



THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA CREATING POLITICAL AWARENESS TO PUBLICS AND PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

Political Science

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ABSTRACT

In the recent years, the internet penetration, social media production and consumption have increased dramatically all over the world. This increase has affected the politics in most parts of the world in many ways. Social media became a tool for politicians to carry out their political campaigns and for activists to create awareness on political issues and mobilize protests. Today almost in all social movements in the countries with high rate of internet access, the role of social media is being discussed. Social media has become a costless and extremely effective tool in reaching mass audiences with political purposes.

KEYWORDS

Political, Media, Internet, Social networking

INTRODUCTION

Social Media mirrors the real world and is all about conversations. Social media facilitate the interactive web by engaging users to participate in, comment on and create content as means of communicating with social graph, other users and the public. Social media has emerged as a major tool where citizens are able to talk about the issues of day to day life and also of national importance. In 21st century, Facebook, Twitter and You tube are not just innovations in the internet world, but are fast emerging as influencers and opinion creators. A social networking service is a platform to build social networks. These social network services are web based and these provide means for users to interact over the Internet. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, pictures, posts, activities, events, and interests with people in their network. Thus, social media is a two-way avenue that doesn't just give you information, but interacts with you while giving you that information and enables interaction with other visitors also. This interaction can be in the form of asking for your comments or letting you vote on an article, or recommending movies to you based on the ratings of other people with similar interests. Social media also allows information and opinions to travel across networks, like ripples in a pond, amplifying ideas and allowing each person to participate as an opinion leader through media production and distribution, not just by passive consumption.

What Is Social Media

Social media is a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks and communities. By design, social media is Internet-based and gives users quick electronic communication of content. Content includes personal information, documents, videos, and photos. Users engage with social media via a computer, tablet, or smartphone via web-based software or applications.

Types of Social Media

Social media may take the form of a variety of tech-enabled activities. These activities include photo sharing, blogging, social gaming, social networks, video sharing, business networks, virtual worlds, reviews, and much more. Even governments and politicians utilize social media to engage with constituents and voters.

For individuals, social media is used to keep in touch with friends and extended family. Some people will use various social media applications to network career opportunities, find people across the globe with like-minded interests, and share their thoughts, feelings, insights, and emotions. Those who engage in these activities are part of a virtual social network.

Way Of Political Participation And Awareness

• Online Political Participation:

Obviously, with the increasing role of Facebook in political activities, participation has now taken a new form. Like posting and commenting online, joining and creating online groups, organizing protest events, participation in online discussions with friends and 'liking' on a Facebook profile of a political figure or party indicating political preferences; certainly have become widespread. Thus, Facebook use for online political participation yield significant influence on youth.

Conroy, Feezell and Guerrero demonstrate that information exchange on Facebook fosters civic participation, trust, political and life contentment among youth. Online political participation is online political participatory activities carry out on Facebook such as sending political messages on Facebook to the politicians, commenting on a candidate's Facebook page, seeking donation for a political party or sharing political information on Facebook. Thus, this provides youth more ways to be active in political affairs than what was not possible in the past generations. Furthermore, online activities, especially on Facebook can easily be seen, read and viewed by a large group of youth because of its high connectivity, therefore it has a strong chance of reaching and encouraging them to participate.

• Facebook Usage:

Evidently, the use of Facebook recently for online political participation, worldwide has greatly increased, especially among youth and they are particularly using it to influence social and political change. Studies have suggested that youth are now using Facebook to seek for political information, mobilize like minds, create user-generated content and share political views. Increasingly, Facebook has been used to mobilize individuals to participate in politics and protest around the world. This, however, suggest that Facebook can help convert or mobilize the people that have been disengaged from offline politics to now participate in an online political activity. This statement has synergy with the work of Theocharis and Quintelier, the authors believe that Facebook provides suitability and accessibility for a sufficient number of people, improved access to information, online opportunities for political expression and political action.

• Interactivity With Politicians:

Interactivity is one of the important features of online participation which encourage users to interact with both content and sender of the message. Studies that are mobilization oriented concentrates on the idea of e-democracy which translate to an interactive online environment where youth for instance can inform themselves about topical political issues and at the same time correspond with political representatives. Facebook provides a great opportunity to politicians to reach out to their constituents and voters. The technology also link and facilitates interaction between community and elected political representatives by providing a public online 'Wall' a space where community members can easily write comments in favour or against their political leaders. While social media in general and Facebook in particular provides important opportunities for youth to interact with politicians and various stockholders, youth can become friends and initiate other linkages with politicians in representatives bodies, government officials and prominent community leaders through Facebook. Consequently, youth 'friendship' and interaction with those important political figures are likely to be vital source of political information and viewpoint. Therefore, these politicians may have the tendencies of mobilizing and influencing youth to participate in online political activities.

• Facebook Information Quality:

Studies have reveals that people use a particular channel of communication because of both external and internal factors for instance, the strength and quality of the information, the organization

and arrangement of the information and also the completeness and reliability of the information. Similarly, individual personal purpose or intention of having good and reliable information can motivate people to select and use a specific media, therefore this can help in ascertain and justifying Facebook information quality as a motivating factor for youth unparticular for using Facebook for online political participation. Clearly, what motivate youth to use Facebook is their ability to interact with friends and share quality and accurate information with people. Correa, Hinsley, and de Zúñiga, emphasized that the higher the speed and quality of information is and the higher possibility to be politically engaged with other issues and people.

• Political Interest :

Superficially, there is a large consensus among scholars that among all other predictors, political interests have a strong influence in terms of motivation to participate in politics. This statement has a synergy with the work of they supported this assertion by emphasizing that political interest is an attitude that provide a stable and sustainable outcome in politics because it often tells whether an individual may be politically active or passive. Therefore, it may be correct to say that Facebook users promote political interest and influence friends in their network are likely to participate in online politics. Additionally, Vissers et.al corroborated that opportunities for political participation are more likely to manifest if the level of political interest among youth specifically is high. It will also be correct to advance the discussion that political interest is a necessary condition of participation as it measures youth's online political participation. Political interest is significant in political participation because it provide the motivation to get political information, skill or knowledge which is relevant in assessing political alternatives. Consequently, Facebook is now the alternative platform of political expression and political interest appears to be a significant antecedent and predictor of online political participation among youth. Facebook political activities such as reading and posting political opinions, interacting with politicians on Facebook, and discussing politics with friends on Facebook groups may likely influence interest and knowledge about positive social and political issues, later facilitating participation in other online political activities.

How Social Media May Be Used For Influencing Political Opinions And Election Decisions

Political profiling may cause the following types of issues for democracies:

1. Political ads are highly optimized and targeted to specific individuals. Individual users often do not know how, through whom, and why they are being influence.

2. "Virality" of online content means an exponential dissemination of information. It is created by "retweeting, favouriting, and replying" and has become an indicator of online message effectiveness (This effectiveness is favourable for advertisers, but also for manipulators who use triggers to gain attention. Novelty, aggressive claims, exciting news and assertions are forwarded to like-minded group members. analysed the diffusion of news on Twitter and classified true and false information by using six independent fact-checking organizations. They found out that falsehood diffused significantly farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth in all categories.

3. Disinformation is usually not contextualized and their origin often remains opaque. Content cannot always be verified/falsified by fact-checking, and filtering algorithms struggle with coded terminology and irony.

4. The anonymity of sources, paired with privacy protection, makes it impossible for police to detect and sue persons who upload illegal and illegitimate content on social media. Since alarming news is shared more frequently, journalists and politicians are experiencing defamations or threats, which diminish their preparedness for working, or and standing as a candidate, in difficult times.

5. A communicative "race to the bottom" decreases respect both for human dignity, and for a fact-orientated and balanced societal dialogue. Fake news and digital agitation diminish the common ground on which societies are built, and could erode trust in the democratic process of societal discourse and co-operation.

This list is not exhaustive. It contains the most important issues, and shows how impacts reinforce each other. "Hate speech, fraudulent material, deliberate propaganda, and misinformation all grew largely

unchecked in an environment where platforms did not police the content they hosted with enough rigour". After the Brexit vote, the emphasized: "The principle of electoral transparency is not met if the voters have no freedom to seek, receive and impart information about the process and the candidates, including about the source and spending of financial support received by a candidate or a party."

Criticism

There are four ways social media plays a significant role in conflict..

1. Social media platforms allow information to be framed in mainstream platforms which limits communication.
2. Social media enables news stories to quickly go viral and later can lead to misinterpretations that can cause conflict.
3. Strategies and the adaption of social media has caused a change in focus amongst leaders from administrative dynamics to new media technology.
4. Technological advancements in communication can increase the power of persuasion leading to corruption, scandals, and violence on social media platforms.

CONCLUSION

Analysing, clustering, tracking, profiling, prediction and recommendations are powerful tools for supporting decision making. Profiling and targeted information created by machine learning algorithms have been growing exponentially, and so has their significance for citizen's political decision making. In digital media, AI can potentially be (mis-)used as an instrument of power through information filtering and targeted (mis-)information and/or manipulation. This can happen in different formats such as text, audio and video, and be multiplied by social bots and viral effects. This would be necessary to contribute positively to a more balanced communication amongst competing parties and interest groups in societies, to safeguard trust in their democratic and legal system and to help stabilize fragile democracies.

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