

Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion Roles and Impact: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review examines the impact of social media on public opinion and its implications for policy-making. Utilising the PRISMA framework, the study analysed 19 articles from Scopus and Web of Science databases published between 2013-2023. The review identified five main categories of social media platforms discussed; Twitter/X, Meta (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp), YouTube, Chinese apps (Sina Weibo, WeChat, QQ), and several unspecified platforms. Key themes emerged across these categories, including the role of social media in knowledge dissemination, creation of filter bubbles and echo chambers, amplification of diverse voices, and spread of misinformation. The findings highlighted social media potential for real-time public opinion monitoring, facilitating engagement between policymakers and citizens, and early identification of emerging issues. However, challenges such as information credibility and algorithmic curation of content were also noted. The review suggests that strategic use of social media can raise awareness and mobilise support for global initiatives like the Sustainable Development Goals. It emphasises the need for policymakers to understand and leverage social media's influence on public sentiment while addressing associated risks. The study contributes to a nuanced understanding of how different social media platforms shape public discourse and influence policy decisions in the digital age. Future research directions are proposed to further explore the complex dynamics between social media, public opinion, and governance in an evolving technological landscape.

Keywords: *Social media impact, public opinion formation, digital policymaking, online political discourse, civic engagement.*

INTRODUCTION

Social media has emerged as a powerful channel for the dissemination of information and public discourse, having a major influence on individuals' perceptions of various policy issues and government actions (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). A significant concern arises from the potential impact associated with the spread of misinformation via social media platforms (Rocha et al., 2021). Misinformation, whether disseminated accidentally or intentionally, has the capacity to generate false and misguided beliefs among the general public (Lewandowsky et al., 2012). Particularly in the area of public policy, the impact of such misinformation can include distorting

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understanding of important issues, hindering sound decision-making processes, and, in severe cases, generating anxiety and panic (Waldo, 2017).

On the other hand, well-informed public opinion has important implications. Within a democratic framework, an informed society plays a crucial role in ensuring effective governance (Crawford, 2003). When individuals are given access to accurate and well-considered perspectives on public policy and government efforts, they are better prepared to make wise choices, demand accountability from policymakers, and participate actively in democratic systems (Ellison & Hardey, 2014). In this context, the potential of social media is twofold—it can serve as a valuable platform for the dissemination of trustworthy information and the promotion of informed discourse (Huang & Sun, 2014; Iosifidis, 2011). Conversely, it also risks becoming a channel for the spread of misinformation, thereby challenging democratic ideals based on the principles of transparency and accountability (Reisach, 2021). Therefore, understanding the impact of social media on public opinion and public policy plays an important role not only in upholding the integrity of information in the digital age but also in cultivating a well-informed and civically engaged society—an indelible aspect of a strong and growing democracy.

The dissemination of information via social media platforms offer unprecedented accessibility to a global audience (García-Perdomo, 2021). This has transcended geographic and time barriers, allowing individuals to access and share information instantly with a wide and diverse audience (Carr & Hayes, 2015). This accessibility has revolutionised the speed at which news and information spread, making it accessible across borders and time zones (Lei et al., 2019). Rise of user-generated content on social media has shifted traditional models of information dissemination. Individuals, not just traditional media, have become key content creators and users share personal experiences, opinions and news whilst contributing to a dynamic information ecosystem (Charalambous, 2019).

Democratisation of content creation empowers citizens to actively participate in shaping public discourse. Events, news and developments are shared and discussed in real-time, reducing the time lag between events and public awareness. This closeness has implications for crisis communications, political campaigns, and the dissemination of breaking news (Effing et al., 2011). Social media users can actively comment, share, and discuss content, encouraging dialogue and debate. This interactivity has turned communication into a two-way process, allowing for immediate feedback and the creation of a shared narrative. Meanwhile, in the government sector and official institutions, more and more people are turning to social media platforms to disseminate important announcements and policy updates (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). This direct communication enables real-time community engagement, thereby increasing transparency and responsiveness.

Government announcements often spark public discussion and feedback, thereby transforming traditional one-way communication into dynamic dialogue. The increasing use of social media platforms has revolutionised the communications landscape by driving the growth of online communities, amplifying user-generated content, and facilitating the spread of official government announcements (Lai & Turban, 2008). These changes not only expand the reach of information but also change the dynamics of communication by encouraging inclusivity, diversity, and active engagement in the global information ecosystem (Bennett, 2003). The evolution of these platforms also presents challenges regarding the credibility and authenticity of information,

requiring ongoing research and adaptation to ensure responsible and effective use of these platforms in disseminating information.

The proliferation of online communities is proof of the impact of social media. These virtual enclaves, often united by shared interests, beliefs, or goals, have emerged as centres of intense engagement and discourse (Centola, 2010). In these communities, individuals from diverse backgrounds come together to exchange ideas and viewpoints, thereby cultivating a rich tapestry of perspectives (Kim & Ahmad, 2013).

Simultaneously, the amplification of user-generated content (UGC) has emerged as a defining feature of social media platforms. By democratising content creation, these platforms have empowered ordinary citizens to actively participate in shaping public discourse (Kim & Ahmad, 2013). Users now share personal narratives, opinions, and news stories, contributing to the expansion and diversification of information sources. This paradigm shift encourages inclusivity, granting a platform to voices that were previously marginalised in the communication landscape (Effing et al., 2011).

Integration of social media into the communications landscape has engendered a dynamic dialogue where government announcements, online communities, and user-generated content converge (Valos et al., 2016). This transformation has widened the reach of information while fostering inclusivity, diversity, and active engagement. Nevertheless, the challenges related to information credibility and authenticity necessitate continuous research and adaptation to preserve the responsible and effective use of these platforms in the dissemination of information (Alencar, 2018).

While the acknowledgment of social media's role in shaping public opinion and impact is widespread in both academic discourse and the broader public sphere, a compelling necessity persists for the conduct of a systematic review and a comprehensive analysis of the most recent scholarly literature. The examination of the pervasive influence of social media within contemporary society has catalysed a substantial volume of research across a spectrum of academic disciplines, encompassing but not limited to communication studies, political science, sociology, and information technology (Lau, 2017; Lyon & Montgomery, 2013).

In order to amalgamate and synthesise this extensive corpus of knowledge, the undertaking of a systematic review assumes fundamental significance. Given the multifaceted nature of social media's influence, it demands insights originating from an array of academic domains, thereby affording a holistic and interdisciplinary comprehension of this complex subject matter. This rigorous process not only provides guidance for prospective research endeavours but also contributes substantially to an enriched and nuanced understanding of the intricate dynamics underpinning the impact of social media on public opinion and public policy.

The main objectives of this research are: first, assessing the extent to which social media platforms have a role as a tool for disseminating information related to public opinion and government actions. And the second is to compare and contrast the role of various types of social media content in forming public opinion roles and impact.

Comprehensive Analysis Using Systematic Literature Review

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) represents a methodical approach to synthesising scientific evidence in a transparent and reproducible manner, with the primary aim of addressing a specific research query. This process entails an exhaustive endeavour to encompass all available published evidence pertinent to the subject matter, coupled with an assessment of the quality and reliability of said evidence (Lame, 2019).

The role of social media in shaping public opinion on public policy is a multifaceted and continually evolving phenomenon (McGregor, 2019). Systematic reviews are essential to comprehensively synthesise existing research findings on this subject. This allows researchers to collect and consolidate insights from multiple studies, ensuring that the review is comprehensive and covers all its scope (Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020). A systematic review will also involve a rigorous process of evaluating the quality and validity of individual studies (Jones & Evans, 2000). In the context of the impact of social media on public opinion and public policy, assessing this quality is very important. This helps in discerning the reliability of findings and allows inclusion of high-quality studies while excluding studies that have methodological weaknesses or biases.

Systematic reviews enable the identification of trends, patterns, and consistencies across studies (Jones & Evans, 2000). This analytical approach is useful for revealing overarching themes and insights that may not be apparent when examining individual studies in isolation. It provides a holistic understanding of the topic impact of social media in shaping public opinion. Additionally, researchers can identify gaps in the existing literature. These knowledge gaps highlight areas where research is lacking or requires further investigation. This information is invaluable for guiding future research directions and ensuring that research efforts are aimed at answering unanswered questions. Given the significant impact of social media on public opinion and public policy, evidence-based insights are critical. Systematic reviews provide an evidence base that informs the decision-making process of policy makers, government officials and stakeholders. The findings of such reviews have greater credibility and authority than individual studies.

By using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Prisma, 2020) method and articles from scientific databases such as SCOPUS, Systematic reviews articles, can provide better quality assurance than manual methods, which also manual search patterns are still susceptible to bias and are difficult to account for academically.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section elucidates the application of the PRISMA methodology in this research, presenting a transparent and comprehensive framework designed to facilitate an exhaustive exploration of pertinent literature pertaining to the influence of Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion roles and impact. The adoption of PRISMA is instrumental in ensuring the thoroughness and robustness of the review process, thereby enhancing the accuracy and credibility of the ensuing results (Coughlan & Cronin, 2015). The section encompasses five key subsections: PRISMA, resource selection, inclusion and exclusion criteria, the systematic review process, and data abstraction and analysis, each of which plays a pivotal role in shaping the research methodology and approach.

PRISMA

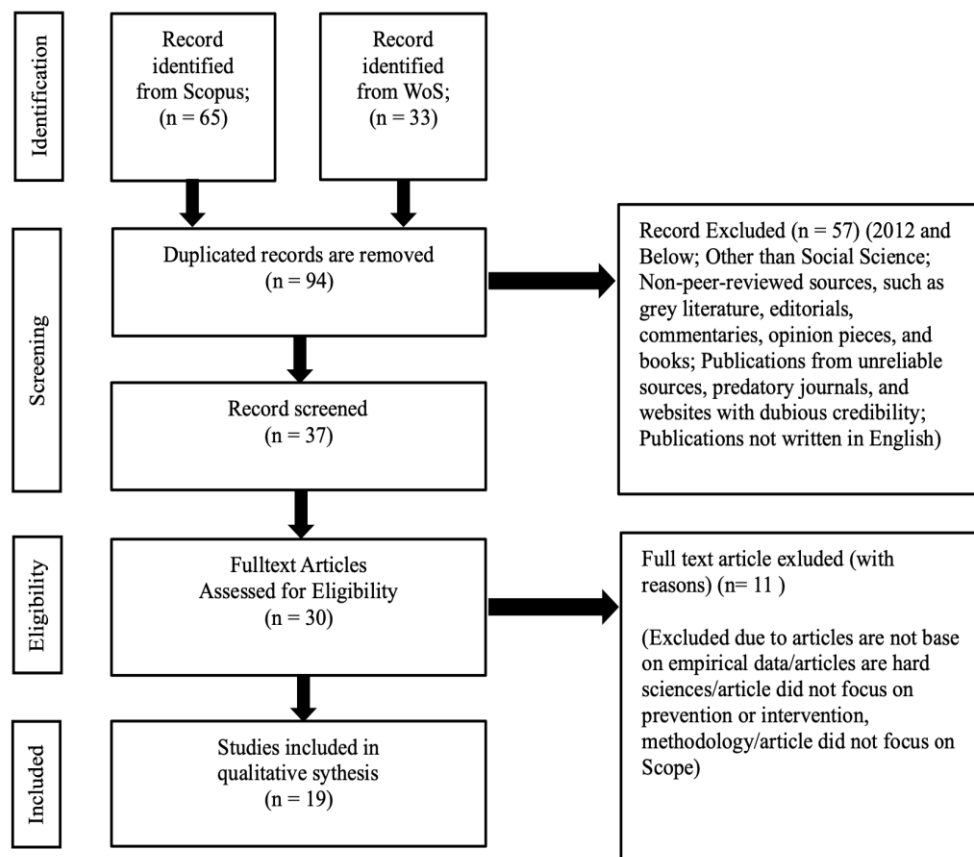


Figure 1: Flow diagram of the study (adapted from Moher et al., 2009)

The utilisation of the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework in this research demonstrates a deliberate and pertinent approach to identifying articles encompassing studies pertaining to the Impact of Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion roles and impact. This selection is underpinned by the imperative of conducting a literature search employing systematically structured procedures that ensure both transparency and comprehensibility for readers. Subsequently, the ensuing step entails the categorisation of articles according to well-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The process of scrutinising pertinent literature unfolds across three distinct phases, namely, identification, screening, and quality assessment.

Resources

The methodology used in this research requires a careful search for studies of social media in shaping public opinion roles and impact. Two leading journal databases, Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) were chosen as primary sources because of their renowned status and comprehensive coverage. The selection of Scopus and WoS were based on their strong ability to cover a broad spectrum of academic fields, including communications. This inclusion was deemed

necessary because no single database can claim absolute completeness and completeness in capturing all relevant literature on the subject.

Table 1: Search strings

Data Base	Search String
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY(("social media" OR "online media" OR "digital media" OR "new media") AND ("Impact*" OR "effect*" OR "implication*") AND ("public opinion" OR "public sentiment") AND ("public policy" OR "government policy" OR "government* law"))
Wos	TS=("social media" OR "online media" OR "digital media") AND ("Impact*" OR "effect*" OR "implication*") AND ("public opinion" OR "public sentiment") AND ("public policy" OR "government")

The second stage involves exclusion to further refine the results. Exceptions include refinements in the subject, document type and source title fields that are not directly related to the topic.

Table 2: Inclusion criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Year	2013-2023	2012 and Below
Subject Area	Social Science, Medicine, Multidisciplinary	Other than mentioned
Document Type	Article	Non-peer-reviewed sources, such as grey literature, editorials, commentaries, opinion pieces, and books
Source Type	Research Journal	Publications from unreliable sources, predatory journals, and websites with dubious credibility
Language	English	Publications not written in English

The Systematic Review Process for Articles Selection

a. Identification

Selection and search for articles in this research went through three stages. First, identifying relevant keywords, using dictionaries, similar previous research and thesaurus websites are used at this stage. Search strings were entered into the search portal on the Scopus and Web of Science websites, search results on both databases produced 33 articles from WoS and 65 articles from the Scopus database.

b. Screening

Screening step is carried out through a process of selecting strict inclusion and exclusion criteria, this is done to ensure the quality and thoroughness of the research. A total of 98 articles were found in the initial search, eliminating 4 duplicate articles. After that, inclusion criteria were applied to limit and select the remaining articles. The year of publication of the articles was determined to be between 2013-2023 by only limiting them to specific studies of Social Science and Multidisciplinary science. The year vulnerable was chosen based on the fact that one of the social media that influences the dissemination of information to spread public opinion is the Instagram platform which was founded in 2012, so the first article discussing this social media was published in 2013 (Hochman & Manovich, 2013). Article exclusion criteria are applied with

discussion limits according to topics and themes, research scope, book articles, conference proceedings written and in non-English languages. This is done to prioritise only quality original research that produces primary data, thereby minimising the potential for bias and duplication. English is required in this process because English is more easily understood by readers globally. This process resulted in 37 articles.

c. Eligibility

Remaining articles were then examined carefully, starting from the title, abstract and content of the article, this was to ensure that all articles met the inclusion requirements and were relevant to the research theme. The results of the examination excluded 7 articles because they were considered not too focused on research studies and were not based on empirical data. So that at the final stage, 19 articles remained that met the requirements for a systematic analysis process.

d. Data Abstraction and Analysis

Data abstraction and analysis process will take an innovative approach, this approach makes it possible to carry out overall analysis and synthesis of various types of research. To achieve the research objectives, this article adopts a two-step approach. Starting with a thematic analysis of the article to extract concepts, statements, results and arguments that support the themes and research questions. In the second stage, raw data is transformed into themes, concepts, or ideas through the use of coding methods. This phase is important in generalising the data and creating meaningful groups based on the nature of the information. As a result of this rigorous process, this research was able to identify 5 main themes related to social media, including Twitter/X, Meta, YouTube, Chinese Apps and Unspecified. Further exploration of these themes resulted in the identification of sub-themes that are related to each other. To ensure the validity of these themes and subthemes, seven researchers were asked to be willing to study communication sciences and other social sciences to read the articles that had been prepared. Thus, this research will offer various accurate references on themes based on social media groupings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At this stage, researchers evaluated all articles to ensure that the information used is relevant to the research focus. Next, researchers will categorise articles based on author name, year, and research subtheme. Each sub-theme will be given a title to make it easier to identify the type of discussion in each article. Below is a table detailing the themes of these articles.

No	Year	First Author	The Variety of Social Media on the Formation of Community Perspectives				
			Twitter/ X	Meta	YouTube	Chinese Apps	Unspecified
1	2014	Helga Nowotny	-	-	-	-	√
2	2016	Andrea Ceron	√	-	-	-	-
3	2016	Wingyan Chung	√	-	-	-	-
4	2016	Jianqiang Hao	√	-	-	-	-
5	2018	Marina Bagić Babac	-	√	-	-	-
6	2018	Anatoliy Gruzd	√	√	-	-	-
7	2020	Aseem Kinra	√	-	-	-	-

8	2020	Stephanie Edgerly	-	√	-	-	-
9	2021	Zhirui Yao	√	-	-	-	-
10	2021	Alessandro Lovari	-	√	-	-	-
11	2021	Shihong Weng	-	-	-	√	-
12	2021	Danyell'e Thorpe Huerta	√	-	-	-	-
13	2021	Simon Munzert	√	√	-	-	-
14	2021	Zongfeng Sun	-	-	-	√	-
15	2021	Liselot Hudders	-	-	-	-	√
16	2021	Marat Zagidullin	√	√	√	-	-
17	2022	Julia Payson	√	-	-	-	-
18	2023	Nikki Soo	√	-	-	-	-
19	2023	Nicolas Berlinski	-	-	-	-	√

This research grouped articles based on context and research content. This classification is the result of a thorough examination of all articles, which were grouped into social media platform categories such as Twitter/X, Meta (Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp), YouTube, Chinese App, and social media not specifically mentioned. The research results showed that the topic most discussed in this research is the social media platform, Twitter, with 11 articles; followed by Meta with six articles. Meanwhile, only one article discussed the YouTube platform. Apart from social media and global platforms, this research also found two articles that specifically discussed social media originating from China. The following is an explanation of each social media as depicted in the table above.

a. Twitter/X

Twitter is generally known as a text-based social media platform; however, posts can also include images and videos. Twitter is heavily driven by the use of hashtags (Gilbert, 2016; Quan-Haase et al., 2015), and is often associated with the spread of news and events (Rathnayake & Suthers, 2017). As governments increasingly rely on social media to interact with the public, questions remain about how they utilise various social media platforms. Gruzd et al. (2017) compared the use of Twitter and other applications by 'The Big Lift', a bridge renovation project undertaken by Halifax Harbor Bridges. Based on the analysis, Twitter is considered a more 'formal' news platform, supporting better two-way communication between organisations and audiences. By building and maintaining an active presence and follower base, social media Twitter has a role in an organisation being able to develop the capacity to address social issues during disruption events or infrastructure projects such as 'The Big Lift'

Twitter data is also used as a real-time tracking tool for content trends, sentiment and public attention during the pandemic which has been proven to provide references and perspectives regarding public health, transportation and economic recovery. Yao et al. (2021), analysing changes in Twitter sentiment in response to COVID-19 in three large cities, namely New York City, Los Angeles, and London. It found that Tweet sentiment related to quarantine measures was positively correlated with new cases, hospitalisations, and deaths in New York City and London, while in Los Angeles, quarantine measures were negatively correlated, suggesting that stricter quarantines tend to be associated with lower case rates and health impacts serious. Meanwhile, Danyell'e Thorpe Huerta and friends (Huerta et al., 2021) in Massachusetts, exploring public responses via Twitter regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings show significant

differences before and after the implementation of emergency policies, such as increased discussions of risk and health, decreased polarity, and increased expressions of anxiety. These results validate the use of Twitter data to monitor public sentiment and discourse during a crisis, especially when used with other observational data.

Ceron dan Negri (2016) highlighting the role of social media in encouraging interactions between politicians, bureaucrats and citizens. In the era of "Big Data," comments posted by social media users can be used effectively to generate significant information, which can support the actions of policy makers from the stage of public policy formulation to the stakeholder mobilisation and demobilisation process. For example, in the realm of technology, Twitter as social media can provide additional information that is not revealed in surveys. Use of Twitter to disseminate public views on driverless cars in Denmark, Kinra et al. (2020). Analysis of 157,000 tweets over 5 months shows that text analysis can complement surveys in unearthing additional knowledge not revealed through surveys, thereby providing additional insights that can help Danish road directorates in their future data collection strategies.

Political actors often refer to public opinion to gain support for public policies, but this is increasingly challenging given the diverse demands and perspectives of society. Soo et al. (2023), found that motivations for defining and implementing public opinion vary depending on the hierarchy of political actors, demonstrating the greater diversity and complexity of the relationship between public and political actors than is often depicted. The findings further show that minority views have a significant role in policy making. Twitter plays a role in providing an opportunity for policymakers to evaluate public opinion, however, the sheer volume and variety of expression on the platform has presented challenges in policy analysis and assessing public sentiment.

Chung and Zeng (2016) analysed more than 900,000 tweets from 300,000 users during three phases of the US immigration and border security discussion on Twitter. Statistical analysis revealed significant differences in emotion, sentiment, number of relationships, network density and total influence scores among the three phases. These findings contribute to the development of social media-based public policy informatics frameworks and systems, by providing empirical findings and sentiment and network analysis data sets related to US immigration and border security and demonstrating their general applicability across a wide range of domains. Meanwhile, Payson et al. (2022) utilised Twitter data with the latest topic modelling techniques to introduce a method for studying state legislators' policy priorities, and applied this method to 15 US states in 2018. The results show that Twitter data can identify policy issues more accurately than existing methods. Hao and Dai (2016) highlights the importance of utilising Twitter social media monitoring as an additional tool to conventional data collection in observing security breaches. Using sentiment evaluation and impact factors, this study concludes that the method is effective in predicting real-time public views and attitudes regarding security breaches.

In Turkey, especially in the 2013-2016 period, the government criticised social media platforms such as Twitter and took drastic measures to control them, including requests for content removal and blocking access to various platforms (Bulut, 2016). However, research by Zagidullin et al. (2021) shows that the Turkish government's efforts in 2013-2015 to denigrate and weaken social media platforms does not significantly affect attitudes toward social media, either among political supporters, political opposition, or non-political individuals. Possible policy

inconsistencies and increased awareness of the importance of social media may contribute to these findings. Another interesting finding is that political party identification has only a moderate or slight influence on this relationship. In other words, how someone identifies with their political party has little influence on their attitudes toward social media use.

Meanwhile, in research Munzert et al. (2021) regarding Election Guidance Applications (*Voting Advice Applications/VAs*), which provides information to the public regarding the parties that best suit their political preferences via social media such as Twitter, the results of the study provide a warning against the common belief that VAs significantly increasing voter participation and influencing vote choice. Munzert et al. (2021) found the use of random-nudge VAs had no significant impact on political participation, vote choice, or levels of political activity on the Twitter platform. Although Twitter is often associated with political news and discussions, the results of this study indicate that interactions with VAs on Twitter do not specifically influence users' political behaviour. In contrast, there is a consistent increase in understanding of political issues and party positions through the use of VAs on Twitter.

b. Meta

Digital platforms such as Facebook (and its subsidiaries such as Instagram and WhatsApp) play an important role as influential curators in presenting news and guiding public opinion. Determining who sees content, through what channels, with what effect is difficult to decipher in the context of highly personalised, algorithmically curated news feeds, and when news usage patterns are increasingly fragmented (Edgerly & Thorson, 2020). Edgerly and Thorson (2020) seeks to adapt to this complex environment by creating new methods and theories, while recognizing that the flow of content today is influenced by many people, including politicians, news organisations, and individual users.

Lovari et al. (2021) showed that certain types of content, such as politicised and conflicting information, have a large influence in shaping public opinion. In the context of the information crisis in Italy regarding vaccination, which was discussed via the social media platform Facebook, Lovari highlighted the impact of digital algorithms that select and highlight certain content, which has the potential to increase polarisation and partisanship. Influencers who gain visibility and credibility have the ability to influence people who are still unsure. However, conflicting communication strategies between influencers can cause polarisation and confusion among the public. To achieve this problem, a dialogical and symmetrical communication model is needed that involves public health organisations, mass media and opinion leaders who actively play a role in the region (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

Instagram is an image and video based social media platform where posts can include text, hashtags and comments (Gruzd et al., 2017). This platform was one of the first to have celebrity accounts and was popular among politicians (Cook, 2017; Hemsley et al., 2017). Gruzd et al. (2017) compared the use of Instagram and other apps by 'The Big Lift', a bridge renovation project undertaken by Halifax Harbor Bridges. Instagram is considered a more 'informal' narrative platform, encouraging a clicktivist response from the audience. Powerful visuals of public projects, when shared on Instagram, can be used to address common social concerns, such as the impact on travel times, bus delays and their impact on social life. The potential for deeper interactions between users and organisational officials on Instagram can contribute to a better understanding of the possibilities for dialogic interaction and the democratic capacity of social

media platforms. This shows that Instagram can be a tool for government organisations to engage in significant interactions with the public, especially in the context of disseminating information related to public policy and government actions.

The level of awareness of government policies increases political engagement, online trust, and positive attitudes towards social media use. Instagram, accessed by 83% of users, is one of the most popular social media platforms in Turkey (Zagidullin et al., 2021). In the Turkish context, participation in social activities through media is directly related to positive attitudes towards social media use. The level of political awareness and involvement influences the development of online trust, while party identification is not significant in moderating this relationship.

Bagić Babac and Podobnik (2018) analysed the role of social media on political campaigns during the 2015 general elections in Croatia, focusing on the Facebook pages of two political parties. Parties employ different campaign strategies, one focusing on negative campaigning and the other focusing on positive campaigning. This gives rise to varying responses from society, with more negative emotions expressed towards one party and more neutral responses towards the other party. Positive campaign messages elicit more positive responses from the public, while neutral content is more likely to generate negative comments or support for campaign opponents. Nevertheless, Bakker and de Vreese (2011) suggests the importance of overcoming age barriers. Although the younger generation is more active in using the internet, their lower propensity to be involved in political affairs may influence a more even distribution of political participation among age groups.

Impact of Election Guidance Applications (*Voting Advice Applications/VAA*s) on various aspects of social media use, especially Facebook. This analysis explores the correlation between Facebook, and the extent to which the social media platform is used as a tool to disseminate information regarding public policy and government actions Munzert et al. (2021). As a result, a random nudge to complete the VAA had no significant effect on political participation, vote choice, or political activity on these platforms. Although VAAs are designed to provide information regarding political preferences, Facebook users are unlikely to experience increased participation or significant changes in their political preferences as a result of interactions with the application. However, there was a consistent increase in understanding of political issues and party positions through the use of VAAs on Facebook.

c. Chinese Apps

Sina Weibo, WeChat, and QQ is an application that originates from China (Azad et al., 2020; Gan, 2018). The majority of users of these three applications are Chinese, as they are products developed and marketed specifically for the domestic market. These applications have an important role in shaping social interaction, information exchange and digital lifestyle among Chinese society. Weng et al. (2021) developed a conceptual framework for understanding government responses to citizens' social media participation in public policy making and identified four participation response archetypes: Ostrich mode, Cuckoo mode, Queen Bee mode, and Mandarin Duck mode.

In Ostrich fashion, the government adopted ostrich purporting behaviour, hiding its head in the sand to ignore the problem (Meijer & De Jong, 2020). Cuckoo mode describes a situation where citizens' deeply held opinions are combined with passive or reactive government responses, rather than active engagement. There are a number of examples of Cuckoo fashion in China, such as incidents Sun Zhigang (Hand, 2006), death penalty case Yao Jiaxin (Wines, 2011), and cases of slavery in black brick kilns in Shanxi and Henan provinces (Franceschini, 2018). In Queen Bee mode, the relationship between government and citizens mirrors the relationship between queen bees and worker bees. Examples of Queen Bee mode include the 2011 Shanghai Metro crash, which injured more than 270 people (Deng et al., 2015). Mandarin Duck fashion reflects an ideal relationship where the country and its citizens are similar to a pair of ducks, caring for each other. This Mandarin Duck fad is relatively rare but not completely unknown in China. The Shanghai World Exhibition in 2010 can perhaps be considered the clearest example (Krupar, 2018).

Based on an analysis of 136 cases in China, the Cuckoo mode, in which public opinion is expressed in advance and the government is reactive, is the dominant response. Occurrence of the Ostrich mode, which avoids or denies citizens' voices, still occurs but is decreasing, while the Queen Bee mode which focuses on government-led communications is increasing. Mandarin Duck mode, characterised by high levels of online political participation by citizens and governments, is rare. These four modes provide a way to classify government responses to social media political participation and allow governments to more effectively integrate citizens' views into the policy-making process (Weng et al., 2021).

Sun and Yang (2021) explained that social media platforms have become an important role for Chinese citizens to access information related to public opinion. People who use social media tend to be more aware of issues that affect them personally and are more likely to devote their time to those issues. Due to China's unique civil service promotion and performance evaluation system (Zhou, 2004; Zhou, 2007), public officials pay the greatest attention to indicators related to economic growth; however, citizens are much more concerned with the issues that affect their daily lives. Government Annual Reports or Government Annual Reports (GAR) has a crucial role in signalling issues that receive attention from governments at various levels in China. Based on survey data collected in June 2016, GAR topics can be divided into two categories: macro-economic issues and citizen life issues. In general, citizens are more interested in life issues than economic issues in 19 cities in China.

d. YouTube

Current technological developments are claimed to be the trigger for the emergence of social media in everyday life; people actively share their views on popular issues on social media, which has a major impact on public policy (Mattera et al., 2023). Additionally, social media platforms are quickly being leveraged to collect data on public attitudes, public opinion, and key factors related to various research fields. (McGregor, 2019). YouTube is one of the most popular social media platforms in Türkiye (Isman & Güzelsoy, 2019).

Zagidullin et al. (2021) shows that the frequency of social media use can positively predict the level of awareness of government policies regarding social media. This shows that individuals who use YouTube and other social media platforms more often tend to be more aware of government policies. This can play an important role in disseminating knowledge about

government policies, levels of political engagement, and online trust. so that it can partially mediate the relationship between frequency of social media use and attitudes towards social media use among YouTube users. This shows that these factors play a role in shaping YouTube users' attitudes towards social media use, especially in the context of government policy and political involvement.

These findings can be interpreted by considering research by Hacıyakupoglu and Zhang (2015) about the system trust gained by social media platforms during the Gezi Park protests, the role played by YouTube in disseminating government information in 2013–2014 (Rawlinson, 2014; Tattersall, 2014), and the increasing use of platforms in conventional politics (İkiz et al., 2014; Okan et al., 2014) by the majority of people who were not involved in or supported the Gezi Park protests (KONDA, 2014).

e. Unspecified

In this context, the specific social media platform used is not explained. For example, as done by Hudders et al. (2021), This review provides an overview of research regarding the strategic use of social media influencers through searches in the Scopus database. Most research focuses more on the role of influencers as a commercial marketing tactic rather than an exploration of behaviour change or influence on public opinion. Using Stern's Updated Advertising Communication Model as a theoretical basis, this research is classified into three main aspects: source, message, and audience. The first study examined the perspectives of influencers and communications professionals. The second study focused on content strategy in influencers' paid posts. Meanwhile a third study explored the appeal and effectiveness of paid recommendations by influencers, including a study that addressed the transparency of hidden marketing tactics.

Berlinski et al. (2023) in its research focuses on the impact of unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud spread via social media platforms, although it does not explicitly mention specific platforms. Such claims, sometimes made by political elites, have a damaging impact on public confidence in the electoral system. For example, Donald Trump's attempt to overturn his loss in the 2020 US presidential election with false claims of mass fraud is an illustration of these kinds of claims that can undermine confidence in the integrity of the election. Nowotny (2014) discusses the impact of new communication media, including the role of social media platforms, on the dissemination of information and changes in authority relationships. While not naming specific social media platforms, this research suggests that the availability of information via the internet has undermined the cognitive authority of scientific expertise. This transformation challenges traditional mechanisms for knowledge development and leads to a decline in public trust in scientific expertise.

CONCLUSION

The present paper reviewed 19 selected articles that discussed the roles and impact of social media in shaping public opinion. This study has discovered five types of social media that are common among the public which are Twitter/ X, Meta, YouTube, Chinese Apps and other unspecified social media. The most discussed roles and impacts of social media include knowledge dissemination, filter bubbles and echo chambers, amplification of voices, disinformation and misinformation, et cetera. This study greatly benefits global policymaking in

several ways such as; 1) real-time public opinion monitoring which policymakers can use social media as a tool for real-time monitoring of public opinion on various issues; 2) engagement and communication with the public which social media platforms provide direct channels for policymakers to engage with the public, share information, and gather feedback; and 3) Identification of emerging issues and trends where social media can serve as an early warning system for policymakers, helping them identify emerging issues and trends before they escalate. By recognizing the power of social media in shaping public opinion, organisations and individuals can strategically utilise these platforms to raise awareness about the SDGs.

Understanding how social media can mobilise public opinion allows for targeted campaigns and initiatives to garner support for specific SDGs. Advocacy efforts can leverage social media to amplify voices, organise rallies, and mobilise communities to take action on issues such as climate change, poverty alleviation, and gender equality. Social media platforms enable direct engagement with diverse communities, allowing for the exchange of ideas and perspectives on sustainable development issues. By fostering dialogue and facilitating discussions around the SDGs, stakeholders can promote mutual understanding, collaboration, and collective action towards achieving the goals. In summary, understanding the impact and roles of social media in shaping public opinion enables stakeholders to leverage these platforms effectively in support of Sustainable Development Goals. By strategically utilising social media for awareness-raising, advocacy, community engagement, monitoring public sentiment, building partnerships, and promoting accountability, stakeholders can mobilise public support and accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs.

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