

Analysis of the Impacts of Social Media on American Society and its Enlightenment for Future Media Management

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Abstract

The 21st century can be largely defined as an era of information explosion and information anxiety, where massive amounts of information are snowballing in our daily lives. Since everyone has a limited ability to process information, and everyone has an inherent need to connect with other members of society, social media have emerged as a popular necessity in the information age. The social media platforms in the United States have been developed for a longer period of time compared to other countries in the world, and their influence on American society cannot be ignored. This paper attempts to analyze and explain the great influence of the new media on people's behavior and thoughts, and analyze the problems and propose some media management suggestions from the current situation of social media in the United States.

Keywords

Social Media; Media Management; American Society.

1. Introduction

Social media originally developed to assist folks' communication with each other in an exceeding cluster setting[1]. It refers to a platform for content production and exchange based on user relationships on the Internet. It is characterized by a large number of users and the spontaneity of communication. By disseminating information on the Internet, which has helped to create many hot topics in people's social lives and has attracted traditional media outlets to follow suit.

2. Mass Media in the U.S.

Mass media in American society includes newspapers, radio, TV, movies, etc., where the content is edited by the owners at their sole discretion, and it is pursued mass production and sales. Unlike traditional social mass media, emerging social media mostly appear on the web, where content can be selected or edited by users, production is niche-oriented, and it values the aggregation of good friends and can form social groups on its own, such as Twitter, TikTok, Facebook, Wikipedia, YouTube, Whatsapp, etc. The services and functions of social media are more advanced and diversified, and relatively cheap, which is widely adopted by modern young people. According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center from January 8 to February 7, 2019, Facebook remains one of the most widely used social media websites by adults in the United States[2]. About 7 in 10 adults say they have used Facebook (69%). YouTube is the only platform comparable to Facebook: about 73% of American adults expressed they have used YouTube. In the 21st century, we have fully entered the information age, and the emergence of social media has greatly influenced our social life, making the dissemination of information faster and more convenient. Social media has become an indispensable and important part of our lives.

3. Impacts of Social Media on American Society

As society has evolved in recent years, social media, to a large extent, can influence citizens' attitudes toward presidential candidates. Since Obama's team started to use social media to help Obama in his campaign, up to now, the U.S. election has entered the "digital campaign era". The appearance of politicians' use of social media has refreshed people's cognition of the influence of social media again and again. With more and more young people shifting their attention from traditional media such as TV and newspapers to social media platforms, social media platforms have become a priority that candidates absolutely cannot ignore. Especially when social media has become a powerful channel for candidates to publicize themselves, there is a great chance that these politicians may establish direct contact or connection with ordinary voters, which has a great impact on voters' voting behavior.

Social media is another battleground for presidential candidates. Its influence on the election permeates all aspects of the process, from the early preparation of the election to the later stages of voting. For the majority of users, the social network is the platform for them to obtain information and express their personal opinions at the first time, and many people feel honored to communicate directly with the presidential candidates and enjoy the feeling of being an "insider"; For candidates, social media is the first channel for them to get voter feedback and understand the feelings of the public. The interactive and instantaneous nature of social media allows presidential candidates to observe public opinion and political trends in real-time and adjust their campaign strategies promptly[3]. In addition, the registration information of social media users is of great value. A large amount of detailed Internet users' data, such as gender, age, interests, political tendencies, and so on, could ensure that election materials are pushed to specific groups, which is very effective for targeted efforts to win "swing middle voters" and find campaign volunteers and fundraisers. The low cost of social online advertising is also very attractive to candidates. In contrast to traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television, where presidential candidates typically spend large sums of money on campaign advertisements during the election, social media advertising is almost negligible in cost and much more targeted. According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in May 2011, about 94% of eligible users had seen a campaign advertisement completely on social networking sites, and about 40% of them forwarded it and shared it with netizens. Besides, another survey of Pew Research Center focused on traditional media showed that the average audience watching TV news in the United States is over 63 years old. And that many campaign advertisements interspersed with television news have very limited impact because of the relatively fixed political tendencies of the elderly.

The role and influence of social media in modern political mobilization cannot be underestimated, which is why politicians of all stripes have embraced it with open arms. As election day approaches, there will be increased competition between the two major political teams behind the Democratic Party and the Republican Party on Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking sites. The party that can occupy the high ground in social media communication, who can add a few points to their campaign for victory in the general election. Eric Schmidt, the former CEO of Google, has predicted on November 30, 2006, that "the candidate who can realize the full potential of the Internet will emerge victorious in the next presidential election." And his prediction was confirmed by Obama, who won the election and became the first "Internet" president.

The advent of social media has enriched the way we communicate and has had an impact on our lives. According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center from July 13 to July 19, 2020, about two-thirds (64%) of Americans said social media has harmed today's development in the United States[4]. Only one in ten Americans said that the impact of social media websites on the current situation is mostly positive. This is because social media is a public platform

where everyone can post their opinions and comments or share their experiences every minute of every day, which is good, but it also creates some confusion for the public. People are not sure whether the news they read is true or false, and may even be misled by fake news. In addition, users on social media always face the harassment of advertising and the hatred that may come from other users. The current situation in the country is that anyone, anywhere can use social media to produce any comment or information. This is one of the main advantages of social media and it is one of the main things wrong with social media. In light of this, we've been thinking about how social media platforms might be managed better in the future.

4. The Current Situation of Social Media in the U.S.

Social media has become an extremely important part of American people's lives. Currently, false information dissemination, scattered public opinion, and online public sentiment dissemination are the main problems faced by social media platforms. And analyzing the causes of problems is the first step toward coming up with effective solutions.

Traditional media and social media have generated a tremendous amount of information, which has caused the public to no longer value the truth as much as they used to. They focus always on the fierce debate over true and false news, which limits the ability of traditional media to supervise the dissemination of information. With the advent of the social media era, the American public is no longer satisfied with obtaining homogeneous information only from traditional media. When Americans know that they will always get the same information immediately from mainstream media, social media seems to be a simpler and personalized source of information[5]. The endless stream of information being pushed and discussed on various social media platforms has created a tremendous flow of information as well as a tremendous amount of disinformation.

Unlike traditional media of the past, social media allows a large number of users to share and exchange opinions without leaving their homes. For example, in the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, polling data from several authoritative institutions showed that Hillary was ahead of Trump, but the final election results were the opposite. This is because of the unique "feedback loop" mechanism of social media, which makes the expression of public opinion more and more decentralized. In contrast with traditional media's one-sided polling data, social media platforms collected the opinions of a majority of silent voters and predicted Trump's victory ahead of time.

Because of its characteristics, social media is a platform that could constantly transmit and amplify various public fears and dissatisfactions. While the United States is undergoing a profound national social transformation and still has an impressive economic growth performance, the long-standing problems of rich-poor division and institutional rigidity are now posing a threat to the sustainability of that growth. The Internet is a powerful tool to impact the emotions of other Internet users when people with low-income show dissatisfaction and anxiety about their economic conditions and national policies.

5. Some Suggestions for Future U.S. Media Management Measures

How to better regulate social media platforms in the United States has become a very important issue. The resolve of the people to bring about change was most important, and this fact should be recognized, say the critics[6]. In the face of false information on social media platforms, the U.S. needs to pay attention to its information filtering capabilities and enhance its efforts to combat false information. For the U.S. federal government, they can improve the legal system and use legal means to regulate social media companies. For media companies, they can improve their efforts to combat disinformation, formulate relevant strategies in combination with the characteristics of their social media platform, so as to reduce the release of

disinformation, detect abnormal users in time and restrict their information release behavior. For individual users, they can learn relevant knowledge and improve their ability to identify false information. In the face of scattered public opinion, the United States needs to cooperate with mainstream social media platforms to collect users' opinions and hold the latest public opinion in time. In the face of online public sentiment dissemination, the U.S. needs to improve the online public sentiment governance mechanism of government departments or even set up a special online management department. The U.S. could establish an institutional mechanism for horizontal communication and vertical coordination among multiple departments to respond to online public sentiment. And they could set up a procedure behind the website to monitor social media platforms in real-time, make dynamic research and judgment, and respond to the focused issues of online public sentiment immediately, so as to avoid falling into the antagonism of public sentiment in the context of untimely information release.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the gradual penetration of social media into every corner of society has been made possible by the growth in social media users daily, and the complexity and diversification of social networks. Social media has achieved a dramatic change that integrated new media technology and media platforms. It makes social media increasingly become a virtual place for information diffusion, intercultural communication, values collision, and ideological integration. With its strong penetration, social media is constantly affecting contemporary American society. A large number of users and wide distribution are the main advantages of social media, but they are also the main causes of social dilemmas. Facing the problems caused by social media, the United States needs to formulate relevant measures from different aspects to supervise the information, filter false information and establish special institutions to ensure that users of social media could access more comprehensive, accurate, and objective information.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all the teachers and my friends for their continued support and encouragement to my paper.

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