

## **SOCIAL MEDIA'S INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC OPINION: A MASS COMMUNICATION ANALYSIS**

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### **Abstract**

Because social media has a number of qualities that make it useful in influencing public opinion, it has a big impact on public opinion. Social media itself provides a powerful platform for sharing ideas and information, of course the impact on public opinion has very significant positive and negative sides. Therefore, it is important for social media users to be wise in using social media. The presence of modern communication media as a result of the increasing development of information and communication technology tends to blur the boundaries between interpersonal communication or traditional interpersonal communication and mass communication. The method used in this article is to use a literature study which contains theories related to the problem being studied. The impact of social media on public opinion, as well as the variables that affect its function and its problems and effects, are all covered in this study.

**Keywords:** Role of social media, public opinion, mass communication

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is nearly difficult to live in today's modern world without being exposed to the media. Whether we like to admit it or not, media in all its forms has ingrained itself into daily life. The media landscape is evolving and becoming more varied over time. At first, media consumers could only appreciate the content that the media source was presenting. Communication in the media was limited to one way. However, as time goes by, ordinary people as media viewers can no longer only enjoy content from the media they are exposed to,

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but can also participate in content in that media. The internet's birth and growth have given society access to new forms of communication. In today's world, social media is pervasive and transforming the paradigm of communication. Communication is not limited by time, place, or distance. It is not necessary for them to meet in person; it can occur anywhere, at any moment. Social status, which frequently stands in the way of contact, can be removed even with social media. People can communicate with one another without physically meeting thanks to the existence of social media sites like Facebook, Google+, and Twitter (Thomas et al, 2021).

It is undeniable that social media has a significant impact on modern human life. Social media is prevalent in practically every sphere of society. Sending messages to friends, exchanging information, and searching for information that is trending in the community are all first steps. Therefore, it is no longer shocking when someone claims that social media has become a necessity for practically everyone. Social media's introduction into modern life has brought about a number of advantages. Social media is particularly good at cutting down on communication time since it helps people erase distance from one another. A high positive impact does not, however, preclude the potential of a strong negative impact as well.

The social media trend that has now spread to all circles, including children, can easily access information and then easily share the information they get, without understanding the benefits or disadvantages, without filtering the information they get, in other words not being wise in managing information, so that the information disseminated could be true and could be the opposite or the trend is called fake news/hoax. Such problems are an important issue regarding the role of social media in building public opinion, because it is very vulnerable to misuse of social media. However, social media is also a medium for spreading issues which is very prone to misuse, quite a few social media users are unwise and irresponsible in using social media. This is caused by individuals or social media users who filter the information themselves who are the social media users. This gives the view that social media is 50% correct and 50% "driven" depending on the user or who receives information from social media (Car Calleb & Rebecca, 2015).

Public opinion is the views and opinions held by a group of people or society at large about an issue or subject. Public opinion can impact actions and policies in various aspects of daily life. Public opinion can influence the results of elections and political elections; voters will vote based on their views of political candidates and parties, and public opinion can also influence the

success or failure of consumer products. A product may be more successful on the market if many people give positive reviews. Public opinion can influence individual health decisions, such as drug use or vaccination. Public opinion about technology privacy can influence governments, technology companies, and individual rights (Choiriyati, 2015).

In order for real political actors in this nation to be successful in winning political elections, social media currently plays a significant role in shaping public opinion in society. At this point, the role of social media in influencing public opinion towards practical political figures or actors may develop in an unhealthy democratic climate due to social media's subjective view of the interpretation of understanding. Those who are not yet mature enough in understanding the figure of a leader and leadership may be "trapped" or trapped by the big scenario of social media to win a particular candidate. Social media players are so happy about certain leaders and their very visible partisanship that social media reporting is irrational and no longer educates the public in criticizing things that should be done. Indeed, figures who are covered and frequently reported on by social media will become popular and it is very clear that these figures also "enjoy" coverage of themselves. In fact, coverage of this character is beyond common sense because it often covers things that have nothing to do with the character's main job duties, such as singing, eating at food stalls and also the character's comments on programs broadcast on a number of television stations in Indonesia. Indeed, this coverage is not something that is good for our political education. In fact, it gives the impression that the world of practical politics in this country is equated with the world of celebrity entertainment which broadcasts activities that are purely popular rather than educational (El-Khoury et al, 2020).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The method used in this article is to use a literature study which contains theories related to the problem being studied.

A methodical and iterative methodology was used to acquire a full grasp of the function of social media in changing public opinion during the literature search for this extensive review. To bolster the claims and concepts, library materials gathered from a variety of references are critically examined and need to be thoroughly explored. The content analysis method, which can be utilized to make accurate conclusions that can be reviewed, is the data analysis technique employed in this work. Selection, comparison, combining, and sorting are all done during the analysis in a way that ensures the relevant

information is found. To ensure consistency in the evaluation, prevention, and deletion of inaccurate information specifically, human misunderstandings that may arise from a lack of library author factors inspection between libraries and supervisors' comments are conducted (Adlini et al., 2022).

Next, an evaluation of the ideas and concepts used is carried out based on accessible literature. Research conducted in libraries helps develop ideas or theories that become the basis for research studies, especially from papers published in various scientific publications. Research, especially academic research with the main aim of developing theoretical and practical excellence, must include a process of literature evaluation or literature study.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Influence of Social Media on Public Opinion**

Social media has a significant influence on public opinion because social media has several characteristics that make it effective in forming public opinion, for example social media can be accessed by anyone, anywhere and at any time. This allows information disseminated via social media to reach a wide audience. Apart from that, social media allows interaction between users. This allows users to exchange information and opinions, so that they can form public opinions that are more diverse and spread more quickly (Erkan et al, 2016).

The influence of social media on public opinion can be seen in various fields, such as politics, social and economics. In the political field, social media can be used to spread information and propaganda, so that it can influence people's political choices. In the social sector, social media can be used to disseminate information and opinions, so that it can influence people's attitudes and behavior. In the economic field, social media can be used to disseminate information and trends, so that it can influence consumer behavior (Fransen et al, 2015).

The influence of social media on public opinion has a complex and sometimes controversial impact on the way we form views and opinions. Moreover, social media itself provides a strong platform for sharing ideas and information, of course the impact on public opinion has very significant positive and negative sides. Therefore, it is important for social media users to be wise in using social media (Gunduz & Pembecioglu, 2015).

#### **1. Information dissemination**

Information dissemination is the act of spreading information and innovation to the public. Information dissemination is a series of changes in the dissemination of information that is conceptualized, directed and

managed. Therefore, there is a mutual exchange of information so that there is a similarity of opinion regarding an innovation. In recent years, the dissemination of information in Indonesia has experienced many changes for the better. Technological developments in Indonesia are a form of modernization effort so that this nation can keep up with the times, and it cannot be denied that these technological developments have brought many conveniences to the Indonesian nation. One example of this technological development is the internet which is starting to become popular in Indonesia, as well as the emergence of smartphones or smart phones which can easily access the internet in the palm of your hand because apart from functioning as a communication tool, this cellphone also functions in disseminating information on the internet (Hollebeek et al, 2014).

## 2. Formation of Opinions and Attitudes

People's actual opinions regarding a given subject, as well as the kind of opinions they create, are influenced by a variety of elements, including their current circumstances, broader social environmental factors, and their preexisting knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs. existed in the past. Because attitudes and values are so crucial to the formation of public opinion, researchers studying this topic are naturally curious about the characteristics of these occurrences as well as methods for evaluating their intensity and variability. Measuring people's opinions is simply one aspect of the art of public opinion analysis; the other is knowing the reasons behind the opinions.

No matter how strongly held, opinions can shift if the people who hold them discover new information or viewpoints that contradict what they previously believed. This is particularly likely to happen when people learn about competing viewpoints expressed by people they respect for their judgment. Public relations professionals frequently employ this kind of influence, referred to as "opinion leadership," to persuade people to reevaluate and potentially even modify their own opinions (Hossain, 2019).

## 3. Interindividual interactions

Social media has revolutionized the way we communicate between individuals. In this article, we will discuss the influence of social media on communication between individuals and its consequences in everyday life. One of the main roles of social media is to enable people to connect with each other globally. They provide the ability to communicate with friends, family, and acquaintances via direct messages, group chats, or sharing

multimedia content. With the help of social media, people can stay connected with people they know, even if they are geographically far away. This has a positive effect in strengthening social relationships and maintaining interpersonal bonds. Apart from that, social media also acts as a source of information. Many people use this platform to keep up with the latest news, follow media accounts, and access content shared by other users. In some cases, social media can be a faster source of news than traditional media. However, this also requires expertise to sort true and accurate information from false or misleading information that can spread through social media (Kim et al, 2021).

### **Factors Influencing the Role of Social Media**

#### **1. Algorithms and Bubble Filters**

Algorithms and filter bubbles are system algorithms that allow users to get similar content according to their behavior when using internet and web services. Examples of this behavior are liking a post, sharing, commenting, clicking a certain link, and even the user's search history. This algorithm is often found in social media. Algorithms filter out information deemed less interesting to individual users while serving more content that users are likely to consume. Filter bubbles are defined as the result of different processes of information search, perception, selection, and information overflow. The various information that appears is the result of relevance to the topic being searched for and the context of the problem being faced (Geschke et al, 2019).

Bubble filters can be said to be a way out to limit the abundance of information. These filter bubbles are artificial tools that actually provide us with an environment of information that is highly relevant to whatever problem we are working on. So in all aspects this algorithm is consistent with its purpose and function to connect users with the desired information through offering several items with a stream of relevant content. Unfortunately, those benefits come with a new threat. The existence of positive and negative consequences for internet users is a common thing. Bubble filters have the potential to strengthen ideological segregation by automatically recommending content that is likely to match users' opinions and views (Cacciatore et al, 2016).

If this happens, it will have an impact on the separation of information which is a serious problem. Because, in essence, everyone has freedom of opinion by understanding various views and assumptions. This algorithm can cause

our minds to get used to being pampered with favorite content that makes us comfortable, so that in the end it makes people close their eyes to the world outside that topic. The bubble filter is the same as the non-transparent filter used by the algorithm, thereby limiting the user's choice. So this results in damage to freedom of thought, discussion and action which needs to be considered as an effort to develop individual thinking. Freedom of thought creates creative individuals and rationality must be cultivated and owned by everyone. The loss of independence of thought caused by limited filters is the cause of diversity of opinions and perspectives that are not paid attention to (Campbell et al, 2020).

## 2. User Activity

Studies regarding internet use also do not escape the attention of academic individuals. The communication phenomenon in question is related to their motives and activity patterns in communicating via social networking sites. A social networking site is a social structure formed from nodes (individuals or organizations) that are "tied" or united by a site such as MySpace, Facebook, etc. With this focus, apart from being expected to fill gaps in internet research, of course this research will also be relatively different from previous internet research. Meanwhile, audience activity itself means that audience members direct themselves in the communication process. Audience activity is divided into two dimensions. First, the audience orientation dimension, consists of three levels, namely selectivity, involvement and utilization. Meanwhile, the second dimension of communication sequence differentiates activities based on when they occur: before, during and after media exposure. So, in observing audience activities in relation to the media, in general it can be done in two ways, first according to the orientation dimension and second according to the communication sequence dimension. Thus, it is known that examining the phenomenon of media use can be done in three major parts, namely through elements of media content, media types and media exposure and situations (Cheung et al, 2020).

## 3. Role of Advertisers and Influencers

Social media was once only meant to be used for amusement, but these days it's also being used as an inexpensive, efficient marketing tool. It is impossible to divorce social media from the advancement of digital technology, which has resulted in the growth of the global internet population to over 4 billion people. Several social media platforms that are often used by influencers to display or promote goods or services from

companies include; Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok and Twitter (Glucksman et al, 2017).

Through candor and openness, influencers in appreciating a product or service that is promoted with audio, video or photos to consumers will have high social influence and credibility, making this phenomenon very successful, especially among young people. These platforms represent a new type of independent third-party advocates that shape audience attitudes and gain followers and recognition of the brand the influencer is promoting (Godey et al, 2016).

Consumer trust in product brands depends on influencers who build direct relationships with consumers and provide encouragement through online conversations about describing the benefits and uses of the product. Potential customers' decisions to purchase a good or service can be continuously influenced by interactions they have with social media influencers. The influence of influencers who are able to convey information about a product to the planned goals will be achieved, namely sales and income will significantly increase because it displays a good company brand image to potential buyers (A Hossain, 2019).

Social media influencers are those who share their thoughts and experiences in a general or niche way. In one or more groups, the development potential of influencers is seen as a reliable indicator of taste or a trendsetter. A company's marketers utilize social media influencers to try and boost sales and consumer interest. Brand awareness can also be raised by marketing with social media influencers. Social media influencers with fewer followers are thought to be more successful at engaging with their following, even when you look at the actual data (Jansom et al, 2021).

### **Challenges and Impact of the Role of Social Media**

Public opinion is not formed just like that, there is a process that is influenced by various factors. When an issue that a small group of individuals believes in develops and is disseminated to a wider group, it will make people who were initially unaffected by the issue become more concerned. Moreover, if it is strengthened by continuous exposure to other information, this public opinion will spread and be believed by many people who initially did not support it. People's attitudes and opinions are not solely influenced by single news released on that day, but by news that has appeared and circulated continuously in recent years (Kim et al, 2017).



Social Media works through the dissemination of information. If there is something that can cause division, that is where social media can be seen to directly influence the views of public opinion. Social Media can lead to the right interests or the opposite. This tendency is usually based on the influences that work on social media. Social media sometimes exists independently. There are also those driven by political interests by several factions or groups. There is even social media that the government can use. Furthermore, social media now plays an important role in influencing society in forming public opinion which is highly expected for practical political actors in this country to successfully win political contestations (Teng et al, 2014).

At this point, the role of social media in influencing public opinion towards practical political figures or actors may develop in an unhealthy democratic climate due to social media's subjective view of the interpretation of understanding. Those who are not yet mature enough in understanding the figure of a leader and leadership may be "trapped" or trapped by the big scenario of social media to win a particular candidate. Social media players are so happy about certain leaders and their very visible partisanship that social media reporting is irrational and no longer educates the public in criticizing things that should be done. Indeed, figures who are covered and frequently reported on by social media will become popular and it is very clear that these figures also "enjoy" coverage of themselves. In fact, coverage of this character is beyond common sense because it often covers things that have nothing to do with the character's main job duties, such as singing, eating at food stalls and also the character's comments on programs broadcast on a number of television stations in Indonesia. Indeed, this coverage is not something that is good for our political education. In fact, it gives the impression that the world of practical politics in this country is equated with the world of celebrity entertainment which broadcasts activities that are purely popular rather than educational (Hollebeek et al, 2014).

Naturally, as social media becomes more prevalent as a new tool, human behavior will also change. A few of the changes include the fact that people are getting knowledge more quickly and effectively without being constrained by location, time, or cost. Social relations shifts, as well as adjustments to the equilibrium of social relations and any modifications to the social institutions that exist within a society, have an impact on the social system, including values, attitudes, and public group behavior patterns. Through social media, the people can interact with the president directly and provide ideas and constructive criticism. Economically speaking, a considerable portion of our population is

profiting from using social media for business purposes, as seen by the public's growing interest in these platforms. People's daily life will be impacted as a result of their growing reliance on social media. Since social media is now a more current source of information than other media, having access to it whenever you want has made it necessary for people to constantly refresh their knowledge (Mariva et al, 2020).

The presence of modern communication media as a result of the increasing development of information and communication technology tends to blur the boundaries between interpersonal communication or traditional interpersonal communication and mass communication (Wati, 2016).

For example, someone who has computer equipment and computer operating skills can publish their own magazine. This is a question for researchers about whether the various new forms of communication can be categorized into mass communication. Researchers have studied media and communication for more than a century. There are three paradigms where media is the main study in mass communication research, including:

1. The first paradigm is the strength of media effects paradigm which looks at the strength of the media's influence on mass audiences.
2. The second paradigm is the paradigm of limited effects or minimalist effects of media on mass audiences.
3. The third paradigm is the paradigm of the cumulative effect of media on mass audiences (G Meikle, 2016).

There are several mass communication theories that specifically focus on mass communication and several other theories that are used to research mass media. Most of the theories used developed outside the field of communication studies and were then applied to media studies by experts. In their book entitled *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory*, Littlejohn and Foss divide mass communication theory into three categories, namely theories related to culture and society, theories related to media influence and persuasion, and theories related to media use. Apart from theories that emphasize the impact process of mass media and mass audiences, several mass communication theories also focus on the content of media messages and the structure and appearance of mass media (Sari et al, 2018).

## **CONCLUSION**

Social media has a significant influence on public opinion because social media has several characteristics that make it effective in forming public

opinion, for example social media can be accessed by anyone, anywhere and at any time. This allows information disseminated via social media to reach a wide audience. The influence of social media on public opinion has a complex and sometimes controversial impact on the way we form views and opinions. Moreover, social media itself provides a strong platform for sharing ideas and information, of course the impact on public opinion has very significant positive and negative sides. Therefore, it is important for social media users to be wise in using social media.

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