



Mediated Communication, Public Opinion and Society Section

Abstracts of papers accepted for presentation in the Online Conference Papers of the
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The implementation of Artificial intelligent in Public Relations

Authors

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Abstract

In this digital era, public relations theory and practice are being transformed by increasing complexity due to information availability, higher reach and interactions, and faster speeds of transactions. These have led to the adoption of artificial by many companies. As AI is relatively new and technologically complex, several definitions are evolving, and the theory in this area is not yet fully developed. There is a need to provide structure and guidance to public relations practitioners to further this emerging stream of research.

The aim of this paper is to provide a comprehensive understanding of AI and their applications to Public relations. We focus on the following three main research questions that deal with conceptual/theoretical understanding, applications, and AI's outcomes/performance, respectively: What are the recent developments in the field of public relations that are related to AI, and how can they be classified based on public relations concepts? What are the opportunities and challenges associated with the adoption of AI in the public relations domain, and how to conceptually link them together? How do the public relations applications of AI enhance firm performance? As a first step, this paper proposes a systematic taxonomy and framework.

The author, using a grounded theory approach, conducts an extensive literature review and a qualitative study in which interviews with managers from 32 companies in 18 industries reveal the importance of understanding AI applications and adopting them.

In addition, AI should not be taken lightly as they have the potential to fundamentally transform the future of PR based on various factors such as (Increased learning and insights, Improved effectiveness and efficiency and Potential challenges). As AI can handle complex tasks of communication, coordination, cooperation, negotiation, and competition to achieve goals.

This research also finds that increasing amount of information and the increasingly dynamic online business environment present a huge challenge for stakeholders to extract value, and also provide opportunities for competitive advantage and growth.

Further, the author proposes an integrated conceptual framework with several propositions regarding AI adoption. He also, identifies the gaps in the literature and the need for adoption of AI in the future of public relations given changing stakeholders and product and industry characteristics.

Submission ID

98

Exploring the relationship between emotional well-being and media exposure during the COVID-19 lockdown

Authors

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Abstract

Lockdowns have been imposed around the world to contain the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. This study examines changes in emotional well-being and in media and social media consumption habits as well as the relationship between both in a sample of 584 participants during the strict lockdown period in Spain.

Information-seeking and consumption of media coverage of collective traumas is suggested to be a coping mechanism towards the uncertainty associated with such events (1). However, repeated and excessive media exposure during public crisis can lead to mental health associated problems such as increased anxiety, mental distress, and trauma (2–7).

Several works with national samples have identified a relationship between emotional well-being and media and social media exposure during the COVID-19 sanitary crisis. In particular, (2) reported a positive association between mental health problems and social media exposure during the pandemic outbreak in a Chinese sample. Similarly, (3) found that the more people followed coronavirus news, the more the level and severity of their anxiety symptoms increased in an Iranian sample. (6) identified a moderate association between traditional and social media exposure and mental distress at the beginning of the pandemic in an American sample.

The systematic review by (7) also highlighted frequent exposure to social media and news concerning COVID-19 as a common risk factor associated with mental distress during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, (4) found that Increased fear of COVID-19 was related to social media use and (5) suggested that coronavirus-related media consumption causes vicarious traumatization to the audience.

Overall, the previous works suggest that excessive exposure to COVID-19 related information on media and social media might have a negative impact on emotional well-being.

Based on these previous findings, we expected that:

H₁. An important part of the sample will report a decline in their emotional well-being during the lockdown period, represented by an increase in negative affect and a decrease in positive affect.

H₂ An important part of the sample will report an increase in media and social media consumption during the lockdown period.

H₃. An increase in media and social media consumption will be associated with an increase in negative affect and a decrease in positive affect.

In line with our hypotheses, the results showed that participants reported an increase in negative affect (PANAS-N) as well as a decrease in positive affect (PANAS-P) during the lockdown period, compared

to before. There was also a notable increase in media and social media consumption. Increases in media and social media use were significantly associated with an increase in negative affect and a decrease in positive affect.

In the presentation, we will further report the results per each specific media / social media and discuss the implications of our findings.

Submission ID

145

Organic Intellectuals, Hegemony & Identity: Op-Ed Writers on COVID-19

Authors

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Abstract

Opinion editorials (op-eds) are a powerful mode of communication that can influence public opinion and public policy, often acting as a site of ideological tension. Op-eds have the significant distinction of expressing individual viewpoints from writers outside of the media organization publishing the article, allowing them to be employed by public intellectuals to (re)constitute dominant media frames of news events and policy decisions. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for tailored framing of messages to effectively reach minority audiences. Framing choices made by op-ed writers based in their individual identities and experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic could contribute toward or negate such efforts. This study investigates the framing choices employed by op-ed writers writing for Slate Magazine about their experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic, how they compare to organizational and global news media frames, and how identity frames adopted in the discourse mediate these choices. A quantitative and qualitative content analysis of 67 op-eds reveal a lack of diversity in the framing choices of the op-ed writers. While op-eds that resisted dominant frames were not entirely absent, writers grounded their discourse in more generic identities, and adopted relatively widespread frames regarding their experiences during the pandemic. These results suggest that op-ed writers may adopt frames that are amenable to wider audiences, or that indirect editorial influences shape the frames used by the writers. These findings support conclusions from previous studies that the potential for op-eds to be used as a means of resistance to dominant perspectives and interpretations may be stifled by individual, organizational, and societal pressures, requiring nuance and creativity on the part of the writer in order to express counter-perspectives.

Submission ID

220

Transnational Public Spheres via Strategic Policy Narratives: Afghanistan's Political Role in Chinese, Russian, and Iranian Media Discourses

Authors

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Abstract

The Trump Administration's inconsistent efforts to bring democracy to Afghanistan in recent years opened discursive opportunities for Chinese, Russian, and Iranian media outlets to not only narrate America's interests in Afghanistan but also to construct the Afghani government and publics in ways that serve their foreign policy interests. While China's, Russia's, and Iran's national media narratives diverge, they also converge regarding the political role of Afghanistan's government and publics in rebuilding and stabilizing its political situation. Analyzing Afghani publics and institutions from the perspective of media narratives is key in understanding the changes and continuities in China's, Russia's, and Iran's short-term and long-term policy interest in Afghanistan. We argue that Washington's recent reversal from an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned policy to a policy that de-emphasizes the Afghan government and people in the peace-process created a rhetorical arena for Russian, Chinese, and Iranian media to strategically narrate Afghanistan's political future and thereby aid in the emergence of transnational public spheres.

Transnational public spheres research often occurs within the European context (Risse, 2010; Kantner, 2014, Rauchfleisch, 2017). Few studies examine the emergence of transnational public spheres outside of EU contexts and even fewer focus on foreign policy issues. We are bringing together insights from transnational public spheres research and media narrative research in order to reveal the political role of Afghanistan in Russian, Chinese, and Iranian media narratives. Foreign media narratives, which implicate publics and political institutions as actors of societal stability enable those publics to debate norms and goals for foreign policy conduct. While conflicting media narratives often speak to a realist or strategic understanding of communication with predetermined positions and interests, converging media narratives potentially open up opportunities for what Habermas refers to as communicative action, aiding in the construction of lifeworlds and publics (Habermas, 1984, 1987) and reflecting Wessler et al.'s (2010) second stage of emerging transnational public spheres.

This project analyzed Chinese, Russian, and Iranian media narratives concerning Afghanistan's political role through three phases: Phase I (May-June, 2018; 79 articles), Phase II, (July-August, 2018; 124 articles), Phase III (October-September, 2018; 180 articles). In total, the study analyzed 383 news articles from over 30 Russian, Iranian, and Chinese sources using the Media Monitoring System (M3S) and the Factiva online database. Preliminary findings suggest that Iran describes Afghanistan as a nation divided between the Taliban and the United States, with the role of the Afghani government

shown as respectable, but often sidelined. Russian media present Afghanistan in constant chaos amid a power struggle between the US and Taliban. The Afghani government is shown as a puppet regime with little to no legitimacy, contrasted to the Taliban who are shown as a viable political and military body capable of making direct demands to the US. Finally, Chinese media present Afghanistan as a nation in the midst of failing US policies that have led to a practical reality of the Taliban being the de-facto ruling power that must be brought to the bargaining table in order to achieve stability.

Submission ID

294

Migratory birds in a dilemma: Public sentiment analysis regarding the overseas Chinese who returned home during the COVID-19 pandemic

Authors

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Abstract

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has propelled not only a global health threat and economic downturn but also a dangerous information crisis (Xie et al., 2020). The heightening of the pandemic has resulted in hate speech, directed at specific races or groups, going viral online, further encouraging social stigmatisation and discrimination. Recent studies have focused on hate speech published on Twitter targeted at Asian, particularly Chinese, people (Fan et al., 2020; Ziems et al., 2020). This situation has occurred not only on global social media platforms but also on Chinese platforms: those who have returned home to China from abroad during the pandemic have encountered condemnation from Chinese netizens on social media.

In March 2020, with COVID-19 under control in China yet remaining severe in locations abroad, the Chinese government implemented stricter exit and entry policies. These restrictions played a significant role in controlling the virus in China, while simultaneously inconveniencing the return of Chinese people from locations abroad, with some Chinese citizens who were stuck overseas taking to social media to publicise their difficulties. Imported cases caused concern among domestic citizens, incited by media reports exposing returnees for having neglected the quarantine policy or for taking antipyretic drugs to conceal their illness, thus triggering public anger. As a result, a heated debate arose on social media regarding whether overseas Chinese citizens, including students studying abroad, should return home.

The objective of this research is to provide a comprehensive illustration of the public sentiments regarding overseas Chinese citizens returning home during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the intention of exploring the following two questions:

- (1) How did Weibo users react emotionally regarding overseas Chinese returning home?
- (2) How have these sentiments changed over time?

An online analysis tool will be utilised to capture and generate big data from Weibo on the chosen topic. The keywords “留学生回国 (overseas Chinese students returning home)”, “海外华人回国 (overseas Chinese returning home)” and “境外输入病例(imported cases)” will be used to extract tweets from Weibo published between 1st March 2020 to 31st October 2020. The sentiments underpinning these tweets will be analysed via the text emotion analysis software, Wenxin.

The research findings could potentially be used as evidence on policy-making processes, particularly regarding pandemic or epidemic prevention measures at borders.

Submission ID

359

What is Behind Rumours? A Grounded-Theory Analysis on 421 Rumours

Authors

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Abstract

Continuous reformations of cyberspace have brought about tremendous changes in the modes and patterns of communication. Online rumours are not only taking up multimedia forms in the new media era, but also more closely associated with social news and public opinion environment. This essay advocates that rumours should not be simply treated as “false information” while searching for effective rumour governance. Instead, it is the netizens’ psychology and social mentality reflected by the wide-spread rumours that should be traced minutely. It is further argued that netizens are less likely to believe in rumours if a stronger sense of security is established in the public opinion environment, and the transparency and promptness of official information flow shall also squeeze the vivosphere of rumours.

With the approach of grounded theory, this essay codes, classifies and analyses 421 sensational online rumours happened between 2017 and 2020. The motive mechanisms of circulating rumours among netizens are dissected via repetitive records, statistics and comparisons. At the micro-level, individual risks of netizens can be reduced by reading and sharing unauthorised “hearsay”. At the meso-level, the three ways of rumour generation: derivation, fabrication and distortion, are concluded, corresponding to certain communicative motive mechanisms of different social groups. At the macro-level, the overall anxiety during social transformation serves as the fertile soil of the diffusion of rumours. The soaring

demand for stories of netizens under modern consumer culture has become one of the main driving forces for the spread of rumours in interpersonal communication circles.

The time span of this research covers the global Pandemic of COVID-19, during which the term “infodemic” has returned to the public view. The “Truth-Seeking” Column of people.com.cn identified 46 rumours related to the Pandemic between December 2019 and August 2020, accounting for 11% of the total number of rumours. Long-term practice has proved that, on the one hand, rumours cannot be fully eliminated, but can only be reduced. On the other hand, rumours are positively correlated with the increase of risk perception among the public, usually accompanied by major institutional reforms, natural disasters or social public crisis. The management of rumours and the control of public opinion environment require an open information market, where timely disclosure and guidance of the truth are maintained via the free circulation of information. In major emergencies, effective information should be updated in real time through the network data platform, so that people can sense security and policy support sufficiently, and thus further enhance the society's ability to resist false information effectively.

Submission ID

370

Social media addiction among Estonian youth

Authors

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Abstract

Systematic reviews have found social media use to have both positive and negative implications for users' psychological well-being¹⁻³. On the one hand, social media use has been shown to help accumulate social capital⁴, provide and receive social support, reduce anxiety or increase self-esteem⁵, allow participation in political life⁶ and allow people to form communities with like-minded others and learn from them⁷.

On the other hand, excessive social media use has been linked to mental and physical health problems^{8,9} like depression, anxiety and negative emotions¹⁰; sleeping disorders¹¹, social issues¹² and emotional tensions¹³. However, it is important to note that the majority of social media users do not qualify as addicted^{14,15}. Studies claiming broad social media addiction or clear causal links between mental ill health and social media use have been methodologically criticized for over-generalizing on small convenience samples or secondary analyses of large-scale social datasets that have a tendency to mark small effects as statistically significant, thereby leading to potential false positives and conflicting results¹⁶.

The current study evaluates social media addiction within a non-representative convenience sample (n=978) of Estonian youth (11-19 yo) and explores their discourses of social media addiction and social

media addicts. In Estonia, there is high internet penetration and digital skills, virtually all (more than 99%) Estonian young people between 16 and 24 years of age use the Internet every day, and almost all (97%), do so on mobile devices¹⁷. Mixed methods data analysis design was applied, which allowed us to nuance ongoing debates regarding social media addiction by addressing both measured addiction (using Bergen addiction scales), perceived addiction, the correlations between the two and the addiction discourses that young people subscribe to.

Overall, the studied youth regarded social media addiction as a significant problem, but the Bergen addiction scales revealed that the vast majority of them were not addicted to social media. However, those with self-perceived social media addiction were more frequently social media addicted according to the scale. Our study contributes two important nuances to the ongoing debates. First, that young people tend to strongly overestimate social media addiction both as a social and as a personal problem, and second, young people's self perceptions of addiction deserve extended scholarly, pedagogical, parental and clinical attention. Further, five notable discursive themes of social media addicts emerged from the analysis of open question responses: An Antisocial Agitated Grump, A Killjoy, The Control freak with FOMO, The Sleep Deprived Vampire and The Needy Attention Seeker. Therefore, the study reveals that social media addiction is a complex term which people often misuse and overestimate.

In conclusion, it is important to be able to find, reach and help the youth who need help with their social media use, while remembering that the vast majority of youth are not addicted to social media. Pathologizing a whole range of popular youth practices, platforms or technologies is not conducive to reach either goal, but instead, fuels moral panics, leads to media populism, confusion in labels and overly anxious perceptions among youth themselves.

Submission ID

544

INFLUENCE OF SELECTED GLOBAL MEMES ON THE NEWS AGENDA OF ONLINE MEDIA ON COVID-19 EDUCATION IN GHANA

Authors

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Abstract

Globally, the impact of the Covid '19 pandemic has been catastrophic, wiping out millions of lives and livelihoods. Traditional and online media platforms have been inundated with daily, hourly and on-the minute updates on the developing angles of the Covid '19 pandemic. Many of these story angles have focused on new virus strains, modes of transmission, vaccine development and acquisition of same by

nations of the world. Media coverage of the pandemic has been as relentless as the havoc posed by the pandemic. A plethora of digital communication tools such as memes have facilitated the seamless communication of information on the pandemic by media and relevant stakeholders. However, little is known about how global thematised memes are delocalized on online local news portals. Thus this study seeks to identify how Covid '19 related global memes influence the Ghanaian online news media as well as its users. The study interrogates the educational and informative aspects of media coverage as well as how online users construct meaning from the news stories. Using the Thematic Analysis approach, the study investigates how global themes inspired by the World Health Organisation's (WHO) safety protocols pertaining to Covid '19 are covered in local online media. It focuses on educative and informational news stories constructed during the re-emergence of the virus with its attendant deadlier new strains. The Framing Theory will be used to determine the extent to which global memes contribute to the local digital news agenda on education and information while agenda melding theory will be deployed to gauge the level of online users' engagement with the news stories. The study hopes to contribute to global literature on media coverage of pandemics such as Covid '19.

Keywords: Memes, Media, Global, Covid '19, Pandemic, Local

Submission ID

553

#DeniedMyVote movement in the 2019 European Parliamentary Elections: A Methodological Exploration of Entity-Emotion Analysis in Social and Legacy Media

Authors

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Abstract

Social media studies using big data typically favor quantitative analytical approaches, due to methodological restrictions of analyzing large amounts of textual data in-depth. However, the cost-effectiveness of quantitative methods often comes at the expense of a deeper understanding of the context, actors and interactions that generated the texts that are being studied. In this paper, we argue for a mid-point between the quantitative and qualitative approaches to text analysis, by proposing a grounded, bottom-up procedure for classifying collections of texts to facilitate further, more in-depth analysis.

To do this, we use the case of the #deniedmyvote Twitter hashtag, which emerged in the UK during the 2019 European Parliament elections in the context of Brexit to document instances of voters being turned away at the polls due to administrative errors. The hashtag did not emerge spontaneously, but was introduced and promoted by activists who had been aware of the risks these administrative errors

would pose to voters. In our proposed classification procedure, we followed four steps to classify tweets into categories that allow us to study how emotions are associated with certain institutions and political figures. First, we collected 15,484 tweets containing the #deniedmyvote hashtag during elections week in May 2019. From these we identified 516 tweets posted by activists and their immediate networks. In the second step, we analyzed this corpus of core tweets manually to identify categories needed for our classification: from individual tweets we extracted entities (institutions, groups and political figures) and words indicating emotions. The result of this step was a vocabulary of associations between entities and emotions. In the following step, we check the consistency of these associations with the inherently narrative legacy media reports of #deniedmyvote.

In the final step, we returned to the main corpus of tweets posted by users outside the activist network, many of which described voters' own experiences of being turned away at the polls. Here we used an automated approach to group tweets into the two-dimensional categories of entities-emotions identified in the core corpus. Our findings show frequent associations between UK institutions and political figures with feelings of contempt, voters and feelings related to discrimination and, across the board, sub-sets of negative feelings that fall outside the spectrum of basic emotions. As a result of this step, the initial diffuse corpus of tweets is organized into smaller categories where qualitative content analysis is a manageable approach, whereby context, meaning and relationships can be examined in-depth without sacrificing validity. Finally, we suggest that this classification procedure can be used with any categories relevant to the data at hand.

Submission ID

593

The Shape of Platform Studies: A Multidimensional Methodological Model for a Vicissitudinous Concept

Authors

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Abstract

The study of platforms is on the rise in communication studies, science and technology studies (STS), game studies, internet studies, and human-machine communication (HMC). While platform studies emerged from hardware studies as an integrated attempt to study the hardware, software, code, marketing, and use of computational technologies—especially, early on, video game consoles, but never limited to them—its use has been broadened to include the study of software platforms, such as social media sites, and the particular affordances they offer for users, their algorithmic decision making, their terms of service, their code environments, and embeddedness in neoliberalism: selling user data, acting as an advertising medium, etc. This holistic approach encompasses everything from minute detail (such as how buttons are configured on a MINITEL console; the way that privacy settings

are displayed to Facebook users), to the broad and situated socio-political context of corporations (e.g., the gender make up of Nintendo development teams).

While a fruitful field with much work developed, there is a noticeable dearth of methodological theorising on the topic (Apperley & Parikka, 2018), even as there are numerous theoretical explorations. How exactly does one *do* platform studies? After a deep dive into all the varieties of platform studies in the form of a graduate seminar, the authors concluded that the disparate approaches to studying platforms, while sometimes fought over as more-or-less appropriate or useful (e.g. Bogost & Montfort, 2009; Gillespie, 2010), might be one of its core strengths. Which is to say that the vagueness of platform *studies* tracks the vagueness of *platforms* themselves (Gillespie, 2010), and that this vicissitudinous nature might, in practice, be a feature not a bug. We propose a multidimensional approach to platform studies, in which work may be located along at least three major axes: computational—sociotechnical, descriptive—critical, and interpersonal—structural. These three dimensions of platform studies are combinable, provisional, and subject to extension. For example, platform studies work might be sociotechnical/critical/structural (for example van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal’s work in *The Platform Society* (2018), or Srnicek’s theorizing in *Platform Capitalism* (2017). Alternatively, it could be on the other end of this array-space and be computational/descriptive/interpersonal such as the platform studies Montfort and Bogost build in *Racing the Beam* (2009), and some of their subsequent MIT Platform Studies series. But work could also find itself at other locations within this triangulation, such as Danaher & McArthur collection on *Robot Sex* (2018) which we argue is critical/sociotechnical/interpersonal, as it centres interpersonal ethics. You could also have work at different positions along a single axis, such as Gillespie’s *Custodians of the Internet* (2018), that’s focus on moderation practices could be said to be sociotechnical/critical as well as somewhere along the dimension between interpersonal and structural. Additionally, other dimensions could be identified or conceived of, e.g., technical—sociological, empirical—theoretical. But together and as a starting point, these initial three define the shape of platform studies, track the work it has already done, and offer a solid framework and model for future explorations.

Submission ID

621

Cyber nationalism, Right-wing conservatism and Gender politics: A Discourse Analysis about the Online Discussion about the Regulations of PRC on the Management of Permanent Residence of Foreigners on Public Opinion View

Authors

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Abstract

On February 27, 2020, the Chinese government issued the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on the Management of Permanent Residence of Foreigners. Out of the expectation of the government, this seemingly ordinary draft for soliciting opinions has caused a sensation in the whole Chinese public opinion field and aroused heated discussion among netizens. In Weibo(the Twitter-like social media platform), the hashtag “#Regulations of PRC on the Management of Permanent Residence of Foreigners” has garnered 5.07 billion views and 3.76 million discussions, a scale has rarely seen on the Chinese Internet field, and other platforms like WeChat, Zhihu(the Quora-like Online Q&A Platform), Douyin(Chinese Tik Tok) were also filled with the discussions about this topic. The network discussion is roughly divided into three camps. One is the resolute opposition, which occupies the vast majority of the public opinion field. Some are objective and neutral in their analysis of the regulations themselves, and those who support them.

In this research, I sorted out the development context, propagation path, and mechanism of the whole public opinion event. In addition to that, through my observation and discourse analysis, I drew two important conclusions. One is the resolute opposition's discourse is full of Han chauvinism and nationalism, racism (especially against black Africans), right-wing populism, with strong Chinese cultural characteristics. The other is that the discourse of the supporters manifested the characteristics of gender politics critics and feminism, and gradually seized back the dominant power of the public opinion field with the sudden popularity of the derived public opinion topic "#Chinese boys protect Chinese girls"(which was proposed by the opposition camp) on March 3. After this public opinion event, this hashtag has instead become James Scott's "Weapon of the Weak" for Chinese women to face the harm caused by the patriarchal system. In the further discussion about domestic violence, misogyny and discrimination against women and other social issues related to women, they used this hashtag in an ironic and joking manner to counter the hypocritical "protection" discourse of the opposition and those male chauvinists, which is essentially a term that dwarfs and objectifies women. This instead extends the life cycle of the whole public opinion event in the field.

The significance of this research lies in that this public opinion event in China is a microcosm of the rise of the global conservative right-wing ideological trend, populism, and xenophobia, and its research perspective also rethinks the border and boundary of public opinion communication research. The research on it will also help deepen the understanding of the assessment of the prospect of anti-globalization in the post-Covid-19 era and the construction of ethnic group subjectivity, and provide a new perspective and method for understanding and promoting the bridging of the communication gap and conflicts between different ethnic groups.

Submission ID

702

Text-based Imagined Communities and Floating Public Sphere: A Critical Perspective on the "Bullet-screen"

Authors

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Abstract

"Bullet-screen" (or "danmu" in Chinese) is an emerging feature on some video sites in China and Japan, which overlays viewer's real-time comments on the videos by flying them across the screen like bullets. Originated from the "okatu culture", the "bullet-screen" has now occupied a large video market and become an important component of the public's video-watching habitus. Considering the unique form of communication, this article takes a theoretical perspective from Benedict Anderson, Pierre Bourdieu, and Jürgen Habermas, focusing on three questions: has the "bullet-screen" built up an imagined community upon the video text and comment text? Has it created a public sphere when different opinions are gathered in and flying across the screen? What are the power relations behind the "bullet-screen"?

This article takes an approach of depth interview with 15 people of different ages, sexualities, occupations, and qualifications in China, which are sampled in accordance with the data from *the 47th China Statistical Report on Internet Development*, published on February 3rd, 2021. The depth interviews aim at collecting people's specific opinions on three aspects: the appearance of "bullet-screen", including its size, color, location, and its obscuration on the image; the text of "bullet-screen", including its explanation, metaphor, and supplement on the video content; the experience of using "bullet-screen", concerning the para-social interaction, the "bullet-screen etiquette", and the political participation as social actors. All the qualitative materials are coded and analyzed in *Nvivo 11*, to draw up the conceptual web between the "bullet-screen" and the society.

This article concludes that the "bullet-screen" feature on the video sites has vested power in the public to gaze at the video producers and the media-represented society. They can deconstruct and reconstruct the content, meaning, even the ideology of videos with the symbolic appearance and intertextuality of "bullet-screen". The power of "bullet-screen" is dispersed into different individuals, but it often takes effect in a high magnitude by establishing imagined communities upon massive real-time floating texts. Despite the absence of the human body, the imagined communities still operate under an etiquette, which is not a simple projection of social ethics but an achievement of a new contract in cyberspace. The "text-based imagined communities" have constructed a "floating public sphere", in which the symbolic capital is evident, and the power in the real-world society can be restricted to some extent. Users are empowered to discuss the political issues and social problems in the "floating public sphere", but they are still manipulated by the video platforms. The social inequality and digital divide of using "bullet-screen" also increase the instability of the created "floating public sphere".

Submission ID

710

Beware of populist tendencies in news reports and online public opinion—Evaluating media sensationalism and online public opinion carnival in the Bao Yuming incident

Authors

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Abstract

As one of the most influential events in China in 2020, the Bao Yuming incident, that mainly focuses on the incident a "senior executive of a listed company accused of sexually assaulting his adopted daughter for four years", has drawn extensive attention and discussion from the media and the public. The populism trend that appears in the news report and the online public opinion around this incident is a problem worthy of reflection in the journalism and communication circles.

It is inaccurate news reports that led to the formation and the outbreak in the public opinion. Thus, the paper firstly sorts out the online public opinion caused by inexact media reports, focusing on the formation of a "Bao Yuming event". Then, it specifically presents the event's formation and development. Finally, the paper describes and explains the reporting process and the content of reports from The Paper, South Reviews, and Caixin Media.

On this basis, the paper analyzes the problems in the three reports. First of all, the single-sourced information makes the facts scarce. Indeed, the three media only provided interviews and quotes from one of the parties, lacking of balance and objectivity. Secondly, the existence of an important bias in the reports, leading to the formation of a media trial. Lastly, the exaggerate, sensational and storyline content that creates a story and not a report.

It is because of such misleading reports that the online public opinion expressed strong populist feelings. Populism in online public opinion is characterized by, firstly, its eager to express opinions despite the truth, which is one of the attributes of the "post-truth" era where the public does not pay attention to the truth but is interested in expressing opinions and emotions. The second is the blind sympathy for the weak-side and exaggerated hatred for the strong-side. This reflects the populist sentiment and highlights the influential power of the populist themes such as hatred for the system and the upper strata of society.

In the end, the paper points out that "post-truth" era needs more ethics of responsibility. The media should adhere to the moral principles of professional journalism. Then, the public should constantly improve its media literacy and critical sense. Finally, media professionals should carry out media

criticism and ponder over media ethics. Positive interactions between the media and the public will help to create a positive media environment.

Submission ID

820

Occupy Wall Street 2.0 – #GME Short Squeeze as a revolution through social media

Authors

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Abstract

In the end of January 2021, Reddit users on the r/wallstreetbets seems to organized one of the most epic short squeeze in capital market history on GameStop stock, pushing up the stock price almost 30 times (using technical imbalance in the market, f. ex. enormous short interest, small free-floating shares, call options leverage) . The trigger for this action was a comment from Citron Research (hedge fund) predicting the value of the stock would decrease. Instead the stock price increased many times more and its high volatility caused trading to be halted multiple times. What is the most important is fact that this short squeeze appear to establish a new (old – vide: Occupy Wall Street Movement) narrative of a great (not only symbolic) battle between Main Street vs. Wall Street, retail investors, every day hard-working people vs. professional traders, hedge fund managers, capital dodgers in which the former ones finally became the victors in the end. In this paper author will present results of conducted discourse analysis on tweets and memes used by internet users – retail investors to define what happened and how they want to perceive this event. As we can read in plenty of articles, The collective effort has proven successful partly because it taps into the same kind of frustration and stick-it-to-the-man sentiment that drove the Occupy Wall Street movement, which kicked off nearly a decade ago as a reaction to the extreme wealth of the "1-percenters" versus everyone else. That sentiment holds the same power 10 years later. "In one sense, this is 'Occupy Wall Street' via the trading desk rather than from Zuccotti Park," said David Kirsch, a professor at the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School for Business. He also added "We are seeing that 3 million small investors in a Reddit forum, when acting in a coordinated fashion, can seriously distort regular price movements,". We can say that the spirit of Occupy Wall Street is back. Only this time, it's coming from inside the stock exchange, not from tents in Manhattan. Over the past few weeks (jan2021), as internet-savvy traders led by the Reddit subgroup Wall Street Bets have furiously driven up the stock price of GameStop, short sellers (well-known hedge funds) who were betting against the video game retailer have been hit hard. According to the analytics firm S3 Research, losses on the single stock have totaled more than \$19 billion. Do we witness a revolution on capital market through social media? Power to the people – from Wall Street's dodgers in ties to Main Street's retail traders?

Submission ID

865

Depolarization in the Rise of Far-Right Platforms? A Moderated Mediation Model on Political Identity, Misinformation Belief and Voting Behavior in the 2020 US Presidential Election

Authors

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Abstract

Introduction. Featured with full anonymity and image-based communication, imageboard has created a special online public space, well known for the widespread cultural and political memes (Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2017) as well as the far-right and populists' antagonistic speech (Nagle, 2017; Tutters & Hagen, 2019). While empirical analysis on the contents gradually cumulates (Bernstein et al., 2011), little is known about the political implications of using these media platforms. This paper thus attempts to explore the topic by examining how the use of imageboard conditions the impact of political identity on people's misinformation belief and the downstream effect on voting behavior in the 2020 United States Presidential Election.

Methods. With a national representative survey ($N = 702$), we run regression models on two mediators (belief in con-Trump and con-Biden misinformation) and one binary outcome variable (0 = *vote for Biden*, 1 = *vote for Trump*), using political identity as the key explanatory variable (0 = *extremely liberal*, 10 = *extremely conservative*) and general Internet use, news consumption on all media, and demographics as controls. Further, we take respondents' experiences (0 = *used*, 1 = *unused*) in using the two most popular imageboards, 4chan and 8chan (8kun), as a moderator in the relationships between political identity and the two mediators.

Results. Political identity is highly correlated to belief in both con-Trump and con-Biden misinformation and they all significantly predict the eventual voting behavior. More interestingly, imageboard use presents a significant moderating effect on the relationships between political identity, the two types of misbelief (belief in con-Trump misinformation: $B = 0.10$, $p < 0.05$; belief in con-Biden misinformation, $B = -0.17$, $p < 0.001$), and voting behavior ($B = -0.31$, $p < 0.001$). For imageboard users, the effects of political identity on misinformation belief as well as voting behavior are much more mitigated, i.e., closer to zero, than those of non-users. With a bootstrapping approach (Preacher & Hayes, 2004), the moderated mediation model is tested significant only for the indirect effect of the interaction via belief in con-Biden misinformation.

Discussion. Previous studies on imageboards suggest that contents on those platforms are closely connected to far-right political movements (Ylä-Anttila et al., 2020). Counter-intuitively, our findings suggest that the use of imageboards mitigates partisans' existing political identity-based misbelief about the presidential candidate, with downstream consequences in voting behavior. One possible explanation could be that exposure to the extreme (possibly indecent) alt-right contents on the imageboards leads to people's reflections on the party leaders (for both the liberals and the conservatives), suggesting a potential "depolarization effect". This result coincides with a recent observation of a split between the traditional ring-wing and the far-right, e.g. the QAnon activists (Tollefson, 2021). Future work could incorporate more online data through web crawling to further examine the connections between online participation in imageboards and offline political consequences.

Submission ID

1340

The Opinion of the European Press about Trump, Biden and the US presidential campaign

Authors

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Abstract

For a variety of reasons, the interest aroused by the US presidential elections always spills over the US borders and into the international arena. This is even more pronounced when the voters must choose between two contenders who are not just unlike but seem to inhabit opposite extremes of the spectrum.

Donald Trump's presidency is perhaps best described as disruptive for its violent swerve away from traditional US policies both domestically and internationally. Perhaps even more drastic were the changes in the way the president engaged with the American public, his political adversaries, the media, and the world at large. The extremes Trump went to were such that many Europeans were unable to tear their gaze away from Trump and his shambolic government. Ordinary European citizens, the media, and political leaders looked on bewildered and incredulous.

Our study set out to explore the specific terms under which the European gaze was cast onto the 2020 US presidential campaign. What aspects did the European press foreground in their analyses of the campaign and the candidates? How did the press assess the campaign and the two contenders for the presidency? What did Donald Trump say?

We used both quantitative and qualitative approaches by combining content analysis and framing theory (hitherto scarcely applied to opinion articles) and we scrutinized interpretations, analyses, and opinions articulated in eight influential European quality newspapers from four countries (France, Germany, Spain, and Britain). We limited our analysis to opinion pieces and editorials that focused on the two televised presidential debates on September 30 and October 23, 2020. Our objective was to determine the prevailing tone, frames, and issues that emerged in the 87 articles we found published during the timeframe in which we gathered our sample.

Our results show that the aspects most articles homed in on were Trump's controversial political and communication style. Furthermore, we found that mentions of domestic US politics by far outnumbered references to US international relations. Across the board, the opinions regarding Trump, both in terms of tone and framing, are glaringly unfavorable. Above all, he is censured for dividing and polarizing the US through his populist, confrontational communication. Joe Biden, albeit largely portrayed as a decent and competent politician, does not arouse much enthusiasm in the European press, which finds him lacking in strength and appeal.

Submission ID

1468

MASS DECEIVER OR DEMOCRATIZING AGENT? SOCIAL MEDIA'S ROLE IN KENYA'S BBI CAMPAIGNS AND THE 2022 SUCCESSION POLITICS

Authors

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Abstract

Political transitions in Kenya are perennially characterized by high octane politics. However, in the age of social media, the character, momentum and intensity of political activity and competition has assumed a different dimension. Increasingly, social media have become significant platforms for political engagement and crucial channels for disseminating political messages, a serious influencer in political campaigns and in the way people think about issues. Key political players have continued to ramp up their digital messaging to reach a national voting constituency that is increasingly younger and tech-savvy. This has created opportunities for both democratizing ideas and spreading political (and other) messages, but also misinformation through propaganda and fake news. As the use of social

media has increased rapidly and the political stakes get high, these platforms have been used to enhance the popularity of politicians and political parties and tarnish those of their opponents. This transformation of Kenya's political terrain has however raised several questions. Key among these being the role of social media in a fragile political landscape. In more specific terms, and as this paper seeks to discuss, the role of social media has been seen by some, including state authorities as an instrument of for mass deception. On the other hand, there are those who broadly view and hail social media for opening up spaces for democratic engagement. It is within this prism that this paper explores the dynamism on Kenya's current political terrain, especially in view of the effort to change aspects of the country's Constitution under the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI), and by extension the intricate connection to the quickly evolving succession politics of 2022 when the country holds a general election to elect a new president among other key officials. Given the foregoing, the following specific questions will guide this discussion. 1) Is social media a mass deceiver or a democratizing agent in the context of Kenya's BBI campaigns and 2020 succession politics? 2) What are the dominant methods used by political players in Kenya to manipulate social media to influence the public during political campaigns? 3) How can the public guard against social media manipulation and deception. To explore these questions, this study is guided by the Media System Dependency conceptual framework which broadly explains the relationship and the effects between the three entities- Audience, Media, and Society. In addition, this paper will draw and discuss emerging themes in contemporary political communication, especially in a changing communications environment. The study employs an exploratory research design and the data will be collected using key informant interviews, and content analysis of social media posts. Key informant interviews will be conducted on Social media experts and policymakers who will include academicians, politicians and political scientists and the content analysis of social media posts and content on the Kenya BBI campaigns and 2022 succession politics.

Submission ID

1469

Research on agenda setting of Sina Weibo COVID-19 event based on LDA topic modeling Analysis

Authors

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Abstract

Nowadays, Sina Weibo has played an irreplaceable role in the contemporary society, especially during the global public health outbreak of COVID-19. On the one hand, during the outbreak of COVID-19, Sina Weibo sets the agenda for users through hot search lists and information flow, to affect to change users' focus; on the other hand, not only for ordinary users, official media and professional users also

noticed the importance of Sina Weibo in the information dissemination, and begun to control public opinions by setting agenda on Sina Weibo. Sina Weibo's subjects are likely to vary, different users' subjects depend on the users' identity and information environment. From this, this article explored the agenda focus between Weibo users of various categories during the break of COVID-19.

This article conducted an exploratory study using "COVID-19" as the key word for data crawling in Weibo user content, using the LDA topic model analysis method to obtain and cluster dates about two types of users' microblogging content during January 20, 2020 to February 29, 2020. The two types of users are professional users and ordinary users. Professional users refer to individual users with microblogging authentication, and ordinary users refer to individual users who do not have micro-blogging authentication. This study revealed the differences between the two types of users' topics on social media platforms and outlined the focus of the two types of users' topics. The results show that: firstly, the topics of professional users more emphasis on the disclosure of information, such as outbreak events, tension, epidemic prevention and control and medical reports; secondly, ordinary users are more focused on the impact of the epidemic, life and work status, psychological and emotional discussion. By exploring the topical priorities of Sina Weibo's different users, it helps to gain an in-depth understanding of how social media platforms focus on building public awareness of the global epidemic and its impact.

Submission ID

1559

Effect of Social Media Political Participation, and Political Disagreement on Political Incivility: A Self-Reported Study from Pakistan

Authors

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Mr. Milos Moskovljevic - City University of Hong Kong

Abstract

Prior studies have confirmed that social media platforms have enabled ordinary citizens to participate in online political activities easily. During these activities, there will probably be an exchange of opinions between people coming from different political standpoints, and quite often, opposing political views, leading to political disagreement. These exchanges of opinions might sometimes even take an uncivilized form. Certain authors argue that incivility could become more pertinent in cyberspace due to an absence of non-verbal communication cues and physical gap compared to the face-to-face political conversation, especially during the heated political discussion between politically opponent discussants. Following these assumptions, this study investigated whether there is a linkage between social media political participation and disagreement and incivility. Political incivility is an extremely important phenomenon to investigate, particularly since it might be quite harmful to the state

of democracy. For example, some studies have shown that the use of negative messages might be correlated with the decrease in political trust and voted turnout. Specifically, this phenomenon needs to be cautiously examined in developing countries and, more importantly, in transitional democracies. The study utilizes data obtained from a web survey conducted in Pakistan involving participants from a non-mainstream political context. Results showcase that political disagreement on social media mediates the relationship between political participation and the experience of political incivility on social media. In other words, people involved in social media political activities who disagree with others are more likely to encounter political incivility. In short, this study explored the self-reported political incivility on social media and its precursors in Pakistan—a transitional democracy where digital connectivity is steadily growing among its diversified population.

Submission ID

1572

Social media as polarizing force or neutral mediators: a methodology for the exploration of social media and misinformation effects on public opinion support

Authors

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Abstract

We build on extant research of news media effects on perceived political legitimacy to explore the polarizing effects a social media news ‘diet’ (e.g. Bayer 2020) – and particularly its ‘fake news’ aspect - may have on public opinion about European integration.

Our methodology repurposes public opinion data, and, first, investigates whether those relying on social media for (EU) news express less support for the Union overall and its migration policies compared to those relying on other news sources. As migration policies are a crucial case for a study of social media effects, due to their media salience and potential for polarization, we measure the effects in periods where the chance of external factors like excessive migration inflows acting as omitted variables is as small as possible. We test whether individual attitudes commonly found to predict Euroscepticism, such as low knowledge about the EU, become a more potent driver of Eurosceptic beliefs when they co-exist with a reliance on social media as a news source. This causal mechanism could be assumed due to how online debates frequently act to reinforce existing beliefs (Karlsen et al. 2017).

We control for a range of variables common in the literature on public support for the EU (people's experience of feeling European, their knowledge of EU politics, trust in national institutions and already existing image of the EU), which are nonetheless rarely used when investigating the effects of

social media use on trust. In a second step, we probe the link between social media news consumption, fake news and polarization by expanding the cross-sectional analysis with country-level analysis of the countries where the largest (Hungary) and smallest (Finland) percentage report encountering news they believe to be fake on at least a weekly basis. Our preliminary results show significant negative effects of social media use, even without mediators, in the Hungarian sample. These effects are smaller, and less consistently significant, in the Finnish case. Our paper thus contributes to the still sparsely researched aspect of social media effects within the extensive literature on media effects on support for European integration (de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006; Karsten 2020).

Submission ID

1584

Palestinian Witnessing and Digital Advocacy

Authors

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Abstract

Ordinary citizens may temporarily take on the role of a citizen journalist by using their mobile phones to capture and share images and/or videos of what is happening around them in order to bear witness to significant events or everyday injustices. These images can become part of a wider social justice movement when they are shared widely on social media platforms by activists. For example, video played a significant role in the Black Lives Matter movement as a way of visually communicating the reality of police brutality to an international audience and mobilising people to take to the streets in protest.

While research has examined the role of this type of visual communication for activists within the Black Lives Matter movement and other similar protest movements, much less is known about how ordinary people can use photography and video activism together with social media to raise awareness of everyday injustices and human rights violations as are experienced on a daily basis by Palestinian people living under Israeli occupation.

It is in this context that the current study was carried out. Social media posts from the Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts of international Palestinian advocacy organisations were collected and analysed with the aim of understanding the role of images posted to social media in building international solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Analysis revealed a pattern of action whereby Palestinians recorded interactions between soldiers and civilians on the ground and then these images were distributed through the social media accounts of international advocacy groups.

Images and videos showed the range of experiences that Palestinians have with Israeli security forces, including restriction of movement at checkpoints, property demolition and physical violence. An analysis of the comments that were left by social media users showed that the majority agreed with the claims that were being made in the posts and expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Submission ID

1726

Access to information on dementia in Germany: What media do informal caregivers of people living with dementia use and what are usage problems?

Authors

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Abstract

Background: Today, information about dementia is available via analogue and digital media (Allen, Cain & Meyer, 2020), but caregivers of people living with dementia still have unmet information needs (Steiner, Pierce & Salvador, 2016). To implement evidence-based care, health information must be accessible to caregivers. According to Wilson's model of information behaviour (1997), source characteristics are a crucial intervening variable in information seeking.

Objective: Our study aimed to identify which sources informal caregivers of people living with dementia use to inform themselves about the disease and which barriers inhibit the use of information media. The study was funded in part by a grant from Wikimedia Deutschland.

Method: We implemented a semi-structured questionnaire for informal caregivers of people living with dementia. The recruitment was done in support groups of the local Alzheimer's Association. The questionnaire consisted of open and closed questions about access to information about dementia, barriers to use existing information media and preferred information sources. The data were analyzed descriptively.

Results: We sent 45 questionnaires by post with a response rate of 51.1% ($n = 23$). The majority of participants ($\text{age}_{\text{mean}} = 70.4$ years, 30.4% male) mainly used radio and TV broadcasts, information material from pharmacies, and newspapers to inform themselves about dementia. The current use and also the willingness to use health apps to obtain information about dementia were low. The respondents named information sessions during support group meetings as additional source of information. Two participants (8.7%) reported problems to use information media. Existing barriers to use information media were lacking internet access and problems in understanding the technical jargon used by medical staff.

Conclusion: The study showed that caregivers prefer analogue media to obtain information about dementia. Access to information currently appears to be limited by lacking infrastructure and communication barriers. This indicates a need to translate scientific evidence in everyday language to inform caregivers about research results and to implement them into dementia care.

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Submission ID

1737

Local Digital Celebrity: Strategies in Global Context

Authors

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Abstract

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An experienced social science researcher and associate professor at the Department of Sociology of the Higher School of Economics. My main area of expertise is media studies – digital culture, online representation, social media research.

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Professional marketing researcher and analyst. My main area of expertise is innovative methodologies - social media listening, online focus groups, research communities, usability testing etc.

The digital celebrities' phenomenon is important because it reflects the changes in the media environment. The modern media field dictates the development and formation of new everyday communication practices in the context of fragmented, multi-platform consumption of social media. (Napoli, 2012; McQuail, 2013). The transformation of media consumption and the development of digital technologies lead to changes in the basic mechanisms of society's functioning. The formation of public opinion is profoundly influenced by these new technologies. The basic models for understanding public opinion formation developed by sociologists in the twentieth century do not always work today (Tard, Lippman, Noelle-Neumann, Bourdieu, Habermas).

Traditionally, opinion leaders ("stars") are representatives of a narrow range of professions, such as artists, musicians, athletes, and politicians. Social media accelerate the possibilities of ordinary people becoming extraordinary and vice versa (Turner, 2009; McKenzie, 1999), like Charli D'Amelio (@charlidamelio) with over 103.5 million TikTok subscribers.

"Local Digital Celebrity" becomes the central concept of the proposed project. How do they develop their careers in global context? How do local celebrities create their self-image according to different digital platforms? A vivid example is Khabib Nurmagomedov, who got first place on Russian Instagram, due to an international audience, overtaking everyone's favorite TV-star Olga Buzova. A bright case of recent months is Alexei Navalny, who expands the audience and, in addition to classical platforms on political topics (4th place among persons on Russian-speaking Twitter), is also mastering entertainment formats; his videos on TikTok are gaining about 4 million views (@_navalny_).

The concept of celebrity itself and those closes to it (star, influencer, blogger) is actively researched for past decades (Marwick, 2013; Abidin, 2018; Marshall, 1997; Rojek, 2001; Baker and Rojek, 2020; Rowlands, 2008; Labrecque, Markos, and Milne, 2011; Chen, 2013). This project builds on the existing literature and focuses specifically on the issue of the representation strategies used by digital celebrities to build a global career.

The methodology includes elements of text and visual analysis that reveals the features of a particular social media platform. It designed to get a general idea of models and strategies of interaction celebrity with the audience and the difference between such strategies on different platforms.

Submission ID

1771

Are Media following the same accounts as their Media Directors on Twitter?

Authors

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Abstract

Social Media platforms have transformed the relational logics in terms of access to information and influence streams between the media, politicians and citizens (Chadwick, 2013; Guo & Vargo, 2017; Jenkins, 2006; Meraz, 2014). With the aim of contributing to the understanding of these new dynamics of influence, we analyzed who the Spanish Generalist Media with most followers started following and who the Directors of those Media started to follow in 2017, 2018 and 2019 on Twitter.

In order to do so, we searched for patterns (Bail, 2014; Provost & Fawcett, 2013) by analyzing Twitter data via a machine learning software from where we were able to visualize the network of the most followed media and searched for each of their Directors. We created new networks to analyze the samples as a group and collect the data of who they began to follow. We then proceeded to categorize these data in Types of accounts, Institution/Citizenship, Country, Number of followers and Gender and utilizing data visualization methods (Batrinca & Treleaven, 2015; Mahrt & Scharrow, 2013) we identified trends and compared the results so as to contribute in the understanding of the new digital mediated influence flows between Media, journalists, politicians and the citizenship.

Submission ID

1799

Mediated communication on corruption scandals and its effects

Authors

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Dr. Juan-Luis López-Galiacho - Universidad Rey Juan Carlos

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Abstract

Empirical evidence demonstrates that the impact of political scandals in the media does not always determine election results. Although according to the polls, public opinion expresses its concern in respect to corruption scandals, a considerable number of voters tend to forget, if not forgive, the dishonest behaviour of politicians when they cast their vote at the polls. The main objective of this research in progress is to discover the relationship between political information and the phenomenon of disaffection of large segments of the population with regard to politics, politicians and political parties, in respect to both their explicit and implicit attitudes. In previous studies it was found that the news may impact citizens' explicit assessment regarding politics and politicians, aggravating their disaffection. Now, as an additional step in this line of research, we study, first, whether exposure to different types of media messages (of the social media, broadcasting and the digital media) about political corruption have a diverse impact on the degree of apparent cynicism towards politics and politicians (explicit attitudes), and whether animosity remains or not deeply anchored (implicit attitudes) across the different profiles of citizens studied. Second, we investigate -following Framing theory- if the different frames in which political information is presented have an effect, to a greater or lesser extent, on the persuasive capacity of messages and these, in turn, on the degree of modification of the public's implicit attitudes towards corruption.

In order to achieve these objectives, different observation and analysis techniques are combined. First, a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of the political information on corruption scandals was carried out on the most relevant Spanish digital media, tv news and social media during two weeks. And second, an experiment using the Implicit Association Test or TAI Greenwald, Banaji y Nosek (2005), implemented on a sample of citizens in order to detect their degree of tolerance of their elected representatives' dishonest behaviour. This research is part of the project PID2019-105285GB-I00 funded by the National Agency of Research.

Submission ID

1897

Digital influencer as the brand and lifestyle concept embodiment

Authors

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Abstract

Research focused on the figure of the “digital influencers” and their strategies for building an image of themselves that adds differentiation value (distinction). We start from the hypothesis that this distinction is modalized in a kind of aura, a term that taked from Benjamin, through Didi-Huberman's interpretive bias, for the construction of which the influencer creates circulating value-objects modalized by power and desire.

The general objective of the research is to examine the process by which digital influencers, through their social media profiles, subscribe to this circuit by constructing values and constituting themselves as such. We defend the thesis that thus positioned the influencer converts to value from value, as in narrative processes in general, someone search for objects of value and, through them, an overvaluation for the social modalization that it receives (power or knowledge), thanks to the narrative pathways that develops and, as a result, the states that define it as a subject made from such actions

Thus, we propose that the digital influencer operates in order to construct its own value, initially linked to the brands it disseminates and, being successful, becomes itself a brand that attaches importance to others already existing. Therefore, this research is part of the overlap of studies on consumption, brands, persuasion and valorization strategies, emphasizing the way digital influencers commercialize and spectacularize their image and life, linked to certain values disseminated in contemporary culture.

The research is based on authors considered relevant for the discussion, such as Antoine Lilti, Andrea Semprini, Walter Benjamin, Georges Didi-Huberman, Michel Foucault, Byung-Chul Han, Paula Sibilia and Christoph Türcke. Semioticians of the discursive and tensive lines, such as Algirdas Julius Greimas, Jacques Fontanille and Claude Zilberberg are our main bases when we weave the analysis of the research from the corpus. The methodology used is the collection, analysis and discussion of bibliographic and empirical material, through analysis of verb-visual languages and social aspects. The

construction of values moves between influencers and brands and is approved by followers, because of the manipulation carried out by the recipients of messages uttered on social media. In this process, the subject that discloses a brand or a way of being reveals itself as a brand, and over-determines the value of a brand due to its supposed competence to legitimize the importance, status, prestige, to what it promotes.

To this end, procedures are triggered within the narrative path, through which the enunciative metamorphosis of the influencer occurs, which becomes a brand incarnation

Submission ID

1914

The Rhetoric of Explanation: A Computational Analysis of Journalistic Explanation of the Gig Economy

Authors

Dr. Robert Clapperton - Ryer

Mr. Amin Mirlohi - Rye

Abstract

Our paper will look at the rhetoric of explanation in a subset of journalism genres. As a case study, we examine the way various media genres explain the existence and social issues of the “gig” economy. The gig economy can be defined as a set of contingent work engagements requiring the use of digital platforms to connect those in need of services with service providers. This work/worker arrangement is challenging the conventional employer-employee relationship leading to potential negative social effects in terms of job security, healthcare and benefits, and work-life balance. The gig economy is also having an effect on how government funds social services through taxation. Journalism plays a crucial role in reporting and explaining the gig economy to the voting public. The degree to which the media is able to explain the functioning of the gig economy in relation to the social impacts it effects will play a role in how government, industry, and the public at large address the issues.

The study will develop an “explanation scale” the measures the degree of explanation from basic facts to deliberation. Methodologically, we will deploy a machine learning model that analyzes text for a series of markers including stance, evaluation, claim, and deliberation to create an explanation score for each piece of journalism in the sample. Samples will be created based on genres defined as news reporting (New York Times, Washington Post, as examples), news op/ed, explanatory (The Conversation, Vox, as examples), long-form business (Fortune, Forbes, as examples), long-form technology (Wired, as example), and long-form current affairs (The Atlantic, Newsweek, as examples). Samples of articles/stories on the gig economy will be accumulated from each genre and analyzed using the machine learning model and given an explanation score. Analysis will be done to compare the degree of explanation detected to explanation quality using human-based content analytical methods.

Submission ID

1925

Memetising the pandemic: Memes as local politics at times of global crisis

Authors

Dr. Maria Francesca Murru - University of Bergamo

Dr. Stefania Vicari - University of Sheffield

Abstract

It was late February 2020 when part of Northern Italy entered the first Covid-19 lockdown of the West. While stories of people fleeing quarantined areas soon made national headlines, the international news were suddenly reporting of coronavirus patients connected to Italy all around the world. Against this background, Italian social media started thriving with Covid-19 memes, multimedia remixes and jokes. On the 9th of March the lockdown would turn nationwide and become one of the strictest in Europe.

The article focuses on Covid-19 memes of quarantined Italy. We look at memes as digital artefacts that, in sharing characteristics of content, form, and stance (Shifman, 2013), connect or disconnect publics. Often driven by ironic keying, memes provide both bonding fabric and boundary work (Gal, 2018): a meme bonds those who get it while alienating those who cannot. Whether reflecting univocal ideological stancing or enabling “polyvocal discourse” (Milner, 2013) in subversive practices, memes are cultural capital (Nissenbaum and Shifman, 2017) talking politics. But how do local memetic assemblages talk politics at times of global crisis? How did pandemic memes construct political discourse in quarantined Italy?

To address these questions, we combined digital methods (Rogers, 2019) and netnographic techniques (Kozinets, 2002). Using *dmi-tcat*, we collected Covid-19 related tweets posted in Italian between 28 February - a week into Italy's Northern lockdown - and 3 June -when most restrictions were lifted. The resulting over 500,000 tweets were then filtered on the basis of whether they incorporated media content. Finally, using *Image scraper*, memes were identified among the resulting media tweets. Similarly to Nissenbaum and Shifman (2017), we used netnographic techniques based on grounded analysis to follow the circulation - and evolution - of the memes in our dataset and identified clusters of memes building specific local political narratives.

The analysis shows that memes produced during the pandemic followed a path of progressive politicization. It is this intrinsic progression as a gradual enactment of different political stances that makes pandemic memes an interesting point of observation into the politics of memes. During the initial phase, the memetic vernacular performed one of the main roles ascribed to it in contemporary digital culture, that of forming and signifying communal belonging (Nissenbaum and Shifman, 2017). They acted as affective rhetorical devices that allowed to reconstruct a communal space where the mounting feeling of bewilderment and uncertainty could be playfully exorcised. Over time,

however, this space hosted the emergence of divisive stances mirroring pre-existing cleavages that were translated into the new social grammar imposed by the traumatic events. By shuffling some of Italy's traditional divides, pandemic memes started to incorporate new symbolic arrangements to frame "us" versus "them" (e.g. Northern Italy versus Southern Italy, Italy versus China but also lay versus expert, stay at home versus business as usual). By analysing both the ideological content articulated by memes and the networked practices that produced and circulated them, the paper follows this path of gradual politicization by mapping the progressive mushrooming of contentious issues and the social cleavages they incorporated.

Submission ID

1935

Software Behaviour: Twitter Bots and Political Discussion

Authors

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Abstract

Throughout history, humans have been building walls around cities and borders to increase security, consolidate territories, create privacy and control who can cross the wall and who cannot. Most of the walls were built to afford protection and function as a physical barrier; however, the most famous and longest walls - from the Great Wall of China to the Berlin Wall - became historical monuments and tourist attractions over the time. People can now purchase a piece of the Berlin Wall from souvenir stores in Berlin as a reminder that, although a guarded concrete barrier can afford dividing a city, a forced separation cannot last forever. Incapable of learning from history, former President of the United States Donald Trump called for building a border wall between the United States and Mexico throughout his 2016 presidential campaign. Trump promoted his idea on Twitter, which sparked discussion on this platform considerably, and received both support and opposition. Social bots - accounts controlled by software - have been used to interfere in political discussions on Twitter, such as for presidential campaigns (Shao et al., 2017), distorting online discussion in presidential election (Bessi & Ferrara, 2016), influencing public opinion (Ross et al., 2019) or fabricating collective action (Francois, et al., 2018). As Schäfer et al., (2017) claim, bots were activated during the election campaign of Trump; thus, it can be assumed that bots were also participating in the border wall discussion.

This study explores social bots' behaviour on Twitter to demonstrate how the various potentials of this platform have been employed by bots in order to accomplish tasks to imitate human communication and blend into this environment. To do so, this study has collected 2.45 million tweets generated between January 1 to February 28, 2019 that participated in the building the border wall discourse. After gathering the tweets, Botometer, a supervised machine learning algorithm, is used to detect bot accounts on Twitter. This study uses qualitative content analysis in two stages to explore the behaviour of social bots. This study first selects the 20 most active bot accounts in the dataset to explore their

behaviour on Twitter and to determine whether they generated new content, or just retweeted, how often they tweeted, and finally how they used different potentials of Twitter in their communication. In the second stage, this study explores what information bot accounts included in their profile, such as their profile picture and biography, to determine how they try to mimic human users.

The majority of analysis on social bots have been mostly concentrated on how to detect bot accounts (Chu et al., 2012; Chavoshi, et al., 2016; Cao et al. 2012; Davis, et al., 2016; Singh, & Banerjee, 2019; Mazza et al. 2019; Luo et al. 2020). Nevertheless, little attention has been dedicated to mapping bots' performance and their actual capabilities of using the potentials of social media. Thus, this study expands our understanding of bots' behaviour and functionalities on Twitter.

Submission ID

1936

Just a couple posts more: Digital stress and the errecting of communicative boundaries.

Authors

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Prof. Jeffrey Wimmer - Universität Augsburg

Abstract

The rise of digital media and new technologies has changed the way people behave in their lives. For many, digitalization blurs the boundaries between work and the private sphere. Whereas digital media and technologies were at least to some extent designed to fulfil needs, simplify processes and make life more easy-going, they now lead to stress and require excessive attention from their users.

The term "digital stress" has been used and discussed in a large number of studies (Weinstein and Selman 2016; Weinstein et al. 2016; Reineke et al. 2016; Hefner and Vorderer 2017). Building on the psychological 'transaction theory' of stress these studies describe the phenomenon as a combination of a demand condition that causes the stress and the individual's response to it (Lazarus 1966). The term "digital stress" ties in with the concept of "technostress", introduced by clinical psychologist Brod (1982, which describes the inability of some individuals to deal with new technologies in a healthy way, due to how they perceive their own skills set. Digital stress, like technostress, encapsulates tension, fatigue, excessive demands for attention and the concern that one is not able to handle modern digital technologies adequately (Salanova et al. 2013). Expanding these notions, we want to develop a contextualized understanding of how and why users adopt certain strategies over others when they face (digital) stress.

The influence of digital stress on non-professional social life has only been looked at marginally. Furthermore, studies have shown that people make hardly any reference to "stress" or "being stressed" when describing their use of digital technologies in the private realm (Peil/Röser 2015). However, given the dissolution of work/life boundaries and the intensifying digitalization, genuine digital stress

does emerge during leisure time. In our research project we attempt to make this phenomenon empirically tangible and to link it to concepts of digital wellbeing. It is part of two-year panel study, which launched in November 2020 and consists of semi-structured qualitative interviews and several group discussions with 25 users.

One of the first findings is that new communicative boundaries are drawn (un)intentionally by the users. They adopt different strategies interchangeably in specific contexts. Some people actively exclude digital media from parts of their everyday lives (especially among younger users). For example, clear rules are established by the actors themselves concerning when and how to use digital media. This circumvents to a degree the strong attention demands of phone apps or other interfaces. Nevertheless, not all boundaries and related strategies are well reflected by the users. Additionally, there is a tendency to simplify digital stress and to overestimate individual agency.

In our paper we describe what this kind of demarcation management looks like, which important contexts it comprises (e.g. work/leisure time, digital/non-digital realm), what strategies the users employ and how promising these appear to be in the long run. We also formulate conclusions about what kind of media use could be beneficial for individual well-being and what role the design of apps and (digital) media literacy skills/training can play.

Submission ID

1984

Enriching or polarizing the debate? A study of online news startups and their contribution to media diversity and pluralism

Authors

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Dr. Pieter Maesele - University of Antwerp

Abstract

Western democracies are currently witnessing a populist zeitgeist in which institutions that traditionally served as sources of authority and truth are under fire (Mouffe, 2018). As such, concerns about the quality and trustworthiness of professional journalism are increasing. In this context, online news startups have been proliferating in today's digital media environment (Bruno & Kleis Nielsen 2012; Wagemans et al. 2016). These generally present themselves as 'alternatives' to legacy media and professional journalism. Furthermore, in alternative media scholarship, we find a common normative assumption regarding the democratic (transformative) potential of alternative media (Harcup 2016). Flanders (Dutch-speaking region of Belgium) is characterized by a particularly rich online news startup space. However, a large-scale comparative study that investigates the role and impact of different Flemish online news startups in terms of media diversity and pluralism is still missing.

The above prompts us to investigate if and how online news startups contribute to a more diverse and pluralistic media environment through the use of different genres, formats and types of journalism. More specifically, we aim to examine the performative nature of their journalistic conduct and its effects on the ways social issues are (ideologically) defined, interpreted and evaluated within a mediated debate.

The analysis takes place in two steps. First we present the results of a critical discourse analysis, based on the framework of agonistic media pluralism (Maesele & Ræijmaekers, 2020), to map the particular ways these online news startups cover two different social issues (i.e. ‘the yellow vests’ and the new management agreement of the Flemish public service broadcaster *VRT*). This analysis not only increases our understanding of news startups’ ideological orientations towards contemporary societal concerns, but also show if and how they provide added value to broadening democratic debate. In a second stage, we conduct a qualitative content analysis to examine in what ways former findings might be connected to what Broersma (2010) refers to as the journalistic form (i.e. structure, genre and design of a journalistic text) and style (i.e. journalistic routines, practices and values) of their news coverage (N = 226).

Preliminary findings show that Flemish online news startups predominantly adhere to a one-sided way of covering news, both on a discursive level (i.e. ideological consistency throughout all article genres) and on the level of journalistic style and form (i.e. either commentary-based or event-centred). Furthermore this study reveals the contingent nature of mainstream-alternative and subjective-objective dichotomies which highlights the relevance of a continuum-perspective when studying the contributions of online news startups. Finally, this study exposes the thin line between enriching and polarizing contributions of online news startups to mediated debate. It urges us to further investigate the implications of the current populist zeitgeist to the study of media and pluralistic debate, specifically the limits of facilitating the ongoing struggle for hegemony by giving a platform to a wide range of ideologically *diverse* but *antagonistic* actors and worldviews.

Submission ID

1985

Cumulative deliberation: The lost ideal of rational consensus and new grounds for assessment of online debates

Authors

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Abstract

Today, the (post-)Habermasian idea of public consensus based on rational and equal deliberation is challenged in many ways. Thus, the concept of dissonant public spheres was suggested by Pfetsch (2018). It implies that the new state of public deliberation does not, in principle, have any orientation to finding an overarching consensus that would incorporate opinion of minorities and balance interests.

The idea of dissonant public spheres goes beyond the conventional criticism of Habermas by feminists and left-liberal scholars (Fraser 1992; Mouffe 1990). It also challenges the position of traditional media as the arenas of consensus seeking and ‘blood vessels’ of the reason-oriented public spheres (Calhoun 1991). At the same time, the concept of dissonance remains highly normative, and critics of irrational public spheres demand that the scholarly community provides remedies and recipes of how to get the public spheres back to ‘normality’ of consensus seeking.

However, we doubt that rational consensus is the ultimate goal sought by platform users when they post; research shows it is much more expressing oneself than seeking any dialogue, and the resulting public opinion is not a result of round-by-round deliberative efforts. We offer an interpretive concept of *cumulative deliberation* that, instead, explains how public discussions are won by cumulation of support and opinion, rather than a by rational deliberative process. Patterns of public opinion formation and collective action like the spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann 1991), the silent majority (Mustafaraj et al. 2011), echo chambers (Sunstein 2001), affective conglomerates (Papacharissi 2015), connective action (Bennett & Segerberg 2012) and contributive action (Bodrunova 2020), as well as various forms of online participation like petitions or flash mobs, and even slacktivist liking and sharing, may all be united by the umbrella idea of cumulation within issue-oriented communication online. Metaphorically, online battles are won by the tug of war and not at round tables.

The concept offers an alternative view on the nature of mediated public communication and allows for avoiding excessive normativity in explaining today’s deliberative processes. It also links online communication studies to general systems and dissipation theory, as the latter allow for defining critical points in cumulation and predicting spillover effects.

We illustrate cumulative deliberation by the examples from online discussions in four languages and operationalize the concept for networked discussion studies combining it with the ideas from general systems theory. We especially focus on the Russian cases of cumulative deliberation and show that, in the states with no long democratic tradition, cumulative deliberation offers an opportunity to the political opposition, marginalized in the political process and content of traditional media, to accumulate support online. Thus, non-Western deliberative practices show that cumulative deliberation is not always a formal and empty substitute for meaning and rationality; it may become a legitimate way to democratize communication when other options are not available. This poses a question of how, in general, we evaluate the democratic quality of cumulative processes in online communication and integrate cumulative deliberation into normative thinking on online public spheres.

Submission ID

2104

A case study: Unforeseen repercussions of anti-corruption messages in the public sphere

Authors

Mr. Steven Lang - Rhodes University

Abstract

Since the coronavirus began spreading worldwide in the first two months of 2020, South African media organisations have been swamped with reports on pandemic statistics, risk factors, methods of containment, attempts to produce vaccines and other associated dynamics. Faced with multidimensional tasks, the media performed all four normative roles in a democracy as theorised by Christians et al. (2009) - the Monitorial, Collaborative, Facilitative or Radical Roles. However, in reporting on widespread corruption and thereby fulfilling its Monitorial role, media organisations were inadvertently hindering their own efforts to collaborate with the authorities and facilitate the distribution of breathing devices.

Early on in the pandemic, it became apparent that South Africa would not have sufficient ventilators to cope with the anticipated increase of patients who required this vital piece of equipment. In an unexpected turn, it was not the Health Minister, but the Minister of Trade and Industry who took on the responsibility of ensuring that enough ventilators were built locally to manage a national health crisis. He set up the National Ventilator Project (NVP) which commissioned a team of experts drawn mainly from the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO) to design and oversee the production of ventilators to supply all medical facilities in the country. Although it was surprising to have a group of astronomers designing health devices, the SARAO team had practical experience designing complex machinery because they were busy constructing sophisticated equipment for the massive Square Kilometre Array radio telescope.

The Project went ahead and produced 20,000 ventilators which were made available free of charge to any facility that needed them. All the health organisations had to do was contact the NVP and place an order. Yet to the consternation of the Project team, very few hospitals and clinics requested the desperately needed equipment. The reason for this anomaly was that the health institutions did not know how to add the donated ventilators to their asset registers. Administrators feared that by taking up the offer without applying standard acquisition procedures they risked being accused of corruption.

News reports about corruption at all levels of government appear in the South African media with such regularity that the public has grown somewhat inured to fresh revelations of dishonesty and fraud. However, when news broke about officials who were illegally exploiting efforts to distribute equipment destined to combat the coronavirus, renewed levels of outrage caused government leaders to issue statements threatening to punish the perpetrators.

These were completely unforeseen consequences of the government's firm stance against exploiting the coronavirus pandemic for personal enrichment.

The impasse was only resolved when a charity organisation, the Gift of the Givers, was co-opted into assisting with the distribution of the ventilators and training hospital administrators to deal with their accounting systems.

Submission ID

2143

Algorithms, News, and Ethics: Examining Users Awareness and Attitudes towards Algorithmic Content Recommendation on Facebook and Google News in Cameroon

Authors

Ms. Gaelle Patricia Ayamou Chekam - Tsinghua

Abstract

Journalism routines have experienced profound changes resulting from recent technological advances that have disrupted almost all industries. Those changes are visible at all stages of the news production, news curation, and news distribution processes. It is therefore common today to see Artificial Intelligence (AI) used in the newsroom to suggest stories ideas to journalists; to produce reports in news categories such as finances, sports, weather, etc.; to serve as news anchors (in China) and announcers (in Japan) on national television, and to optimize content by helping editors make data-informed decisions about headlines and articles that are more likely to perform well among the audience. Algorithms have also highly been used by platforms such as Facebook and Google News to recommend content to users from across the world.

However, the use of AI in journalism and the broader use of AI in other fields, have raised a certain number of concerns. The major ones in our field, as outlined in previous literature, include the propagation of fake news, echo chambers or information cocoons, filter bubbles, lack of accountability; and ultimately the potential threat of automated news personalization on democracy.

More broadly, several studies have focused on the ethical perspective to the use of AI in human society in order to ensure that it benefits humanity. In this sense, an emphasis has been laid on building a trustworthy AI, as presented in the EU's Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI, which involves among others, accountability, transparency, and user's awareness of the involvement of -and their interaction- with an algorithm. This study seeks to contribute to the existing literature by examining the Cameroonian audience's awareness and attitude to the use of AI for news recommendation. The African country is currently in the middle of a socio-political crisis, which increases the population's need for trustworthy and balanced information.

A survey of young Cameroonians, who use Facebook Newsfeed and/or Google news is therefore conducted to investigate the extent to which these users are aware of the involvement of algorithms in such services in order to personalize the content they access. It also helps understand how much that audience knows about the algorithmic news recommendation to which they are exposed daily, and to assess their appreciation for algorithms. The study concludes by discussing the implications of the findings, drawing on key ethical journalism principles such as transparency, for the ethical use of algorithms in news recommendations in an African context.

Keywords: algorithms, news personalization, journalism ethics, transparency, trustworthy AI.

Submission ID

2304

Digital Mourning Practices as Interaction Ritual Chains: A Natural Language Processing Analysis of Comments under Wenliang Li's Weibo Post

Authors

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Abstract

Commemoration can be understood as “a set of practices that maintain social and material relations between the living and dead” (Arnold, Gibbs, Kohn, Meese, & Nansen, 2017). In this sense, digital mourning can realize part of its function by extending the deceased's social life.

On 7 February 2020, Chinese doctor Wenliang Li, who was considered one of the pandemic whistleblowers, died of the COVID-19. Li's death has prompted waves of grief and anger. People swarmed into his Weibo to leave comments, turning it into a digital mourning space. It is not solely a temporal phenomenon but a ritual one with a long-lasting consistency. More than a million comments were left under Li's latest Weibo post before his death from January to November. This study takes these comments as the object of inquiry and seeks to understand how such ritual of mourning and grieving was formulated and maintained.

A total of 862575 pieces of comments were extracted from the Weibo post comment section as the study object—these comments dated from 2/1/2020 10:30 to 6/30/2020 10:30. The data was preprocessed, and emojis were turned into characters for further analysis. It was followed by a series of NLP tasks, including topic modelling, sentimental analysis and word frequency analysis.

The study identifies three types of digital mourning practices among these comments. The first one aligns with what Goffman (1956) proposed as "everyday interaction rituals," including salutations, compliments, and stereotyped verbal interchanges that make up the polite or friendly routine of verbal interaction. The second type involves self-disclosure practices in which commenters tend to share their own unpleasant experiences that constitute the "emotion energy" of this semi-open space. The third type is the social-context-dependent commemoration. In this case, the festival's timing or a new policy around the pandemic can invite a new round of mourning.

The study finds that the commenters share a common mood over time even though the deceased person is not personally known by the members of mournings. Emotion serves both as the catalyst for interactions and the reproduced outcome. Also, these comments' characteristics align with what Collins (2014) proposed as "the ingredients of successful interaction ritual chains."

This study situates at the intersection of affect studies, death studies and social media studies. It sheds light on the potential of new forms of commemoration and political engagement when corporeality can not be guaranteed.

Submission ID

2325

Internet Justice for Sushant through #JusticeforSSR: An Analytical Study of Genesis, Motives, and Consequences of the Campaign

Authors

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Abstract

In recent times, the importance of Social Media has increased significantly as it has become the medium to register protest against injustice or initiate activism for burning issues. And that is why the term Social Media Activism became popular due to the immense contribution of Social Media in Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, Me too Movement, Black Lives Matter and so on. Even in India, Social Media ensured that Jan Lopkal Andolan, Nirbhaya Case, Migrant Crisis, Farmer's Protest came into limelight. In all these cases, there was a positive outcome that encouraged the common people to utilize it to raise their voice, dissent, opinion on issues that are not covered by the mainstream media. But the success of these Online campaigns/activism has also boosted the moral of netizens to raise issues that are trivial. Also they see it as an opportunity to change the course of debate as per their convictions. Online debates on issues turn volatile and toxic as netizens start taking sides and go to any extent to prove their point- be it by trolling, using abusive language, derailing the debate altogether, fake news as supporting evidence etc.

One such example was the death of Sushant Singh Rajput, an actor which led to the formation and consolidation of his fans on Social Media platforms who starting trending #JusticeforSSR. While initially the focus was on pressuring the government to initiate a CBI enquiry into his death but later conspiracy theories starting circulating regarding circumstances of his death and his fans began targeting Rhea Chakraborty by running a smear campaign. The demand for her arrest became a trending hashtag. Later Kangana Ranaut, another actress shaped the debate towards nepotism and Sushant's Online fans shifted their focus on hating and trolling other Bollywood celebrities who were a

product of nepotism or supported it such as Karan Johar, Varun Dhawan, Alia Bhatt etc. The fans in pursuit of providing justice to their Idol (Sushant) initiated online gestures such as trolling actors who supported nepotism, disliking trailers of films on Youtube, and boycotting films such as Sadak 2. The study would assess and anticipate the reasons, as well as genesis behind the Sushant fans anger being vented towards the debate of nepotism and how it turned into fruition through online gestures. The study would analyze the content posted on Twitter through discussion threads, tweets, using semantic analysis in order to understand consequences, and also investigate the downsides of social media justice.

Submission ID

2339