



Influence, Reconstruct, and Promote Agenda via Content on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

The rise of social media sites has completely changed the lifestyle of people. From entertainment to information, it has transformed and affected the way of thinking and changed perceptions regarding people, culture, society, religion, country, and so on. In recent years, it has been discovered that the content on social media sites has a significant influence on people's lives. It has positively changed lives but regarding many aspects, it played the role of an agenda or reconstructing narratives to an individual's mindset. Thus, it has the power to revolutionize all the practices and norms in any society. The study is a literature review and descriptive which is based on secondary sources like books, research articles, website content, and reports. Henceforth, the findings made it clear that the content on social media platforms has revolutionized all the practices, customs, and cultural influences on individual lives. Social media is an extremely powerful tool and has the ability to break and brainwash all the existing stigmas and stereotypes. It has a remarkable effect on changing the thoughts and building narratives of users.

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1. Introduction

Social Media is defined as the collective term for websites that are used to interact and communicate with people. It is altering perceptions of ideologies. It has had massive growth in the last ten years, and these sites are being used for various purposes including communicating with friends, family, and colleagues, sharing ideas, expressing feelings, freedom of speech, connecting globally, real-time communication, gathering news, and information, and so on. According to statistics from 2022, there are approximately 4.74 billion active social media users worldwide, with 2.9 billion users, Facebook is taking the lead, followed by YouTube with 2.5 billion, and WhatsApp with 2 billion, then an Instagram with 1.4 billion users around the world (Kemp, 2022). With these massive numbers, the popularity, power, and influence of social networking sites can easily be distinguished. There are numerous brands and media houses that use these social networking sites to promote, and advertise their businesses, and to spread out agendas. Social media has a significant effect on everything from culture and practice to provocation and persuasion. Everything has been easy with the high emergence of social media and using influencers to spread out certain agendas. There are numerous effects of using social networking observed on an individual. From extrovert to introvert, mental to physical, self-esteem to anxiety, and so on. It has actually brought social change in many societies. All the factors will be discussed and analyzed in this study. The objective of the study is to understand the effects of social media and its usage and to know the adoption of content and practice it in daily life. The Research Questions are;

- To what extent is content across digital media affecting us?
- To what extent authenticity and credibility are being measured and researched before sharing anything on social media?

2. Literature Review

Social media platforms play an essential role in communication in this digital world. These networks are utilized for a range of purposes, including entertainment, information sharing, the expression of ideas, and so forth. Majority of the people, especially youth spend a large amount of their time on these platforms. Amongst various social networking apps, TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube appear at the top of the list. According to Dixon (2022a), 4.7 billion active users use social media with a penetration rate of 58.4% globally. As of January 2022, Facebook led the list of the most popular social networking sites, followed by YouTube with 2.5 billion users, WhatsApp with 2 billion, and Instagram with 1.4 billion, and TikTok with 1 billion users globally (Dixon, 2022b). It illustrates the persistence and significance of social networking sites, which have played a major role in our daily lives. Now, it's almost impossible for someone to start a day without scrolling social media. From getting up, to driving to institutes/workplaces to gatherings and so on, everywhere every time everyone is seen scrolling social networking sites. Henceforth, the influence and addiction of social media have dramatically changed the entire way of life.

O'Keeffe, Clarke-Pearson, Communications, and Media (2011) conducted a study on social media in the year 2011. He claims that during the last five years social media users have surprisingly grown up. The findings of the poll suggested that 22% of youngsters use their favorite social media sites more than ten times every day. However, the motives unveiled that a large number of users i.e., 54% use it for text messages or texting and 25% use it for IM or instant messaging. It clearly illustrates how a large number of people utilize these mediums for a variety of reasons, which eventually leads to the emergence of personalities. After examining the findings of the above study, it is evaluated that youngsters use social networks more frequently than others. They utilize various social networking platforms for multiple purposes. The most popular of these are texting and communication. It indicates that they are more interested in networking and mingling with friends, colleagues, and strangers. They enjoy communicating via message, audio/video calling, or live streaming because it empowers them and gives them an inner sense of happiness while making interactions via these platforms. In the end, they feel relaxed, joyous, and exuberant about using social networking sites, as it's an escape from daily routine.

While investigating the average time spent on social networking platforms, Georgiev (2023) published a report, which claims that social media platforms are where most people spend their time regularly. Facebook comes on top of the list with an average of 58 minutes each day, Snapchat 30 minutes, Instagram 28 minutes, and YouTube with 19 minutes average on a daily basis (Georgiev, 2023). It may be argued that the normal time spent on Facebook has outstandingly increased as a result of the never-ending discussion over its use. The data demonstrate that Facebook is popular amongst the youth, despite the existence of alternative social networking sites. It is updating on an almost daily basis; the Facebook people see today didn't look like that a year ago. It is due to rapid changes which hook the users by offering a variety of features under one roof.

Social media has a significant impact on how people build their personalities (Li, 2013). According to the study, it has been observed that psychological traits are crucial to a person's growth. To know about the impact "Big Five Personality Traits" was used as a hypothetical approach on U.S. adults via a questionnaire survey. The findings showed that extroverted people have more positive effects from using social networking sites, but emotionally weak people resulted in negative effects. Psychological variables are very important for the formation of personality. The way a person thinks, speaks, listens, observes, expresses his or her opinions, etc., all reflect his or her personality, which is built up of various psychological elements. By concentrating on mental attitude, it wouldn't be wrong to state that the content on social networking sites has a substantial impact on the development of these components. As the above study has also made it clear that extroverts are clearly having positive effects while introverts are experiencing negative effects on using social networking sites. It is because introverts have emotional breakdowns, difficulty with perspective, dependency issues, shyness, etc. (Cherry, 2022). Thus, it can be claimed that mental health is extremely important in determining the use of social media.

Without a discussion over the "Big Five Framework," a debate of psychology would be considered incomplete. Fiske (1949) examined that served as the foundation for Big Five

Framework. Later, it was elaborated on, and examined further by various scholars (Cherry, Lehman, & Indicator, 2021). The Big Five Personality Traits are abbreviated as OCEAN which means "openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism." To better understand Big Five Personality Traits, Seidman (2013) conducted a study in which he discoursed the linkage between the use of social media and self-presentational needs. He conducted a study in which 184 undergraduate students participated. The results unveiled that neuroticism and agreeableness were the best markers of belongingness, particularly when it comes to behaviors and motivations. Similarly, diligent (hardworking) people were more concerned with how they promote themselves online. Likewise, the personality traits extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism were associated with a tendency for self-expression. And neuroticism describes those who had perfect feelings of expression and concealed self-aspects (Seidman, 2013).

The relationship between using social media and the big five frameworks has been explained by a researcher in an appropriate method. As was already mentioned that psychological variables are crucial in the development of personality. Now, it has been understood that the role of the content individuals see on social media plays a crucial part in psychological development which leads to reactions, changing perceptions, and seeing things in society. In order to understand patterns of how university students utilize social media sites, the motives behind it, and the problems that students encounter while accessing social media, Shabir, Hameed, Safdar, and Gilani (2014) conducted a research study on the subject. A survey was taken to gather data, and 300 students were chosen for the study. The results showed that most students were persuaded to use Facebook for connecting, networking, learning, studying, sharing ideas, and discussing academic tasks. It also highlighted the negative consequences of using social media, demonstrating how young individuals are forced to watch offensive visual content and information which is anti-religious. It plays a crucial role in inciting hostility amongst diverse communities in society.

Similarly, Alhabash and Ma (2017) conducted a study on the effects, motivations, and use of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat. The goal was to examine the key variations among these four social media sites on the basis of timing, intensity, and motivation. As a part of this study, a survey method was used by taking a sample size of 336 college students. The findings revealed Instagram's popularity and desire compared to other social media networks. Following Instagram in terms of time spent by the participants, Twitter, Snapchat, and Facebook come next. Snapchat took the lead in terms of intensity, Instagram came in second (nearly evenly), while Facebook and Twitter got the next two spots. In a similar manner, when it came to motivation, Snapchat took first place, followed by the remainder. In another study, researchers wanted to determine how social media affects young people in Ghana (Ocansey, Ametepe, & Oduro, 2016). For the research, they took a sample size of 200 teenagers. The results showed that Facebook and WhatsApp were the two most widely used social networking platforms. Furthermore, it indicated that young people are more aware of the risks connected with having an online presence, and they mostly use it for communication, entertainment, and expression of emotion, among other factors. However, the majority of young people were seen to be badly impacted and to be worthlessly using social networking apps.

It demonstrates how different people use social networking sites for various purposes. On the one hand, if someone uses it for a good cause, such as content related to education, knowledge, information, employment, learning, etc. On the other hand, others are utilizing it for negative content like pornography, illegal activity, cyberbullying, and so on. Therefore, it may be claimed that people are not directly impacted by the content circulating on social media. In fact, it influences individuals depending on their requirements, aspirations, and levels of enjoyment they seek from a particular platform. Therefore, depending on how they see and interpret information, the impact will be perceived differently. The Uses and Gratification Theory matches this scenario perfectly. It talks about "the effect of media on people". The theory states "how people use the media for their own needs and get satisfied when their needs are fulfilled (Communication Theory, 2010)." With the expansion of social networking websites, it has become tougher to differentiate real news from mainstream media. To identify the consequences of news recommendations from social media opinion leaders, a study was undertaken by (Turcotte, York, Irving, Scholl, & Pingree, 2015). The poll's findings

indicated that the public's interest in traditional media has declined with time. It unveiled that social media offers creative, and novel ways to find news. According to the research, social media recommendations are somewhat trustworthy for people, especially when a friend or other well-known person publishes something on social media, and the people automatically see them as opinion leaders.

After reviewing the study, it is clear that public faith in the media has decreased in recent years. Now, individuals can easily tell the difference between real and fake news, because they have been media literate. On the other hand, the mainstream media has been seriously harmed by the increasing use of social media. There are several social networking platforms, but when it comes to authenticity and validity, Twitter takes the top rank. Nowadays, most of the news and information is acquired from Twitter, be it Prime Minister's tweet to POTUS, ISPR to CIA, BBC to CNN, the #MeToo movement to the #BlackLivesMatter campaign, and a long list goes on. Previously, the mainstream media was the primary source to report the news, but today most of the news is first published on social networking platforms, particularly Twitter. The key element maintaining the validity of Twitter is the "No Edit Option." This means that once a tweet is published, it cannot be altered again, however it can be removed. Talking about Facebook, WhatsApp, or other platforms, then if someone you know personally shares news, information, or factual data then the level of confidence in it naturally increases since you will unconsciously assume that it's true as you have a personal connection with that individual. Henceforward, it can be said that social media has earned the trust and respect of people.

The above study could be connected to the magic bullet or hypodermic needle theory. This theory says that media operates like a bullet or a needle, injecting or discharging content straight into the minds of the audience and producing an immediate result (C Theory, 2011). Here, the media can be considered as "somebody" and the bullet as "content" that the person has been shot. In the end, the person will accept it because he/she trusts "somebody" and won't double-check or conduct any further research to verify the "content". When discussing Snapchat's popularity, Waddell (2016) argued that the app's feature which allows messages to vanish is what makes it so successful. According to him, ephemeral messaging's visual attributes have legitimized photo communication, allowing self-expression and interpersonal satisfaction that are frustrated by text-based tools. Hence, it reveals the relationship between the Uses and Gratification Theory and the MAIN Model regarding Snapchat usage. In today's world, technology has an indelible impact. The MAIN Model was introduced by (Sundar, 2008) to clarify it for easier comprehension. It specifies four sorts of capabilities: "Modality (M), Agency (A), Interactivity (I), and Navigability (N)." The letters show how each affordance's psychological prejudices might influence consumers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions toward a product, brand, or service (Jason Tham, 2013).

Zhang and Yoon (2018) conducted a study to investigate how the "Korea Wave" is affecting the people and the countries, along with discovering the factors that lead to the effect, influence, and expansion of Korean culture globally. The validity of the impact of pop culture (movies, music, TV shows, food, etc.) and the efficiency of social media in influencing Chinese consumers to buy Korean items was also examined. The findings showed that Korean culture is playing a significant role in influencing consumers' perceptions of "Made in Korea" products, particularly Chinese buyers. It is clear from this study that the content on social networking has the ability to affect and transform people's mindsets. Due to social networking sites, pop culture has become widespread and diffused into society in terms of vocabulary, conversations, fashion sense, taste in meals, and unique hobbies, among other things. Thus, it is important to use social platforms in a positive way, as it has a proven influence and the power is undeniable. To better understand the causes and motivations behind using Instagram, Lee, Lee, Moon, and Sung (2015) carried out a study. A survey was taken on 212 Instagrammers to determine the objectives, motivations, and attitudes behind using Instagram. The findings showed that utilizing Instagram is mostly driven by five factors: self-expression, social engagement, peeking, escapism, and archival.

Instagram has expanded so fast because of user-generated content as it is a photo-and-video sharing platform. It has become a go-to platform for people who want to promote, express via visuals, communicate with others, stand out, find entertainment, or accomplish something. The Media Dependency Theory is also applicable in this scenario. As the theory

suggests that there is an underlying connection between media, audience, and significant social constructions. Since there is a limited level of knowledge that the public can understand from regular life, one can use the media to gather more information to meet their demands. An audience's dependency on media is created by heavy usage (Communication Theory, 2012). As was already mentioned, five factors influence people to use Instagram, which results in getting them hooked and dependent. Hereafter, the theory makes it viable regarding the content that users see on social media makes them dependent on and addicted to it. To determine the attraction and impact of Facebook on young people in Malaysia Mustaffa et al. (2011) conducted a study. They looked into the factors influencing Facebook's popularity among Malaysia's youth, and to investigate the diffusion of Facebook they used a survey methodology. According to the findings, young people are drawn to Facebook mainly because of peer pressure and addiction to digital technology and media. It also unveiled that students have made it normal of using Facebook in their daily lives, which results in spending more time online.

In this case, the Diffusion of Innovation Theory is completely appropriate. After analyzing numerous social science theories, E.M. Rogers developed the idea in 1962. He articulated the concept in terms of the five stages through which any technological adoption takes place in society, namely "Laggards, innovators, early majority, early majority, and early majority (Halton, 2021; Hussain, Hussain, Marri, & Zafar, 2021)." Rogers divided adopters into 5 categories to further clarify his explanation. According to him, innovations are initially adopted by innovators (2.5% of the population), then by early adopters (13.5%), early majorities (34%), late majorities (34%), and lastly laggards (16%). It is interesting to note that the laggards' group is substantially larger than the innovators' group at the opposite end of the scale (Institute, 2020). Using the Diffusion of Innovation theory may now be connected to Facebook's charisma. Young individuals are attracted to these platforms because they enjoy coming up with original ideas. For young people, Facebook and other social media platforms are truly groundbreaking in terms of innovation, UI/UX, features, and so on. As a result, these platforms are easily dispersed among them.

Understanding the repercussions of utilizing social media, Amedie (2015) particularly concentrated on three aspects. Social media, in the first place, fosters a fake or false sense of friendship, which has an impact on mental health. Secondly, social media consumption can become addictive, which has consequences for family, personal time as well as interpersonal skills. Thirdly, it has been used as a means of committing crimes. The author claims that social media leads to anxiety, depression, and emotional breakdown. He also mentioned the term "Catfishing", which refers to a fabricated persona or false identity. The study also established a link between social networking and terrorism, demonstrating that individuals who belong to radical and isolated groups might use social media to promote terrorist acts. This is entirely appropriate to the current societal situation. From being extroverted to being physically shy, having a fake persona to a fictitious sense of entitlement, and so on. Everything causes or contributes to anxiety, sadness, stress, and depression, which can result in serious mental diseases. Thus, utilizing social media is not really a problem as long as you're using it carefully and keeping other factors in mind.

Short videos easily go viral nowadays, few platforms are renowned for it, and TikTok comes top of the list. To know the effects of TikTok and Bilibili, Zhou (2019) conducted a study, where that mainly focused on learning. According to them, these platforms have been a new form of learning skills like drawing, painting, art, hacks, etc. The research aimed to classify the gap between behavior and expectations provided by those platforms. The main focus was on three factors: effects, viewers' comments, and online activities of users and their expectations. The findings revealed that the behavior and expectations are produced based on five different personas, and their particular interest actually promotes these creative practices on short video-sharing platforms. It wouldn't be wrong to say that TikTok and other short video-sharing platforms have a positive impact, rather than considering it has a bad impact on youth and society. The above research has proved that these platforms are actually being used to learn creative skills. Due to the short but informative videos they easily get viral. If these platforms are used for learning skills, then they wouldn't only be beneficial for the youth but also for the kids in society.

With the emergence of social networking sites, user-generated content is getting popular. Several marketing tricks and strategies are being used for user-generated content. Hashtag challenges are one of those, to go in-depth Ahlse, Nilsson, and Sandström (2020) conducted a study on it. The aim was to explore the reasons that motivate Z-generation users to take part in hashtag challenges, and how brands utilize them for business purposes. The exploratory qualitative method was used to conduct the study, where Gen Z participants took part in sixteen semi-structured and in-depth interviews. While the qualitative content analysis was used to review the Uses and Gratification Theory. The results showed that Entertainment is the leading factor that motivates users to participate in such challenges, and marketers can use it as a tool to make their campaigns successful.

From the above study, it can be analyzed that the main reason behind participating in hashtag challenges is Entertainment. As Gen Z is modern and socially active, these things grab their attention immediately, which marketers use to promote their brands by providing them a source of entertainment in the name of hashtag challenges. Credibility has been a major issue on social media nowadays. Talking about authenticity, Twitter is a renowned microblogging platform, which is known for its genuineness. To check the facts Castillo, Mendoza, and Poblete (2013) conducted a study. The planning of real-life events was done via supervised learning strategies. The results unveiled that the differences are connected to the authenticity, credibility, and validity of the particular information that is being conveyed, and describing structures that are real for categorizing information mechanically as trustworthy or not.

To examine the above study, it can be stated that it's not about the information whether it's credible or not. It's all about the structure of that particular message and how it is being conveyed to the audience. Henceforth authenticity is still unclear here because, in the end, it's about how the information is being molded rather than sharing as it is. In order to know the factors for distinguishing fake news on social media, Luo, Hancock, and Markowitz (2022) conducted two online experiments to inspect the total to which people observe news headlines as reliable and credible, and precisely differentiate fake and real news across topics like science, health, and politics. The findings revealed that the number of likes and engagement help the audience to determine the worthiness and authenticity of the news. The data mentioned above shows clearly the significance of engagement in social networking sites. Users can evaluate the validity, originality, authenticity, and reliability of news by examining the overall engagement of the post. It is actually making sense because people interact on real events, which leads to getting liked and shared. This thing keeps on multiplying, and eventually, new users find it reliable to share it on their profiles as well.

In terms of evaluation, Aldous, An, and Jansen (2019) conducted research on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Reddit. The main focus was to determine four levels of user engagement i.e., like, view, comment, and posting. The data from 3,163,373 social media posts were gathered over eight months to study the variations in practices, strategies, and news organizations' approaches to respective activities and how these factors affect users' engagement. The findings showed that the distribution of topics varies from platform to platform. Similarly, user engagement levels also vary in terms of platforms and topics. From the above study, it can be examined that the role of engagement is very crucial in social media. In fact, it varies from platform to platform, every social networking site has a different algorithm, nature, and users mainly. When a user sees any information on a particular topic, he/she will be engaging accordingly, depending on various factors. Similarly, if they post the same content across all social networking platforms, then they'll observe different engagement on all platforms. Hence, choosing the right platform and the right topic to post at the right time is very important to keep in mind in order to achieve a desirable engagement goal.

Wang (2021) conducted research to distinguish the choice of topics and receive users' reactions. The goal of the study was to evaluate the impact of reaction emojis on Facebook and their contribution to users' ability to share specific news or information. A sum of 30 fan pages on social networking sites in Taiwan was inspected. Following a year of monitoring Facebook pages, a quantitative approach was used to identify news organizations, determine the distance between them, and divide the organizations into groups. The findings demonstrated that topics play a significant major criterion in classifying media outlets using social media users' reaction emojis. With this second study on the role of topics, it is clearly

visible that the importance of the topic and the role is the key factor to make the audience react. Whether to share that particular piece or not. The reaction feature of Facebook plays a vital role along with the headline of a topic in order to gain more reactions, shares, and comments, which determines how popular it is on the platform. Similarly, it's not only about information, the same algorithm can be applied to videos and pictures whose title plays a main role or the first few seconds of a video to achieve the goal of engagement. People usually make perceptions based on the popularity of a particular post which is measured by engagement. Henceforth, the title, topic or initial seconds of a video are extremely important to grab the attention of an audience, and to multiply the process because of engagement.

Speaking of the persuasion, coherence, and spread of information in society. A study on social media marketing was done by (Chang, Yu, & Lu, 2015). The goal was to examine post popularity, post attractiveness, and argument quality, which can lead to likes, sharing, and clicking on social media. A survey of 392 was conducted to evaluate the results and discussion. The findings clarified that there are three persuasive messages which play a key role to click, like, and share a post. The popularity of a post is very crucial and works in both the central route and peripheral as per the research model. Additionally, user groups and different messages have diverse behavior of communication. According to the results of the previously mentioned study, it can be said that social media significantly contributes to the dissemination of culture and other products of art and culture as well as the transmission of knowledge into society. The allure of a post encourages interaction, sharing, and even adoption into daily routines. From the short clip of a Netflix movie to trending topics, Halloween practice to wedding season, western clothing wear to practices, and so on. Everything is being diffused in society, because of social media. The content is presented in such a manner that it easily goes viral and becomes a talkative topic in the town. Therefore, social media has a remarkable impact on persuading the audience.

With the spread of social media, influencer marketing has also emerged. Influencers play a vital role in making mindsets and spreading out a message effectively. To examine the power of influencer marketing, sponsored content and its authenticity on social media, Wellman, Stoldt, Tully, and Ekdale (2020) conducted research on it. The study's goal was to evaluate whether or not influencer marketing is immoral and whether or not providing paid content for social media represents an ethical issue. Travel influencers were chosen as the subject of a case study. The results demonstrated that influencers follow the ethics of being honest to their followers, brands, and most importantly, themselves. The above research conducted on ethics, authenticity, and sponsored content by influencers clearly depicts that influencers play a very important role in mind-making and building narratives. They have the power to convince and persuade the audience. Now, the possibility of unethical content and practices have also been removed after the findings of the above study. In the end, humanity comes first, it is all about self-belief, morals, and ethics, what to promote and what not to promote. Not everything is about money; it's mainly about the sincerity with one's self, the brand, and the audience. Hence, the power of influencer marketing cannot be neglected; brands, news organizations, NGOs, and government organizations can use influencers to promote the positive message for the betterment of society.

A study was conducted by Lau (2017) to examine the effects of social media platforms and the academic performance of university students. The goal was to determine the rationale for using social media and how social media multitasking impacts pupils' educational outcomes. 348 students from various universities in Hong Kong were surveyed in order to get their data. The findings demonstrated that social networking sites are widely used for non-academic activities like watching movies, playing video games, seeking entertainment, etc., while the results of social media multitasking revealed that it has a negative impact on overall educational outcomes and the average cumulative grade point (CGPA). The data shown above clearly indicates how social media has a negative impact on students' academia. The majority of students use social networking platforms for fun and entertainment rather than research or academic purposes. Hence, the extensive usage of social media reduces the CGPA and provokes many concerns about their academic performances.

3. Conclusion

The content on social media has the ability to revolutionize all the practices, customs, and cultural influences on an individual. It has a great influence to brainwash by promoting certain agendas. It has a remarkable effect on changing thoughts and building narratives. Although there is debate over whether social media has a greater positive impact on individuals' lives and society or not, but its influence cannot be underestimated. It is mostly about individuals, professionals, groups, and organizations using social media to create, disseminate, understand, interpret and perceive a specific message. Due to the powerful influence of content on social media; the norms, beliefs, culture, and traditions are also being affected along with the adoption and diffusion of western and other cultures and practices in society. Henceforth, it wouldn't be wrong to state that the content circulating on social media has a more adverse impact on individuals and society, because of the enormous influence of these platforms, which are being used negatively to promote certain agendas and practices to brainwash and reconstruct narratives of individuals' minds.

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