories are derived from the text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Qualitative content analysis is recommended by Kracauer (1952) as meanings and insights can be derived holistically from the text. Qualitative content analysis can be defined as “*a research method for subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns*” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). We used manual coding of the social media data as automatic methods can create a barrier to understanding (Kozinets et al., 2014). Revisions were made to the coded

categories such that the categories remain mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive as suggested by Golden-Biddle and Locke (1997). For example, we coded all tweets aimed at making the community aware of the progress of the project as ‘giving progress updates’. This category included tweets with photos, project news, metrics and service information. Even though ‘targeting sections of the community’ had only 19 out of 640 tweets, since we followed qualitative content analysis, we found it as a relevant category for our study on governmentality.

**Table 1:** Number of tweets in each category

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of tweets analyzed</b>	<b>Percentage in each category</b>
Promoting the organization	96	15%
Giving progress updates	392	61%
Appealing to the community	98	15%
Targeting sections of the community	19	3%
Not clear	35	5%
Total	640	100%

We did not consider 35 out of the 640 tweets for coding as the message in these tweets were not clear. These included tweets with reference to a dead website link without a title, such as links to Facebook posts and newspaper articles that had expired at the time of coding: in these cases we were not able to make sense of the content, as there was no title. We also segregated and removed repeated tweets with the same wording recurring daily. In some instances, there were as many as three extra tweets with the same wording on the same day. We suspect this to be an error due to network issues and coded it in the ‘not clear’ category. We, however, considered the tweets if they had different wordings but the same content or if the same worded tweet occurred on different days as it could be a reminder to an earlier post.

We used Facebook data for understanding the effect of governmentality instruments on the project community. The Facebook posts act as a discussion forum with users' comments and debates available for each post concerning the project. 56 Facebook posts by the metro rail organization spread across four months from May 2017 to August 2017 received a total of 454 comments from the project community which were analyzed – to capture the impact of governmentality on the community. Thus, the average response rate was 8.1 community comments per metro rail organization posts. We do acknowledge that all comments were not positive and there were some dissenting voices but since they were few and did not add to the construct of governmentality but resistance to it, which is a separate topic, they are not discussed in this paper.

As shown in Figure 1, we conducted 18 semi-structured interviews, using open-ended questions with the project team, in which we sought to understand the effect of governmentality on the project team. Rather than asking direct questions about the impact of social media on the project team, we asked informants about the challenges the project encountered from external stakeholders and analyzed their answers for evidence of attempts at governmentality. The interview durations ranged from 1 hour to 3 hours and they were conducted over a span of 3 months.

We used grounded theory methods (Glaser & Strauss, 2017) and first open coded both the Facebook data and interview data. During the process of coding, we went through each of the Facebook comments and interview transcripts and looked for instances of the project community and the project team supporting the project. Each of these incidents was assigned to a category that emerged from our data. Doing this enabled us to create broad categories relating to effects of governmentality such as 'support for construction activities' for the project community and 'attract talents' for the project team. Hence, through a systematic



process of categorizing incidents we were able to create a list of governmentality effects. We then followed this with multiple cycles of coding, crosschecking and theoretical review (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to connect our incidents to the three distinct themes of governmentality (Foucault, 2007) – practices, knowledge and transformation. This allowed us to better understand the effects of governmentality through branding on the community and the project team, and their relationship with the governmentality instruments. We thus followed Eisenhardt’s (1989) guideline on ‘building theories from case study research’ wherein she suggests anchoring new theory in literature which then increases internal validity and generalizability.

#### **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The content analysis of the social media communications of the metro rail organization to the community enables us to understand governmentality through a variety of branding instruments that we now discuss below.

##### **Governmentality instruments for the community**

This section covers the content analysis of the official Twitter page of the metro rail organization. We observed the use of four branding instruments from the tweets that we analysed. Each of them is now discussed:

1. ***Promoting the organization*** – The messages which promote the metro rail organization included promotional events, awareness programs and use of promotional words. The promotional events involved making the community experience the metro rail through use of prototype models of metro rail coaches and lift prototypes, videos of walk-in of stations and animations of the inside of trains to create an appreciation of the project’s services. An indicative tweet is provided below:

*Lifts and Escalators. The Prototype of the lifts which are to be used in \*\*\* (name of metro rail organization) project was installed at \*\*\* (location name)*  
(Tweet by official page on 15 November 2012)

These prototypes are an example of the strategic use of visual cues, a means to win indecisive customers and evoke experiences (Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2014). The outcome expectations of the project affect the perception of the organization and hence its brand image (Heslop & Nadeau, 2010). Awareness programs were conducted in shopping malls and metro stations to project the benefits of having a metro rail for the community. Tweets surrounding these were aimed at making the general public aware of the benefits of using the metro rail service. Long et al (2008) mentions how awareness campaigns are aimed at developing and promoting a brand that would create a strong emotional connection. Documentaries on television channels and radio also made the public aware of the discounts and benefits offered by the metro rail service. Details of such programs were shared through tweets such as those below.

*“6 Possible ways how \*\*\* (metro rail) is going to change our lives” – Courtesy 104.8 FM* (Tweet by official page on 29 July 2015)

*Public Awareness program at \*\*\* (name of park) park. \*\*\* (metro rail organization) in coordination with the Corporation of \*\*\* (name of city) conducted awareness program* (Tweet by official page on 25 August 2012)

The use of promotional words was seen in tweets which mentioned the salient features of the project in order to try and encourage people to engage with the project.

The metro rail track near the airport runway, which had to be made underground because of requirements by the airport authority, was projected as,

*Metro dips and climbs over city- \*\*\* (station name) -Airport Line to Rise Over \*\*\* (location), Go Underground Near Airport* (Tweet by official page on 19 November 2012)

When traffic regulations only allowed construction work to be undertaken during night hours when traffic flow is less, the metro rail organization projected it as “*Metro staff toil as city sleeps*” showing their work commitment to the city. The promotional words also focused on updates of awards and appreciations conferred on the metro rail organization or its contractors for their exceptional performance in the project such as,

*UITP (International Association of Public Transport) congratulates \*\*\* (metro rail organization) for inaugurating the first line of \*\*\* Metro Rail Services to public* (Tweet by official page on 6 August 2015)

Mastos et al. (2015) note the role of framing and dominant interpretation in shaping construction projects. The use of promotional words here resembles the ‘aesthetics of strategy’ in the work of Kornberger & Clegg (2011), wherein the techno-rational discourse of the planner is substituted with the seductive, media-focused language of the strategist. Through these events, programs and promotional words, the metro rail organization branded their organization.

2. ***Giving progress updates*** – Updates on the metro rail construction were given in the form of service information, progress reports, progress photos and progress metrics. The tweets of service information were aimed at giving first-hand information about

service disruptions and traffic diversions due to the metro construction, such as the one below.

*Metro rail work switches sides at \*\*\* (Name of location). Traffic Will Be Routed After Black-Topping earlier worksite* (Tweet by official page on 25 December 2012)

The progress photos included photographs of work in progress as well as those of completed metro rail stations and viaducts. The news included construction updates such as construction work in progress and also non-construction updates such as reports of new metro coaches which reached the depot and updates of the trial runs conducted. The progress reports mentioned only positive news about work completed and did not cover negative news such as accidents and delays. Even the progress photos did not cover sensitive areas such as accidents or traffic diversions and were restricted to appealing and aesthetic images. Issues and failures can lead to negative emotions and can potentially negate the constructive effects of a brand (Rose et al., 2016). The progress metrics include quantitative measures of the work completed per day or over a time period. The progress news, photos, and metrics included the location of the activity so that the community and metro rail users could connect to the construction progress such as seen in the tweets below,

*\*\*\* (station name) Metro station work progress. Roof, base and concourse slab is fully completed in the main station box.* (Tweet by official page on 27 March 2015)

*Track work progress as on 18-12-13. Plinth completed for a length of 17,719m on viaduct between \*\*\* (station A) and \*\*\* (station B). (Tweet by official page on 18 December 2013)*

Giving progress updates for branding seems to be unique to the construction industry as they attempt to connect the community, when contrasted with efforts such as promoting customer's participation that are prevalent in other industries for a similar purpose as noted in the literature (Casaló et al. 2008). We can categorize 'giving progress updates' as analogous to aided awareness defined by Abrams et al (2010) as communicating what the brand is and does. Given the large social value that infrastructure projects purport to deliver however, providing updates that positively orient stakeholders towards the completion of the project could enhance governmentality.

3. ***Appealing to the community*** – Appeals to the community were made through projecting the metro's social commitment and by appealing to both national and regional sentiments. These multilevel appeals meant that all of the community were reached out to in one way or another. Social commitment was shown by the project organization's role in improving existing services and church buildings in the region, safeguarding trees by restoring damaged ones, conducting rescue operations for the community in events of fire or building collapse, conducting medical camps, conducting food carnivals, etc as demonstrated by the following tweets.

*\*\*\* (metro rail organization) repaired and beautified the \*\*\* Church at \*\*\* (name of place) and was handed over to the church authorities (Tweet by official page on 18 June 2014)*

*Honorable Chief Minister felicitated \*\*\* (metro rail organization) officers for \*\*\* (area) rescue operations. (Tweet by official page on 10 July 2014)*

Other literature, which stresses that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a political process producing ethical subjectivities in the organization (Spence & Vallentin, 2015) and community, resonates with these findings. Some of these social commitment initiatives included activities taken up on behalf of the project affected community, such as educational benefits for children, distributing mosquito nets, etc. The tweet below provides one example.

*\*\*\* (Name of metro rail organization) Education Support Program Conducted. Under the income restoration program for the project affected... (Tweet by official page on 19 August 2013)*

The extra construction works carried out for external stakeholders in the form of renovating drains were also included as part of the metro rail organization's social commitment. These projected the efforts of the metro rail organization in showing its responsibility to the environment, wildlife and eradication of diseases, as well as helping the community in which the project was housed. The appeal to national sentiments included conducting flag hoisting on national days such as Independence Day and Republic Day, celebrating days of national significance such as Vigilance Day by carrying out awareness training and other events. The metro rail organization celebrated such days and conducted events around their theme as the following tweet shows:

*Skit on Truth Alone Triumphs Performed: To mark the occasion of Vigilance awareness week ... (Tweet by official page on 1 November 2014)*

Rose et al. (2016) notes that such trust-enhancing facets of a brand are used to generate stronger commitments. The organization also projected their support for national goals such as the use of indigenous made-in-India equipment in the construction and operation of the megaproject as evinced in the following tweet.

*Visit to \*\*\* (city name) As part of indigenization of the Metro coach manufacturing, Alstom who is the manufacturer of ... (Tweet by official page on 26 November 2012)*

Similar to this, in a study on processed food, it was noted that customers preferred local produce over produce that was foreign sourced (Hu et al. 2011). The appeal to regional sentiments included celebrating regional festivals and publicizing the visit of regional leaders and celebrities to the construction site. Take the following tweet for instance:

*\*\*\* (Name of metro rail organization) celebrates \*\*\* (name of regional festival) festival at \*\*\* (name of metro rail station) Metro Station on 7th & 8th Jan 2017 (Tweet by official page on 6 January 2017)*

Such efforts also projected the city and the metro rail as something the whole nation looked up to, highlighting visits from other metro rails within the country to learn from this city's metro rail project and reaffirming the project's and the community's leadership in developing urban infrastructure in the city. An example of a related tweet is seen below.

*### Metro (rail) comes calling - A team from ### Metro Rail Limited along with the Managing Director visits (Tweet by official page on 17 August 2015)*

Nguyen et al. (2015) highlights familiarity, emphasized in the megaproject as appeal to community sentiments, as an important antecedent to brand likeability. Similarly, Gopaldas (2014) reports how brands carefully select, calibrate and broadcast sentiments to entertain consumers and transform the marketplace. These cultural branding initiatives on the part of the metro rail organization sought to make their brand iconic (Holt, 2004).

4. ***Targeting sections of the Community*** – Dahl (1961) suggests that almost the entire population has at some time been subject to some degree of socialization through schooling; not surprisingly, the metro rail organization also reached out to schools and colleges. The metro rail organization targeted specific sections of the general population such as school children, college students, women and disabled people. Selecting such target sections that are acceptable to all sections of the community is important, as it should instil positive sentiments within a greater majority (Fan, 2006). The organization offered free rides and conducted drawing competitions and quiz programs for the school children. The quiz programs were conducted on the children's awareness of the metro rail and the painting competition was organized around the theme "go green metro" to project the metro rail as environmentally friendly. The tweet below provides an example of how a community event was advertised through social media.

*Painting competition at 4pm Today!!! Topic - Go Green Metro -Timing 4pm to 6 pm - Don't forget to bring your colors. (Tweet by official page on 4 June 2016)*

All these events were centered on the metro rail's features and advantages in order to try and plant them in the minds of young school children. Other tweet categories



included women, college students and disabled people. Special programs were conducted for women and college students as the tweet below suggests.

\*\*\* (name of region) Week celebration – Flash Mob dance on women empowerment & rainwater harvesting - at \*\*\* (station name) Metro ... (Tweet by official page on 23 August 2013)

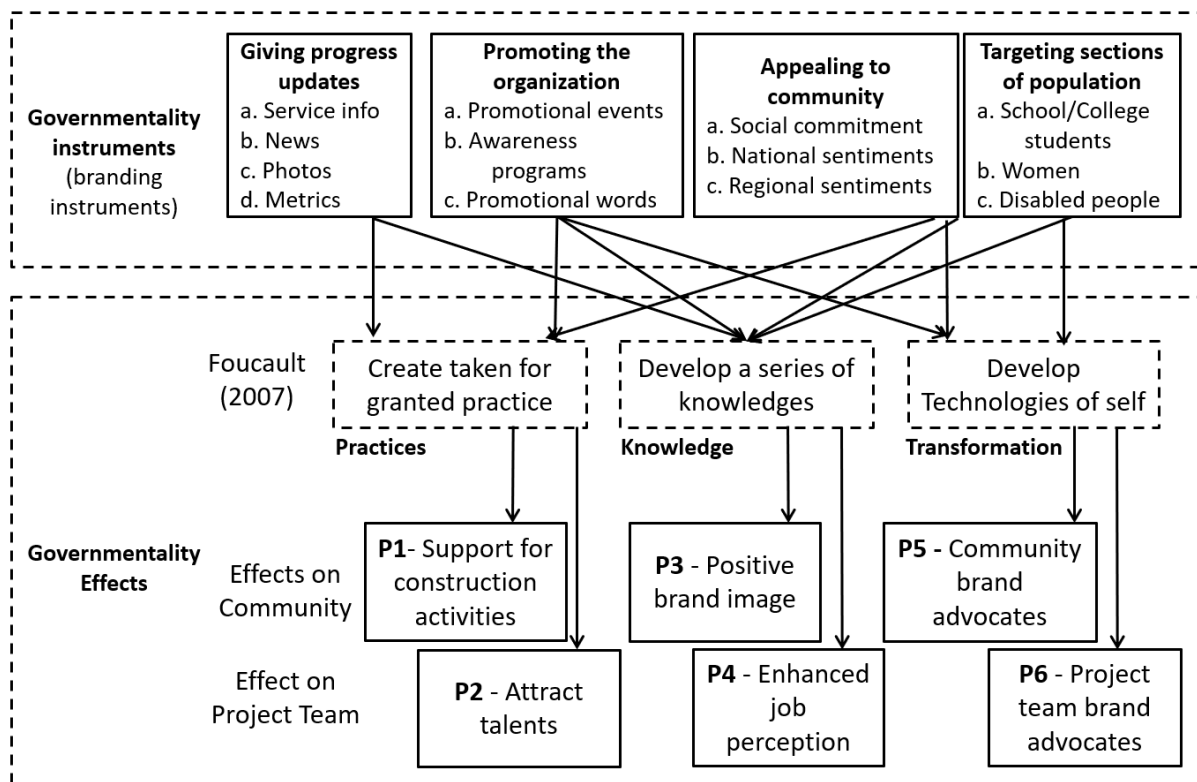
The metro rail organization also communicated messages implying that their services were friendly to the physically challenged. Zenker (2015) reports that it is crucial for organizations to understand the values, needs, preferences, and behavioural choices of specific target groups in the community for target group branding. These steps aimed to instil the use of metro rail as a lifestyle choice, acceptance of which implied learning specific disciplines and rituals (Foucault, 1977). For Foucault, identity is shaped by institutions such as schools, self-help groups, work environments and social workers (Foucault, 1991): in view of our data we might add megaprojects to this list of institutions that strive to shape identity.

### **Effects of Governmentality on the project team and community**

The branding instruments employed in megaprojects mimic the three different themes of governmentality: practices, knowledge and transformation (Foucault, 2007). The knowledge of the megaproject's positive impact as a taken-for-granted practice on the regional and national landscape can be seen from the use of 'appeal to the community' and 'promote the organization' instruments. The recourse to and interventions in specific target areas such as schools, women and the disabled sought to implicate these targets in specific technologies of the self. In making these interventions the project deployed a power-knowledge nexus centred on the needs and interests of specific target groups; more generally, it drew on

discourses of sustainability for broad promulgation. The cumulative effect of the instruments of governmentality observed in the case of the megaproject resulted in taken for granted practices, development of a series of targets for information and the development of technologies of self-governance.

The effects of these governmentality instruments had an impact on the project community and the project team, as shown in figure 2. The perceptions of the community about the metro rail megaproject were obtained from the comments on Facebook, while those of the project team were obtained through semi-structured interviews.



**Figure 2:** Governmentality instruments and effects from the case

The three sets of effects of governmentality on the community and the project team that we observed in accordance with Foucault (2007) – practices, knowledge and transformation - are now discussed below.

1. **Practices:** The governmentality instruments created practice effects on the community that supported construction activities as the metro rail organization enjoyed special preference and support from the community during construction. A metro rail organization employee commented during an interview that,

*“When we create traffic diversions for work ... There is no agitation from public ... They (project community) have accepted us.”*

Dawes (2009) explored the role of branding in creating customer insensitivity to prices. Similar insensitivity is seen here in megaprojects with the project community not being affected by traffic diversions (and consequent indirect costs) due to the megaproject construction because of governmentality through branding. The community members empathize with the construction hurdles of the megaproject as one of the posts from the project community shows.

*“In so many hurdles, \*\*\* (Name of metro rail organization) workers completing projects ... May God bless them to live long with safety and happiness.”*

This message resonates with the similarly worded social media post that “metro staff toil as city sleeps” that the metro rail organization posted as part of the ‘promoting the organization’ instrument. The community echoed dominant, complementary, persuasive and legitimating discourses posted by the project organization in social media that empirically shows the effect of governmentality (Doherty, 2007). The

'giving progress updates' instrument with construction locations resulted in the project community knowing the progress and resonating with it. Emphasizing especially appealing characteristics such as the progress can attract customers as seen in the case of place branding discussed by Zenker (2009). Involving key community gatekeepers such as regional leaders as well as bringing celebrities to visit construction sites is vital to generating community support (Kesterton & de Mello, 2010). None of these will have any effect if there is not an adequate reach of the media, in this case social media, in projecting the qualities of the project deemed desirable in informing selected stakeholder publics. We therefore posit that,

*Proposition 1: Community support for construction activities result from the reach of the media promoting the organization, giving progress updates and appealing to the community.*

While community support is mentioned as one of the critical success factors for delivering successful infrastructure megaprojects (Osei-Kyei & Chan, 2015; Rohman et al., 2017), this proposition discusses ways in which it can be achieved.

The practice effect of governmental branding resulted in the organization being able to recruit talented employees as they attracted employees from international metros and other esteemed jobs in India to work for the metro rail organization. The organization has employees with previous experience in Riyadh metro, Singapore metro, etc., as is evident from the semi-structured interviews with the project team. As a result of recruiting these talents, the metro rail organization was able to implement state of the art technologies and offer innovative design solutions. An engineer working in the organization said,

*“I resigned a government job to be here ... This is a big project happening in my city ... I want to be part of it.”*

Job attraction is mentioned as one of the effects of branding on employees by Dineen & Allen (2016). Sivertzen et al. (2013) notes that branding through social media positively relate to organization reputation, which motivates employees to apply for a job in the organization. The role of branding in enabling the recruitment of talented workforce has been noted previously in Tumasjan et al., (2016). With megaproject employees’ coming from international projects and government services the talent-attracting effect of governmentality through branding is evident. Therefore, similar to our observation on knowledge within the project community, we posit that

*Proposition 2: Job attraction from the project team results from the reach of the media promoting the organization, giving progress updates and appealing to the community.*

Within the construction project industry, project participants are attracted to or repulsed with the project organization depending on the aligning of their values, norms and attitudes with those of the organization (Love et al., 1998). Here, in the megaproject studied, we see how the megaproject projected characteristics and aligned with the values of the project team by appealing to their sentiments.

2. **Knowledge:** The governmentality instruments augmented the project community and project team’s existing knowledge of the project and this changed the project’s brand image and job perception for these entities respectively. The announcements of free rides to sections of the population, such as school children and the disabled, as part of the ‘targeting sections of the population’ instrument, were perceived as “good

*initiatives*” in the comments section on Facebook. On a post about recycling water used for washing coaches of the metro rail, one user commented,

*“You mean to say the 140 liters is recycled to get RO water? If yes, it is good.”*

Another project community member responded, *“I feel proud. Thanks to \*\*\* (metro rail organization).”* To the metro rail organization promoting its initiative of organizing bicycles for last mile connectivity, one member responded, *“Good and healthy initiative.”* Marketing programs such as ‘promoting the organization’ in our study achieve a certain level of awareness and become linked to a set of associations and preferences in consumers’ minds (Keller, 1998; Alreck & Settle, 1999). When the metro rail organization reported progress such as tunnel breakthroughs, there were compliments from the project community. One of the project community members responded,

*“Hats off to all those who are involved!”*

Awareness, such as ‘giving progress updates’, enhances the community’s level of familiarity and their brand attitudes in the case (Abrams et al., 2010). The metro rail project was considered by many members of the community to be a marker of the identity of the city in which the project is housed, as is evident from the Facebook comment below.

*“Suggestion - \*\*\* (name of metro rail organization) celebrate \*\*\* (regional festival) festival in grand manner and become one of the identity to the great \*\*\* (Name of city) ...”*

The community members tied the metro rail organization's celebration of the regional festival to the organization becoming an icon of the identity of the city, complementing similar discourses of 'appealing to the community' found in the social media interactions of the organization. Research from the construction industry also resonates with these findings, where investments in CSR activities result in an improved corporate image for organizations (Huang & Lien, 2012). We therefore posit that

*Proposition 3: A positive brand image in the community results from the reach of the media promoting the organization, giving progress updates, appealing to the community and targeting sections of the population.*

This proposition is supported by Li et al. (2005) and Osei-Kyei & Chan (2015), who highlight the importance of transparency to external stakeholders throughout the delivery of the project leading to its successful delivery. Being absolutely honest is not a form of project communication that is stressed, as the megaproject in our study chose to hide negative and sensitive news and only projected the positive news in their progress updates, those messages designed to improve their brand image.

Similar to the project community, we also observed the knowledge effects on the project team in terms of job perception. Interns who got an opportunity to work at the metro organization tweeted and created Facebook posts highlighting this as an achievement.

*"Last day as intern # (metro rail organization). Had a good time"*

Working in the organization was associated with being part of an icon with a strongly symbolic role in terms of community perceptions. The employees of the organization

felt proud of working in the metro rail project. The Human Resource manager with the metro rail organization remarked,

*“People are proud of working with us ... It’s a national service.”*

One of the Facebook comments, from someone probably associated with the metro rail organization quotes,

*“Proud to be part of this project from 2009 to 2015.”*

In megaprojects, the effect of perceiving one’s job as a form of service to the nation is often quite visible. Therefore, we posit that

*Proposition 4: Enhanced job perception on the part of the project team result from the reach of the media promoting the organization, giving progress updates, appealing to community and targeting sections of the population.*

Supporting our proposition on enhanced job perception, Van Marrewijk (2007) notes that employees of the megaproject that he studied felt that they were constructing something unique. Through this proposition we highlight the role of promoting the organization by stressing its uniqueness, along with other governmentality instruments as central to enhanced job perception.

3. **Transformation:** The governmentality instruments turned into ‘technologies of self’ and transformed the identity of the community and the project team. The transformation in identity of the community made some community members strong brand advocates of the metro rail project. They took efforts to defend the actions of the organization in front of other community members and even posted clarifications and replies on behalf of the organization. A Facebook post on recruitment of new staff



to the Public Relations team of the metro rail organization, attracting some criticism such as, “*this won't bring you more crowd for metro. Reduce the ticket rate*”, led one of the members of the community to clarify,

*“This is to have more interaction with the commuters and public to wipe out the inconveniences and to improve the efficiency of the service.”*

Sashi (2012) mentions the role of customers in influencing the purchase decisions of others in peer-to-peer interactions as a form of advocacy in the buyer-seller relationship. Such interpersonal interaction in virtual communities such as Facebook enhances member loyalty and builds brand loyalty (Shen et al. 2010). Studies in governmentality using the concept of ‘translation’ from actor-network-theory (ANT) have examined how network builders use discourses strategically to recruit network members to mold their identities and make them future network builders (Callon, 1986; Merlingen, 2011). Transformation of identity occurred because the metro rail projected to and targeted particular sections of the population that it sought specifically to enrol and translate into loyal supporters of the metro. We therefore posit that,

*Proposition 5: A transformation of project community into brand advocates result from the social reach of the media promoting the organization, appealing to the community and targeting sections of the population*

Flyvbjerg (2014) supports our proposition related to the project community advocating for the megaproject when he refers to the pleasure a community gains from looking at and using something that is iconically beautiful. He terms this the ‘aesthetic’ sublime and sees it as one of the important drivers of the scale and

frequency of megaprojects. The metro may not strike the average western reader as a sublime but in an over-crowded, gridlocked, polluted and hot city in India it certainly has aesthetic appeal as well as functional utility. While Flyvbjerg (2014) refers to just the instrument of promoting the organization in his ‘aesthetic’ sublime, we add governmentality instruments such as appealing to the community and targeting sections of population to the list of instruments that can support this construct.

The project team also turned into brand advocates. Team members were very passionate about their work in the metro rail organization and justified actions that advanced the project at the expense of affected parties by positioning the inconvenience caused to some stakeholders as a small price to pay for a project of prime importance. Megaprojects are often criticized for the practice of ‘strategic misrepresentation’ (Flyvbjerg, 2008) as they attempt to over-estimate the benefits and underestimate the costs in an effort to make the project look good on paper in order for the project to be selected when in competition with other projects. This has led to the ‘survival of the unfittest’ (Flyvbjerg, 2009) where megaprojects that are most generous with their projected benefits are the final ones selected. The particular role of governmentality in shaping the normative universe of the project team and making them brand advocates needs to be investigated further in future research, given its criticality. Therefore, similar to our observation on transformation with project community, we posit that,

*Proposition 6: A transformation of project team into brand advocates result from the social reach of media promoting the organization, appealing to the community and targeting sections of the population*

Supporting our proposition, Van Marrewijk (2007) notes the ‘fighting spirit’ in the case of the Environ megaproject as the employees committed themselves to the project and to a belief in the innovative concept promoted by the organization. Our proposition adds to this discussion on the strategies that megaprojects use to achieve transformation.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Even though the construction industry occupies more than 10 % of the world’s GDP, the use of social media data and its relevance in research on construction projects is under-explored. Through this research, we explored the intersection of two under-researched areas in the construction sector, branding and social media, as message and media for governmentality influences managing the project community. We explored the role of social media in creating dominant, complimentary, persuasive and legitimate discourses.

The research objectives were to understand how and in what ways governmentality worked in a megaproject in relation to the external stakeholders and the internal project team. From the social media communications of the metro rail organization it can be seen that the megaproject used governmental strategies such as promoting the organization, giving progress updates, appealing to the community and targeting sections of the community. The effect of this governmentality on the community through the creation of a positive brand image was to build support for construction activities and to create community brand advocates. Not only was the project community influenced but so also was the project team recruited from the broader community. Project team effects included enhanced job perceptions, an ability to attract talent and produce project team brand advocates. As a result of the governmentality effects on the project community, team members saw the megaproject as socially committed, safe, clean, prestigious and iconic for the city.

We have highlighted six propositions that contribute to investigation of the management of external stakeholders in megaprojects through governmentality. The existing body of knowledge on stakeholder management that focuses on strategies fuelled by overt incentives, such as for instance explicit give-and-take behavior (Ninan & Mahalingam, 2017) characterizing land acquisition and the management of landowners who may be stakeholders in a project is complemented by this approach. We also contribute to discussion of community engagement practices in megaprojects that use subtle branding to foster governmentality. Research into governmentality through branding in the construction industry extends previous literature on governmentality empirically: the construction industry has rarely been addressed in these terms (Clegg et al. 2002 being an obvious exception) and researching the role of social media in producing governmentality is novel.

When contrasted to branding in other sectors, the construction megaproject we studied stressed, in particular, progress updates of the project that comprised 61% of all tweets. Progress updates include locations of activity so that the public can connect with construction progress, enabling them to feel connected to the materiality of the project. Appealing to the community through CSR activities in megaprojects is done mainly through the material renovation of nearby community buildings and parks. While progress in reaching project objectives on time and on budget is clearly of major interest to project managers the assumption seems to be that it will also be the major factor of interest to project stakeholders, an assumption that could be tested by researching community perceptions. Notably, the share of tweets promoting the organization was only 15% in contrast with 40% observed in other industries, such as pizza making (He et al., 2013). While existing literature mentions customer insensitivity to prices as an effect of branding, in megaprojects insensitivity to traffic diversions and other inconveniences caused due to the construction activities resonates similarly.

This study has some limitations. As Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) note social media is largely used by younger age groups, restricting the effects of governmentality. Also, while we cannot argue that the governmentality exercised through social media is the only reason for the lack of protests in the project considered, these strategies did aid in some part covertly influencing the community. Future research could provide further confirmation of these findings and identify the relative importance of social media induced governmentality in reducing public protests. Another limitation is that the current study is restricted only to the Indian context. Similar studies in other geographical and cultural contexts could help confirm or contrast with our propositions and in turn help refine current theory. Other avenues for future research present themselves as well: analysis of social media communications by project teams could be extended by analyzing how community discourses evolve over a period of time as well as inquire into the impact of events on the project. The role of governmentality in shaping the normative universe of the project team, turning them into brand advocates, needs to be investigated in depth. In this paper we have not focused at all on resistance to governmentality through social media and such resistance needs to be investigated in future. Future studies can also explore the relative importance of the governmentality instruments and effects through a triangulated, mixed-methods approach incorporating quantitative elements (quantitative content analysis for instance) that may help identify additional findings.

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