Role of Social Media in Shaping Political Culture

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Abstract

This article attempts to explore the influence of social media on building political culture at the international level, the role of major social media platforms, and the key stages where social media contributes to political culture formation. Based on a qualitative framework, the article utilizes purposive sampling methods to collect necessary information and statistics from various websites. With the onset of the 21st century and the expansion of the internet, the development and growth of various social media platforms have also surged. Social media has been playing a significant role in shaping global political culture and public opinion. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, WeChat, Reddit, and Telegram have brought millions of people together on a single stage, the factual details of which are presented in this article. Algorithms designed to enhance the effectiveness of social media play a vital role in political culture formation by repeatedly showing content based on people's preferences and thoughts. Similarly, boosting mechanisms for content have also contributed to building political opinions. Social media serves as a crucial tool for informing people about various programs and campaigns, increasing public participation, and effectively presenting demands to generate the necessary public opinion for their implementation by relevant authorities. Political culture formation involves specific stages where social media plays a supportive role. The article concludes that the expansion and rapid usage of social media in the present time have significantly influenced global politics. The number of social media platform users is increasing daily, and social media is playing a supportive role in the process of political culture and opinion formation.

Introduction

During the development of society, various city-states came into existence in Greece in the 8th century. According to Jones (1997) major city-states like Athens, Sparta, Corinth, Thebes etc. maintained a separate identity with independent governance and

economic self-sufficiency. These states were called Polis. Later, city-state activities were gradually referred to as politics. In political science, Machiavelli was the first Political Thinker to use the term "politics."

The city-states established in ancient times have transformed into national states through various stages of time. In the same way, the policy of the state or government is called politics. A complete subject or branch of knowledge that studies this politics systematically and scientifically is called political science. In the development of political science, various scholars have made invaluable contributions at different times. Goodin and Pettit (1993) have reported as a complete and systematic subject, political science studies and analyzes in depth the international relations including various topics related to politics, administration, laws, government and the state.

How individuals, groups, organizations and governments work in any country is greatly influenced by its political culture. In addition to taking political culture as an important subject in political science theoretically, it also has an important role in practical politics. In general, the knowledge, belief, behavior and thought related to politics in people are called political culture. It is such a mental and psychological perception that determines the political activity and role of a person. The concept of political culture was first systematically introduced by Almond and Verba (1963) in their seminal work "The Civic Culture". They argued that political culture is critical in understanding the stability and functionality of democratic systems. They defined political culture as "the particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of the nation"(page 13) .

Political culture of a person is the product of a certain mental process. It is through political socialization that political culture is formed in a person. A person develops social values, perceptions, beliefs, faith and behavior, so does the development of political culture. Family, neighborhood, peer groups, job experience, educational institutions and special events play an important role in political socialization of an individual.

Along with the high development in information and communication technology, there has also been a massive change in the process of building political culture. Especially since the beginning of the 21st century, the increasing use of social media has affected the process of building political culture.

In the current dynamic digital landscape, social media has emerged as an important tool for shaping political debate and influencing public opinion. It is a transformative

force that can engage in political dialogue and debate with people in any corner of the world and shape political perceptions. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Tiktok and Instagram have become an integral part of political campaigns. Campaigners are increasingly using social media to spread the word, garner, support and advocate for their cause. It is working to build, modify and change the political culture of the people (Kajitha, 2023).

Social media is acting as a decisive force for contemporary political communication through its digital platforms to create, disseminate and exchange information among various virtual communities. It is acting as a dynamic medium for exchanging political messages and ideas among individuals and groups. Nationally and internationally, social media is influencing various political debates and ideas. In the last two decades, the global campaign of social media is bringing seismic changes even in world politics (Kharel, 2024). In this way, the role of traditional actors in the formation of political culture has gradually decreased, while the role of social media has increased to a great extent (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013). Political information, debates and programs provided by any social media platform are building, improving and changing the political culture of individuals. The objectives of this study are to examine the impact of social media on the construction of global political culture, identify the major social media platforms that play a key role in the socialization process for political culture formation, analyze the role of algorithms used in social media in shaping political perspectives and participation and explore the major stages involved in the development of political culture in the digital age.
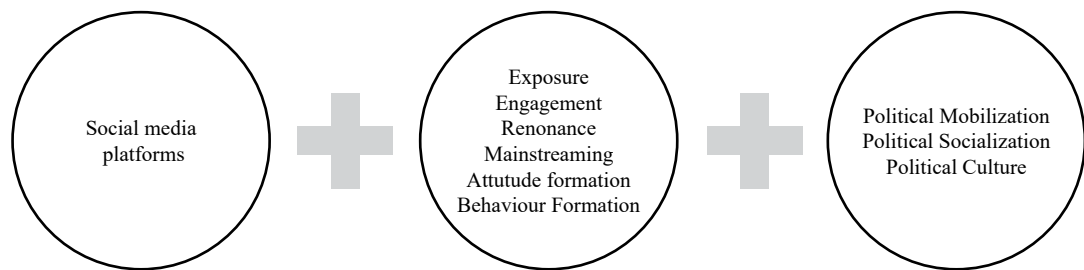
Theoretical Framework

In this article, Cultivation Theory is taken as the theoretical framework to evaluate the role of social media in the formation of political culture. George Gerbner, developed and advanced Cultivation Theory. With deep knowledge of communication and journalism, George and profound understanding of the societal impacts of media. Gross Larry's application of **Cultivation Theory** primarily revolves around the **representation of marginalized groups in media** and the **impact of those portrayals on societal perceptions and beliefs**. George Gerbner used this theory to study and research the long-term effects of regular television viewing on the perceptions of viewers. It was found that the thoughts and beliefs of individuals who consumed large amounts of television content were transformed according to the visual content they watched. Based on the knowledge and beliefs gained from watching television,

they formed perceptions about various activities and events (Gerbner and Gross, 1980). People form their perceptions, thoughts and values based on what they see, hear, and experience through their senses.

Methodology

The present article adopts a pattern based on document analysis. Necessary data and information have been collected from various publications and websites. Facts and information related to the study's objectives have been balanced and critically analyzed using purposive sampling methods. During the analysis, descriptive method was used to validate the data. The global growing influence of social media, along with examples of various events and usage patterns, has also been analyzed to draw conclusions. This article utilizes the inductive method in its approach.In this study, Cultivation Theory is utilized as the theoretical framework to confirm the causal relationship between the use of social media and the formation of political culture.

Social media platforms + Exposure Engagement Renonance Mainstreaming Attutude formation Behaviour Formation + Political Mobilization Political Socialization Political Culture

Analysis and Discussion

Since the beginning of 21th century, the development and use of social networks is happening at a rapid pace. Along with other areas of human life, it is being used extensively in politics and it is also having a deep impact on political subjects directly and indirectly. Social media is playing a dynamic role especially in political mobilization, political socialization and building political culture. Globally, social media has provided a dynamic virtual space for public dialogue, creating and broadcasting interactive content, exchanging ideas and shaping political opinion (Castells, 1996).

Global Influence of Social Media in Political Mobilization

There is also a multifaceted and meaningful interrelationship between social media and the mobilization of world politics. Social media platforms have become essential tools for organizing and promoting political campaigns worldwide. Out of the 8 billion

world population, 4.89 billion people are using some form of social media. Which comes to 61% of the world's total population. Continentally, 79% of people in North America, 80% in Europe, 60% in Asia, 30% in Africa and 75% in Latin America are connected to social networks(Datareportal, 2023)**.** Social media itself is helping to build campaigners and political groups toorganize political events and broadcast political information or messages at a rapid pace. It helps publicize information about political events and mobilize immediate supporters to organize protest events (Newson, Houghton and Patten, 2008). It helps people learn about, support or oppose international events and form certain opinions about those events. In addition, social media work to attract the attention of people nationally and internationally about any political event. Social media has also helped garner international support and solidarity for any local issue through hashtags, viral videos and online campaigns (Howard and Hussain, 2011).

Similarly, social media has created virtual communities in various global forms to connect people to share their ideas and build unity. With access to the Internet and smart phones, social networks have played an important role in increasing the political awareness of the people at the lower level, inviting them to participate in various political programs and campaigns, and forming certain political opinions. Social media is also working to create, modify and change people's political views and opinions (Shirky, 2011). In other words, social media is emerging directly and indirectly as a major determining factor in building people's political culture.

During the Arab Spring occurred in 2010s, social media played a crucial role in organizing protests, disseminating information, raising awareness, garnering global support, providing a platform for citizen journalism, and fostering a sense of community and solidarity. This led to large-scale demonstrations demanding political change, economic reform, and an end to corruption (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013).

Similarly, social media sites like Facebook and Twitter have played a crucial role in globalizing the Black Lives Matter movement. The movement began in 2012 with the use of the hashtag BlackLivesMatter on social media after the shooting death of African-American teenager Trayvon Martin. In this movement against systemic racism, racial inequality, police violence and white supremacy, social media has been instrumental in raising awareness, organizing protests, publishing statistics, internationalizing incidents, building international public opinion, and fostering a

sense of community and solidarity (Freelon, McIlwain and Clark, 2016). Social media has become a virtual platform through which people can collectively express their views, raise their voices, create public opinion in their favor, organize movements and achieve their objectives.

YouTuber DhruvRathee has played a significant role through social media platforms in influencing public opinion and potentially decreasing the popularity of the BJP in the 2019 election. DhruvRathee is known for his critical analysis of various political issues, including the policies and actions of the BJP government. His content, which includes videos, posts, and discussions on platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, has reached millions of viewers and contributed to shaping political discourse (Singh, R. (2020). The 2014 election is sometimes dubbed the 'Twitter election,' while the 2019 election is referred to as the 'WhatsApp election.' With YouTube now being one of the main platforms Indians use for news (Reuters 2023, noting this survey mainly covered an English-speaking urban population), the 2024 election might come to be known as the 'YouTube election (Schroeder, Shetye and Wani, 2024).

Major Social Media Platforms for Political Socialization

With the development of information technology, social networks that have developed rapidly since the beginning of the twenty-first century are playing an effective role in improving and changing people's political culture. In all countries, small and large, less developed and developed, social networks are creating political ideas through political mobilization and political socialization. Social networks are gradually taking the place of traditional media due to smartphones and internet access. Online communities that connect countless people have helped in broadcasting political ideology, building a common identity, fostering a sense of belonging and publicizing purpose (Boulianne, 2020). The following are the major social networking platforms for political socialization of minds and for forming political ideas:

Facebook

Facebook is the biggest social media platform for socialization to form political opinion. By playing an important role in political communication and information dissemination. Various individuals, groups, political parties, activists and interest groups are using Facebook to bring any political issue to a large audience, organize various programs and create debate. Which help to make political culture in society.

Facebook was widely used in global events like the Arab Spring. Out of the world's 8 billion population, 3.07 billion people are monthly active users. Which comes to be 37.90% of the total population and 60.91% of the global social media users. Similarly, 2.11 billion people are daily active users. In India, the country with the highest population and density, 11.95 percent of people are connected to Facebook, while in America, 8.04% of people are Facebook users. By gender, 56.8% of Facebook users are male and 43.2% are female. Among the total users of Facebook, 24.4 percent people are in the age group of 25 to 34 years (Shewale, 2024).

Twitter

Social media platform Twitter is regarded as an effective platform for real-time information dissemination. It is extensively used to debate political topics, share breaking news, and announce campaign events. Major politicians, celebrities, and public figures worldwide utilize it to communicate directly with the general public and the media. Hence, Twitter has been playing vital role to socialize people for making political culture. There are 629 million monthly active users on Twitter. Gender-wise, 60.9% of X users are male and 39.1% are female, with 38.5% of users in the 25 to 34 age group. Based on the number of monthly active users, X ranks twelfth (Singh, 2024).

YouTube

Social media platform YouTube is considered highly important and effective for broadcasting audio, video, and text content. It is extensively used for transmitting political ideas, speeches, debates, and commentary. In the recent Lok Sabha elections held in India, YouTube was used so extensively that the election was even referred to as the "YouTube election." Currently, YouTube has 2.49 billion users, and 47% of internet users have access to YouTube. India has the highest number of YouTube users, with 462 million (Dean, 2024).As YouTube's reach has increased in rural and remote areas of the country, it has become easier for people to acquire political knowledge, which helps to form political culture.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is an important platform in social media. It is widely used on personal, group, and institutional levels. It serves as a crucial tool for political mobilization, political socialization, and political communication. Political parties and their affiliated organizations extensively use it for election campaigns, political campaigns

and protest demonstrations. Through WhatsApp, audio, video, and text messages can be quickly sent to designated groups. Due to its extensive use in political campaigns and information dissemination, helps to form political culture in people. WhatsApp has two billion monthly users. Daily, 100 million messages are exchanged via WhatsApp. Among its total users, 47.2% are female, and 52.8% are male. The highest number of active users, 487.5 million, are in India(Dean, 2024).

Instagram

Social media platform Instagram is considered a powerful tool for storytelling. Popular among younger generations, politicians and celebrities extensively use it to share photos, videos, and stories. Instagram helps politicians and celebrities connect with their followers through live videos. It draws national and international attention to various political events, gathers support, runs movements and forms public opinion. Influencers use Instagram to debate political issues, appeal to voters, and raise awareness among a large and diverse audience. Finally it helps to form political culture in people.Currently, Instagram has 2.5 billion users, making it the fourth most visited social media platform worldwide. Among its users, 61.6 percent are between the ages of 18 and 34 (Datareportal, 2023).

TikTok

In recent times, *TikTok*has become extremely popular among the younger generation. The term **"TikTok"** is often associated with short videos. This platform is particularly used to convey political messages, spark debates, gain support, and successfully run campaigns. During elections, it is utilized to present ideas to voters, inform the public about the opposition's wrongdoings, and increase voter participation. Due to these roles people get help to make their own political culture. It is estimated that by 2024, the number of *TikTok*users will reach approximately 1.8 billion, with 1.5 billion active users monthly. A significant portion of its users are between the ages of 18 and 34(Iqbal, 2024).

WeChat

In China, WeChat is a major social media platform used for communication, digital payments, and social networking. It plays a crucial role in disseminating government information and shaping political opinions among the public. Globally, WeChat has 1.359 billion users. In China alone, there are 845.4 million users, with millions more in countries like India, Malaysia, and Russia (Singh, Shubham 2024).

Reddit

Reddit is a digital platform for discussing various topics, including politics. It is used as a forum for debates and discussions on different issues. It is utilized for discussing topics connected with communities and for grassroots political issues. Which helps to form political culture in people. It played a significant role in the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. Currently, Reddit is estimated to have around 1.212 billion monthly users and 73.1 million daily active users (Dean, 2024).

Telegram

The social networking site Telegram is considered suitable for secure messaging. It is widely used for political communication, mobilizing political activists and organizing large protest events. Which helps to make political opinion and culture in people. Globally, it has more than 800 million monthly active users. Maintaining privacy, it ranks among the top ten popular social networking sites (Dean, 2024).

Role of Algorithm of Social Media for Shaping Political Culture

An algorithm is a series of specific steps designed to solve problems, perform tasks, and make decisions. In computer programming, algorithms direct computers to perform particular actions through definite steps. Similarly, various social media platforms extensively use algorithms. These algorithms consist of rules, signals and data that control the platform's operations. They filter, rank, select and recommend content to users. Algorithms determine what kind of content users read, watch or listen to identifying our personal interests and needs to recommend content accordingly.

Just as virtual matchmakers connect users with content that matches their interests, algorithms work similarly by understanding user behavior, preferences, and interactions. They help social media platforms present relevant content, thereby playing a powerful role in growing online audiences. Algorithms function by collecting user signals such as engagement, relevance, time and frequency, user interactions, profile authority, location, content type, virality, and watch time to present content according to user preferences (Adisa, Dorcas 2023).

Social media algorithms play a crucial role in shaping political culture by engaging users with political content that aligns with their interests and concerns. These algorithms select and personalize political content based on users' behavior, preferences, and interactions. This personalization amplifies political messages and aids in disseminating them effectively. Additionally, algorithms help boost political

content, target specific groups or communities, facilitate political mobilization, and contribute to political socialization. In this way, the algorithms used by various social media platforms engage users with political topics according to their interests and behavior, thereby playing a significant role in the process of shaping political culture (Newberry, Christina 2024).

Major Steps in Shaping Political Culture

George Gerbner and Larry Gross's cultivation theory asserts that prolonged exposure to television content shapes individuals' perceptions in alignment with the media's portrayal. According to them, media content plays a role in the opinion formation process through the following steps(Sparks, 2015):

Exposure

Media, including social networks, effectively presents various content to users. This exposure influences viewers' perceptions. Positive content on television can foster positive perceptions, while negative content can lead to negative perceptions among the audience.

Engagement

Audience engagement with the content presented by electronic media is crucial. Prolonged exposure and interaction with visual content lead to mental processing and internalization, eventually forming specific perceptions among viewers.

Resonance

When the content presented by electronic media reflects people's stories, experiences, and situations, it increases viewers' attachment and engagement with the content. This process helps shape specific perceptions. Media content that resonates with viewers' experiences or fears reinforces particular views.

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming is the process of bringing together people of different ethnicities, languages, genders, classes, regions, and communities into a common campaign or platform. Electronic media and social media platforms help form specific perceptions by including diverse groups in particular political content, ideas, or debates. This is particularly effective in shaping political views among people in remote or rural areas.

Attitude Formation

Continuous engagement with the content presented by electronic and social media helps individuals form specific political opinions and attitudes. The angle from which topics are presented determines the perceptions formed in the audience.

Behaviour Formation

Ultimately, the content presented on electronic and social media shapes individuals' political beliefs and behaviors. This influences their political inclinations, debates, voting activities, and social interactions, leading to modifications and improvements in their political behavior.

Conclusion

The use of various social media platforms has significantly impacted many areas, including politics. This article focuses on how social media facilitates global political mobilization, identifies major political social media platforms influencing political thought and culture and outlines the processes through which political opinions are formed. Information was gathered, analyzed and reviewed through the internet, relevant books, and various AI platforms. Given the extensive scope of the subject, the study is centered on specific objectives.

Various social media platforms are building political culture among people through political mobilization and political socialization. Platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok present audio-visual content, while platforms like WhatsApp, WeChat and Telegram are effective for messaging and also share audio and video content. These platforms play a critical role in forming public opinion, either supporting or opposing the government, thereby influencing political power structures. Social media had a significant impact on movements like the Arab Spring and Black Lives Matter, showing its role in democracy, human rights, and justice on an international level.

According to the cultivation theory, social media platforms expose users to content, engage them with it, increase their affinity for the content and help in forming opinions that align with the content. This process also includes bringing remote and rural people into the mainstream political discourse, fostering political understanding and ultimately shaping political thoughts and culture.

The scope and rate of social media usage are rapidly increasing. Platforms enhance their effectiveness using algorithmic AI, boosting systems to attract a specific audience based on region, age group and number. However, social media can also spread misinformation, defame political figures, increase political criminalization, incite ethnic and religious hatred, facilitate economic fraud, promote terrorism, vulgarity and violence. Therefore, effective monitoring, supervision and regulation are necessary to control these negative aspects.

Further study and research are required to understand the various relationships between social media and political content. Topics such as the relationship between social media and e-governments, the role of social media in public service delivery, the role of social media in sustainable development, and the role of social media in political stability need in-depth research and analysis.

Gratitude

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