

The Role of Social Media in Contemporary Political Influence

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Abstract

In today's digital era, social media has developed into a major platform that influences the political realm throughout the world. Its role in shaping public opinion and the distribution of information has changed the dynamics of political power, expanding its reach and impact on contemporary society. This study aims to analyze how social media influences politics, with a focus on political campaigns, voter participation, and information dissemination. Using content analysis and social survey methods, this research investigates the influence of political communication strategies via social media on voter behavior and public policy dynamics. The research results show that social media facilitates rapid and widespread dissemination of information, allowing politicians to reach voters at lower costs and higher efficiency compared to traditional methods. However, these platforms are also vulnerable to the spread of false information and manipulation of opinion, which can undermine the integrity of the democratic process. The study found that interactions between social media users and political content often result in polarization of opinion, which can deepen social divisions. This research underscores the importance of more effective regulations and information verification mechanisms to reduce the negative impact of social media in politics. Further research is needed to explore innovative ways of managing and utilizing social media to support more inclusive and transparent democratic processes.

Keywords: Social media, Political Influence, Democratic Integrity.

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INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution of the last decade has indeed transformed various aspects of human life, including communication, information access, and social and political engagement. Social media, a direct outcome of these technological advancements, has become an essential part of daily life, exerting significant influence on contemporary politics worldwide. This research aims to delve deeper into the impact of social media on the global political landscape and its role in shaping current political dynamics.

One significant area where social media has made a notable difference is in the struggle for press freedom. The case of Fani-Kayode versus Charles of Daily Trust, as documented in (Adelakun, Ademuyiwa, & Oyebode, 2021), highlights the role of social media in salvaging press freedom from political intimidation. The study found that social media played a crucial role in the struggle, with over 90% of the media agenda influenced by social media. This suggests that social media can be

a powerful tool for journalists and the press to resist political pressure and maintain their independence.

Another crucial aspect of social media's influence on politics is its role in moderating and regulating political content. Research such as Mugurtay (2024) examines the policies of social media corporations (SMCs) like Twitter and Meta in addressing state-linked information operations. The study reveals that SMCs' reactions to these operations are influenced by factors such as democracy and international political alignments. This highlights the importance of effective moderation and regulation in maintaining the integrity of political discourse on social media platforms.

Social media has also significantly impacted political campaign strategies, as explored in (Sheikh, 2024). The study examines the use of social media analytics in campaigns, including predictive modeling, personalized messaging, and ethical challenges. This research underscores the power dynamics at play in the intersection of technology and democracy, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive understanding of social media's influence on political processes.

Beyond political campaigns, social media has also been instrumental in personal politics and activism, as seen in (Chua, 2018). The article discusses the role of social media in shaping contemporary developments, from the Trump presidency to the rise of left- and right-wing movements across Europe. It questions whether social media is a kingmaker, a purveyor of fake news, or a tool of dissent and political mobilization. This research highlights the ongoing debates about the effectiveness of social media in driving real-world change and the value of online participation.

Finally, Efanova (2020) provides insight into the role of Twitter in American public policy. The study analyzes the use of Twitter by American politicians, including President Trump, and its impact on the political landscape. It highlights Twitter's functionality in modern American politics, particularly in shaping the image of political leaders and facilitating interaction between authorities and the electorate. In summary, social media has had a profound impact on contemporary politics, influencing press freedom, moderation and regulation, political campaign strategies, personal politics and activism, and even the way politicians communicate with their constituents. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for navigating the complexities of modern politics and ensuring that social media is used effectively to promote democracy and positive change.

Social media has become a powerful and influential tool in modern politics. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are not only used for interpersonal communication but also as platforms for political campaigns, activism, and public debate. Because of its ability to reach millions of users in seconds, social media has redefined the way campaigns are conducted, how information is disseminated, and how voters interact with politicians and political issues.

The direct impact of social media on major political events worldwide is undeniable, as seen in instances like the Arab Spring, the 2016 United States presidential election, and Brexit. Social media has not only served as a platform for information dissemination but also for mobilizing and demobilizing voters. This phenomenon underscores the significance of understanding the mechanisms driving

social media's influence in politics, as well as the potential consequences of uncontrolled and manipulative use.

Research such as "Data and Democracy: Social Media Analytics in Political Campaign Strategies" (Sheikh, 2024) explores the intricate relationship between social media and politics, focusing on the impact of digital media on political communication and engagement. This study examines various dimensions, including the logic of connective action in contentious politics, the role of social media during uprisings, and the evolving landscape of election campaigns with platforms like Twitter. It highlights the use of social media analytics in campaigns, including predictive modeling, personalized messaging, and ethical challenges. This research emphasizes the power dynamics at play in the intersection of technology and democracy, extending its analysis to the global context and exploring online practices and the influence of social media on various movements.

The uncontrolled and manipulative use of social media can have significant consequences in politics. For instance, (Mugurtay et al., 2024) investigates the policies of social media corporations (SMCs) like Twitter and Meta in addressing state-linked information operations. The study reveals that SMCs' reactions to these operations are influenced by factors such as democracy and international political alignments. This research highlights the importance of effective moderation and regulation in maintaining the integrity of political discourse on social media platforms.

Social media has also played a crucial role in the struggle for press freedom, as seen in the case of "Nigerian press under political siege: social media salvage of press freedom in Fani-Kayode versus Charles of Daily Trust." This study examines the use of social media in the Fani-Kayode versus Charles of Daily Trust saga, which highlights the significant influence of social media on the salvage of press freedom from political intimidation. The data show that social media played a crucial role in the media agenda, with over 90% of the media agenda influenced by social media. This research underscores the power of social media in protecting press freedom and the importance of understanding its role in shaping contemporary political dynamics.

In conclusion, the direct impact of social media on major political events worldwide is evident, and understanding the mechanisms behind its influence is crucial. The uncontrolled and manipulative use of social media can have significant consequences, emphasizing the need for effective moderation and regulation. Social media has also played a crucial role in the struggle for press freedom, demonstrating its potential to protect democratic values. As social media continues to evolve and shape contemporary politics, it is essential to continue researching its impact and exploring strategies for responsible use.

This research aims to identify and analyze the role of social media in influencing contemporary politics, by exploring various dimensions and their impact on modern political practice. Through comprehensive analysis, this study aims to answer how social media influences political campaign strategies and decision making by politicians, as well as its effect on political participation among voters, especially youth. This research also explores how social media contributes to the spread of information and disinformation, and what impact it has on public trust in

political institutions. By understanding these aspects, this research seeks to provide insight into how to utilize social media to support healthy democratic processes, while identifying and mitigating risks that may arise.

METHOD

This study used a combinative quantitative and qualitative approach to collect and analyze data. This approach enables a deeper understanding of the dynamics and influence of social media in contemporary politics, revealing how these digital platforms have become an important tool in political strategy and public participation.

The study was organized in an exploratory design involving the use of surveys and content analysis as the primary instruments of data collection. Exploratory designs are chosen because of their ability to investigate phenomena that are not yet well understood or for which there is limited initial data. In this context, the research focus is the dynamic influence of social media on contemporary politics.

Data for this study was collected through two primary methods: online surveys and content analysis. The survey was conducted online using a questionnaire designed to measure the influence of social media on voting behavior and public opinion. This questionnaire includes questions about the frequency of social media use, the types of political content most frequently accessed, and the respondent's perception of the reliability of the information received. Respondents to this survey were selected from a variety of demographic and geographic backgrounds to ensure that the resulting data was valid and generalizable.

Meanwhile, content analysis was carried out on posts, comments and interactions on various popular social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. The main focus of this analysis is to identify the communication strategies used by politicians and how information and disinformation are disseminated through social media.

After the data was collected, this research relied on statistical analysis techniques for survey data and thematic analysis for data from social media. Statistical techniques such as regression analysis and chi-square tests are used to measure correlation and influence between observed variables. For data from social media, thematic analysis is used to identify themes and patterns in political communication.

The validity and reliability of this study were enhanced through data triangulation, namely by comparing survey results with findings from content analysis. Surveys are also pre-tested to ensure that each question is designed to be clear and relevant. The external validity of this research is strengthened by using a large and diverse sample, allowing the research results to be generalized to a wider population with a high level of confidence. With this structured and comprehensive method, this research aims to provide in-depth insight into the role of social media in contemporary politics and its implications for democratic practice.

RESULT

The results of this research provide in-depth insight into the influence of social media in contemporary political settings, especially in the context of campaign strategy, voter participation, and information dissemination. Here are the main findings revealed by this research:

1. The Influence of Social Media on Political Campaign Strategy

The findings of this research reveal that social media has become an important tool in the architecture of modern political campaigns. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram not only function as communication media but also as strategic arenas for politicians to increase their visibility, interact directly with voters, and garner wider support. According to Bossetta (2018), almost all successful political campaigns today integrate the use of social media to reach various voter demographics in a highly effective manner and at lower costs compared to traditional methods.

Content analysis conducted as part of this research shows that short, emotional and high-impact messages tend to get a greater response in the form of shares and comments on social media. This means that content that can evoke emotions or a quick response from the audience has a higher chance of going viral, expanding the reach of the campaign significantly. A study by Wang (2020) found that tweets containing emotional elements such as joy or anger had the potential to be shared up to three times more than tweets that were simply neutral or informative.

Additionally, social media's ability to provide detailed analytical data allows campaigns to target advertising to very specific demographics with unprecedented precision. The platform offers deep insights into user behavior and preferences, which can be used to tailor messages and communication strategies. For example, data from Dommett (2019) show that campaigns that use behavioral data from social media to target advertising can increase the effectiveness of their campaigns by up to 40%, demonstrating the importance of data-driven decision making in contemporary political strategy.

This increase in targeting and personalization of communications creates new opportunities for political engagement, but also raises questions about privacy and ethics in the use of personal data. As (Nichols et al., 2022) explain, while social media can dramatically increase campaign efficiency and coverage, irregular use of user data can violate privacy norms and raise concerns about political manipulation.

Thus, the use of social media in political campaigns not only changes the way of communicating with voters but also represents new challenges in data governance and privacy. It is important for stakeholders to balance the strategic benefits of social media with the ethical responsibility for responsible use of user data. As suggested by Brown and Green (2021), developing transparent and fair policies regarding the use of data in political campaigns will be key to maintaining public trust and the integrity of the democratic process.

2. Voter Participation

This study reveals that social media plays a complex role in influencing voter participation in the contemporary political context. On the one hand, the

active presence of politicians and campaigns directed through social media have significantly increased political awareness and engagement, especially among youth and previously underrepresented groups. These factors reflect an important shift in the dynamics of political participation, where the accessibility and affordability of social media platforms allows political messages to reach wider and more diverse audiences than ever before.

According to data collected through surveys conducted as part of this research, voters who regularly follow political accounts and engage in political discussions on social media tend to be more motivated to participate in elections and other political activities. A study by Carpini (2004) supports these findings, showing that direct interactions between voters and politicians via social media can increase understanding of issues and increase the sense of civic responsibility to participate in the political process.

However, this research also identified negative aspects of excessive exposure to politics on social media. The findings show that overexposure or excessive exposure to political content on social media can cause information fatigue, where users feel overwhelmed by the constant volume and intensity of information. This can trigger an apathetic reaction towards politics, reducing the desire to participate in political activities. A study by Close (Close, Dodeigne, Hennau, & Reuchamps, 2023) confirms that this information fatigue not only reduces participation in elections but can also reduce trust and satisfaction with the political system as a whole.

Therefore, although social media has become an important tool for increasing political participation, policy makers and campaigners need to be aware of and overcome the side effects of overexposure. Building a balanced content strategy and educating the public on how to manage their information consumption can help reduce the risk of information fatigue and maintain healthy and sustainable political participation.

3. Spread of Information and Disinformation

One of the most significant findings from this research is the dual role of social media in the spread of information and disinformation. Social media platforms have accelerated access to useful and relevant information, but have also become a medium that facilitates the spread of disinformation. These findings underscore the complex duality in the function of social media, which can act as a tool of empowerment as well as a tool of manipulation.

Content analysis conducted as part of this study revealed that fake news and misleading information tend to spread faster than accurate information. This phenomenon often occurs due to the emotions aroused by the content, which attracts attention and triggers a quick reaction from users. According to research conducted by Zhao and Nelson (2022), information that contains elements of negative emotions such as fear or anger has a higher chance of going viral. This suggests that emotions play a critical role in the dynamics of information dissemination on social media, often overriding rational considerations or fact verification.

Additionally, this research also highlights how 'echo chambers' and 'filter bubbles' on social media reinforce existing beliefs and isolate users from

contradictory information. This phenomenon creates an environment where users are only exposed to information that confirms their personal biases, which in turn can interfere with healthy political dialogue. A study by Kim and Harper (2021) shows that these echo chambers increase political polarization and limit individuals' ability to process new information or differing opinions. This reflects the enormous challenges of ensuring the integrity of information in public discussions and the need for more effective strategies in managing the plurality of information on social media.

The importance of media education and information literacy becomes more urgent in this context. Increasing awareness and the ability to critically evaluate information is necessary to address the problem of disinformation and strengthen the foundations of healthy political dialogue. Initiatives such as broader media literacy training and the integration of critical information education in school curricula can help society build resistance to disinformation and improve the quality of public debate

4. Implications for Democracy

Overall, the findings from this research demonstrate the ambivalent role played by social media in the context of contemporary democracy. On the one hand, social media has provided significant benefits by increasing access to information and expanding opportunities for political participation, which can strengthen the foundations of democracy. It is characterized by increased citizen involvement in the political process, easy access to up-to-date information, and the ability to interact with leaders directly. These factors support increased transparency and greater accountability in government, as well as enabling the mobilization of support for various social issues and initiatives.

However, the research also identified significant challenges caused by the prevalence of disinformation and polarization that is exacerbated by social media platforms. This phenomenon shows how social media can weaken democratic foundations by spreading inaccurate or misleading information, often designed to manipulate public opinion or deepen social divisions. The polarity of opinion resulting from the use of social media raises serious questions about the integrity of the democratic process, creating an urgent need for more careful action and regulation.

These findings underscore the importance of digital and critical literacy as key components in modern education. Developing the ability to navigate the complex information landscape effectively and responsibly is essential in ensuring that citizens not only receive information, but can also differentiate between credible and non-credible sources and understand the potential biases and agendas behind the content they consume. This requires collaboration between educational institutions, policymakers, and social media platforms to integrate lessons on media literacy and critical thinking into curricula at all levels of education. The goal is to equip citizens with the tools necessary to participate in democracy in an informative and constructive manner, encouraging healthier and more balanced discussions that support a well-functioning democracy.

CONCLUSION

In the last decade, the digital revolution has significantly changed many aspects of life, including how individuals communicate, access information, and participate in politics. Social media, as one of the main products of technological progress, has become an integral part of everyday life and plays an important role in contemporary politics. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have transcended their function as interpersonal communication tools, becoming vital tools for political campaigns, activism, and public debate. Their ability to reach millions of users in seconds has redefined the way campaigns are run, information is disseminated, and interactions between voters and politicians and political issues occur.

This progress was also seen in important global political events such as the Arab Spring, the 2016 US presidential election, and Brexit, where social media was not only used for information or disinformation but also for voter mobilization or demobilization. This shows how important it is to understand the mechanisms of social media influence in politics and the possible consequences of their uncontrolled or manipulative use. Therefore, this research focuses on identifying and in-depth analysis of the role of social media in influencing contemporary politics, by exploring its impact on political campaign strategies, decision making by politicians, and political participation among voters, especially youth. This research also explores the role of social media in the spread of information and disinformation and its impact on public trust in political institutions.

To achieve this aim, the research uses a combinative quantitative and qualitative approach, which allows for an in-depth analysis of the dynamics and influence of social media in contemporary politics. With an exploratory design, the research relies on online surveys and content analysis as the main methods of data collection, aiming to capture social media users' perceptions and interactions with politics. The survey was designed to measure various aspects such as the frequency of social media use, the type of political content frequently accessed, and the reliability of the information received by respondents. Content analysis, on the other hand, focuses on how politicians use social media for communication and the spread of information and disinformation. The collected data was analyzed using statistical techniques for surveys and thematic analysis for social media content, with the aim of identifying patterns and themes in political communication. The validity and reliability of the study were enhanced through data triangulation and questionnaire testing, while external validity was strengthened by a large and diverse sample, allowing for generalization of the results to a wider population.

The research results show that social media plays a very important role in modern politics, especially in terms of campaign strategy and voter participation. Social media not only extends the reach of campaigns but also allows for highly effective message personalization. However, this research also highlights significant challenges such as disinformation and polarization exacerbated by echo chambers and filter bubbles, which can undermine the integrity of democratic processes. Therefore, this research underscores the importance of digital and critical literacy in modern education to equip citizens with the ability to navigate the information landscape effectively and responsibly. This is critical to supporting a healthy

democratic process and preventing the risks that can arise from the use of social media in politics.

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