

POLITIC GOES DIGITAL, SO WHAT? A REVIEW ON INTERNET POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

This article explores and mobilises the concept of 'internet politics' as an analytical entry point for understanding how politics emerge in the digital media world targeted to the public conversation and constituents believe to promote engagement and participation. Understanding political communication to public in digital platform is strategic in a digital era where exposure to political message is inevitable. Some leading academic databases are searched within a methodology of literature review to report a review of studies on internet politics. The result shows that research in this area incline towards utilization of a specific platform in digital world. We conclude that political communication in the digital world started in the west and followed by non-western researcher. Technological advancement makes possible for people to communicate and gather virtually as in social media platform, thus any digital platform accessible for a substantial number of people is a potential channel for political communication where further research in this area needs to be directed.

Keywords: *political communication, political marketing, digital platform, social media, political message*

INTRODUCTION

Two distinct characteristics set apart several types of new media platforms are interactivity and convergence between image, texts and video. Most of the characteristics is aiming for maximum engagement from users. This is exactly the reason why President of The United States of America, Donald Trump, pressed the tweet button to send his very first tweet to the world at 8.53 AM on February 9, 2013 (McLaughlin, 2018). This tweet sets his successful journey in utilizing social media for his political career. Twitter is one of his powerful arsenals he chose to get as much engagement as possible. That same tweet also monitored and replicated by many political actors across the globe in pursuing and utilizing digital platform for political communication.

This study hypothesized that political realm utilizes the Internet media to gain access to abundant audiences which has been commercially benefited some other party outside the political world. Principally, communication to audiences under commercial agenda directed toward large gathering of audiences, it called "market" in economic terms. Internet is relatively standard place to gather for people with certain similarity in characteristic, interest, demography and point of view (Holmes, 2019; Qu & Watson, 2019). Considering the term market for financial gain, this large number of people gathering is a potential constituent for political gain that grow as research focus for interdisciplinary study from different field from communication to political sciences. The target audiences of communication process from political entity within the digital world are large in quantity but segmented at the same time, required communicator having strategies to gain their attention (Guazina, Prior, & Araújo, 2019; Johansson & Scaramuzzino, 2019; Vaccari & Valeriani, 2018).

There are several elements in political communication being implemented in the Internet Politics field. This study explored and observed this area within an interdisciplinary literature to get a deeper understanding of the concept and application.

- RQ1: To what degree social media, and related digital platform relate to the use of all these channels for political purposes.
- RQ2: In what manner Internet media useful for political organizations.

The structure of this article is organized as follows: The “Methods” sections lays out how the research behind the outcome of this article conducted. The “Results and Discussion” is the meat of the article where findings and pattern of ideas explained. The “Conclusion” concludes the article with limitation of study and future direction of research in the area.

METHODS

This section refers to the process involved from identification of literature in Internet Politics. While the exact term of the study explored and analysed throughout literature, this section highlights this study management of data and methodology used to answer the research questions. Limitation of the study is this study review research article and review article at the same time. There is a risk of some level of depth in analyzing the topic where it might benefit to the wider audience if future research explores on only research literature or only review literature.

The other part of limitation in this study is the fact that this research relies on algorithm regulated within the chosen academic databases. Even though an established methodological literature review was applied to data gathering in this study, there is a slight chance that some literature might have not covered in this study. This limitation brings about necessity in relation to future research. Implementing systematic literature review as one of the methods focusing on comprehensive findings of literature on specific academic field will mitigate the limitation (Numminen & Leino-Kilpi, 2007).

This study explored how politics make use of internet communication channel range from websites to social network sites. Each individual academic database is observed as main data sources for analysis purpose to illustrate how politic utilize the internet media in order to achieve their agenda. Some studies explored specific geographical details, whereas other studies look deeper into a specific internet media and digital platform.

1. Data

Data presented in this study comes from academic databases which specifically literature in the field of communication science is mostly available. The databases explored are Sage Journal, Taylor and Francis Journal, ProQuest, Science Direct, Emerald Insight, and EBSCO.

These resources offer some of literature findings in the area of Internet Politics. This field of study falls under communication sciences and political sciences as interdisciplinary field of research. Sage Journal contributes most of the data in this study with leading journal in area of communication with 80-plus academic journals under Politics and International relations subject and 60-plus academic journals under Communication and Media Studies, followed by Taylor and Francis with 59 academic journals under Communication Studies, 270 academic journals under Social Sciences and 237 academic journals under Politics and International Relations.

However, this study explores research focus on interdisciplinary topic where research might be published in several different journal within the related research field. All other database offers similar category of journal subjects where the data originated from. Data gathered from resources are limited within a certain period as research period for the purpose of answering research questions with updated literature. Most literature published in the data come from interdisciplinary studies. Literatures published in academic journals as research source are the raw data in this study categorized in several different subject will be detailed in methodology section.

2. Method

Sources in the form of review from academic databases for answering research questions are using qualitative literature review methodology. Qualitative literature review is one of the review approaches to draw a certain pattern in the academic literature. Some of the other common approaches are theoretical literature review, which refers to applying a specific theory in identifying and mapping an academic (Hiebert, Leipert, Regan, &

Burkell, 2016; Turner, Baker, & Kellner, 2018; Venugopal, M., & G., 2018), systematic literature review focusing on the quality of reviews to increase validity in the field (Szablewska & Kubacki, 2018; Xiao & Watson, 2019; Zuchowski, Miles, Woods, & Tsey, 2017) and integrative literature review concentrating on summarizing and critiquing past literature (Hedayati Mehdiabadi & Li, 2016; Nurmi, Kangasniemi, Halkoaho, & Pietilä, 2019; Rastogi, Pati, Krishnan, & Krishnan, 2018). All academic databases are studied as the core sources of discussion into Internet Politics. Methodology chosen in this study aim for exploring how politic makes use of the Internet as a medium to disseminate its message to audiences.

Firstly, keywords are identified and used consistently to explore the topic and concept. Keywords are selected pointing to Internet Politic as main theme, thus data gathering process adapting to search engine by maintaining keywords to pinpoint search results. Only these two words are used which are “internet” and “politics”. These two words are joined into a concept of “Internet Politics”. In one particular database, Taylor and Francis, the “Internet Politics” is categorized as a subject in and of itself. The rest of databases are explored the same way and resulted in search result which ranked according to relevance but within an allocated research period. Most of database provides a searching feature where users are allowed to set their search process ranking based on relevance and at the same time search only within a customary of time.

Searching this keyword in all database is limited from 2017-2019 focusing search result in relevance within the period. The reason behind the time period organized in such way is to focus on recent findings in the databases. Exploring six electronic databases as key sources conducted within recent publication generating a set of literature to answer research questions for this study. These six databases were chosen with consideration that these academic databases cover literature in the area of social sciences.

From the six academic databases, 145 articles were extracted. Different database resulted in different quantity of articles within keywords submitted. Submission of keywords to Science Direct resulted in 7,711 results from a variety of discipline refined by 2017-2019 in years, and research – review in article type. From the result then, were selected top 25 articles ranked according to relevance. Move on to Sage Journal where most of the data gathering comes from, resulted in 8307 articles. From this results, top 50 articles were collected. Taylor and Francis Journal where this exact concept is formally categorized as subject in this database, shows search result with 16183 articles and top 20 articles was collected. All result and article from other academic databases are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Articles from Academic Databases

No	Databases	Articles Analysed	Search Results
1.	ScienceDirect	25	7711
2.	Sage Journal	50	8307
3.	Taylor and Francis Journal	20	16183
4	EBSCO Journal	10	505
5	Emerald Insight	20	1308
6	ProQuest	20	1502
Total		145	35516

These articles were taken from the top list from those databases trusting on internal search engine ranking these articles based on their relevance to the keywords submitted in the search engine. Then, articles were grouped into a code following a certain pattern identified from the focus of each individual article. Coding process makes possible analysis of all discussion about patterns of academic conversation on Internet Politics within data to answer the research questions. The subsequent chapter will highlight those patterns as a result from this study aiming to answer the research questions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Politics on the new media platform are the focus of this study. While this study utilizes a review on literatures as a method, it expands its data gathering into both empirical and review articles found in the databases. Most of the academic databases has its unique search engine which ranks the search results according to their impact factor, number of citations, author affiliation, etc.

However, the pattern and trend in a particular academic field is possible to be monitored for researchers in order to dig deeper into what academic conversation about a topic within a certain period of time. The following sub-sections draw a pattern on the “Internet Politics” topic and targeting to answer the research questions.

A. Local vs. Global

The above sub-heading is heavily related to politics across the globe because the Internet eliminates geographical borders. Academic conversations often focus on case studies specifically happened in local areas, on the other hand, discussions and results from studies also directed inductively to describe phenomena of Internet politics for a larger perspective.

A study on political activism and its relation to Internet usage increase in East Asia draws a conclusion that any political effort in utilizing the Internet is also monitored by audiences from different continents. Political activism increases with people getting more familiar with internet communication routines. On the other hand, electoral decrease with people exposed to more information about political issues (Huang, Su, Han, & Weatherall, 2017). South Asia is a place where multicultural, multiethnic, multi-religion communities live side by side. It is a potency of collaboration and cooperation; however, latent conflict also surfaces every other occasion. In Pakistan, local members of political parties were interviewed combined with more research methodology. This study found that local political parties gained positive benefits in terms of informing and mobilizing voters (Jamil, 2019).

Following local politicians on a certain social media platform is a sign of deliberate public exposure on political issues. A study on Facebook users and their political engagement in the Philippines found that quantity of political literate friends within someone's circle of friends correlates with political engagement. The more friends with political updates and information, the more you have exposed and willing to engage to political matters (David, San Pascual, & Torres, 2019). A radical political party in Denmark combined digital and physical spaces to practice their political organizational rights within the political process in the country (Husted & Plesner, 2017). This study focused on how organizational space and political organization configured in Denmark. It also underlines that the case of Denmark might be unique for locals and it will be hard to generalize across borders.

B. Political Participation vs Political Knowledge

Politics in the Internet mirror any other sub-field in the society in owning this not-so-new media. Commercially, marketers meticulously target customers with background data as their entry-point identification before launching the marketing campaign. Similarly, political entities educate the public serving its agenda. Developing embedded political knowledge of the public is one of the aims in political communication, especially in the Internet communication channel.

This public considers as electorates, supporters, activists, and voters within political communication. When this public accesses information on the Internet, there is an accidental exposure through notification, advertisement posts, pop-up advertisements to political messages. This accidental exposure is not delivered accidentally but packaged and tailored to target a specific audience. Targeting a specific audience must follow background data of the audiences in order to particularly serve content for the audience, background data can derive from Socio-Economic Status (SES).

Internet is a luxury for some people from low SES, on the other hand, high SES people access information in this communication channel comfortably. Access to internet highlights people's access to information in order to perform in modern society.

The gap between them is differentiating these two sides (low and high SES) in accessing political knowledge. Research shows that accidental exposure to political knowledge lessens this gap in relations to political participation (Morris & Morris, 2017).

C. Emerging Politics in Digital Platform

Digital platforms open a new performing field for any form of new political movement. Political organizations, actors, ideologies flourish into new generations utilizing this digital platform. Characteristics of digital media, that easy to access, widespread and high engagement between people, information and ideas, is embraced by politics

(Boyd, 2015).

Physical event in relations to politics broaden and refined by the way of virtual sharing in this social media era. A political event in Trinidad described the relationship between emerging political expression happened in real space and virtual space conversation about the event (Sinanan & Hosein, 2017). This hunger strike in Trinidadian town took place locally. Without transmission in virtual world via Facebook, conversation and commentary about the event only represented narrowly. Digital platform allows photos, videos, texts explicitly access by more people witnessing the event physically. The other important finding of the study is engagement around the event is higher after the details shared in virtual world. On the other side of the spectrum, controversy and attack on the self is one the reason why people hesitate to participate politically online.

Internet activism was introduced now with political agenda behind the actors as being emerging political bargaining position as oppose to status quo.

In South Korea, political actors do not necessarily come from political organization such as political party or governmental body. When political participation means channeling opinions on political decision, South Korean youth concentrated their voice using the Internet. Instead of marching on the street for voicing their protest on American beef importation to Korea in 2008, Korean internet users massively launched satirical, critique narrative of the government policy (Kang, 2017). Emerging political power to speak against unpopular government regulation becomes more acceptable especially when modern communication channel is employed. Political opinion enhances in digital platform because modern society getting familiar with this type of communication style and it resonates with them.

Celebrity politics also has emerged in online platform resulting in voter's expectation to political figure with certain compelling image. Such political personas in social media underlined by how political professional unpacking visual political communication in the online mediascape. Political from around the world understand and apply strategies to create a brand of power and authority. From Obama, Sarkozy, to Merkel focusing on social media, Trudeau in Canada also approached his campaigning in similar tone using Instagram (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2017). Utilizing hybrid qualitative and quantitative method, this study found that social media help politician to build professional image as someone who credible and legitimate.

Instagram is a social media platform with strong visual cues among others. In comparison, Twitter has a unique concentration of micro-blogging where users converse in limited text space. There is an emerging politics happened in Twitter where conversation in the parliament could possible materialized in Twitter before continuing in the physical space. A study on Twitter conversation from Catalan parliament members revealed that logic and strategies in political conversation has its own pattern in Twitter compare to physical space (Borge Bravo & Esteve Del Valle, 2017). It also shows that top politicians in political party hierarchical do not take leadership in Twitter conversation. The one with more active engagement most likely to take important presence in the conversation.

There is more emerging politics in digital platform across application and software. With users relying more on mobile device, politics gets even bigger chance on people attention and participation in political field. Strategic message for each individual digital platform will continue to be polished along with rising Internet users' expectation on what politician should look like or what attribute politician should have.

D. E-democracy

Democracy refers to how a control and a system within an area regulate majority of its member. Political purposes are embedded to digital platform to reach wider audiences. Connecting individual as electorates within digital platforms require skills and techniques. The concept of democracy as conversation between members or people with their representatives and among representatives adapts to technological enhancement including digital media technology.

As frequency of digital conversation between members in democracy society has inclined over the past decades, the potential of e-democracy has unfolded, so there is growing study to investigate process of democracy in digital platform. A relation between quality of democracy and Internet use was studied using survey data about same-sex marriage. Democracy portrays in the same level as Internet usage in view of political issue such same-sex marriage (Diez & Dion, 2018). The study found that Internet use has strong association with the issue in terms of democracy of majority of people have control on a specific issue. Having higher Internet use in a region increases possibility to express people's political views.

Internet is the tool where democracy could benefit most of the member of society. On the other hand, there are certain element of political field that abusing the Internet for their political gain (Mansfield-Devine, 2018). Negative political agenda, such as racist, sexist and other offensive activism, entered democracy where people as a member of the population recognized in expressing their view.

The strong relation between democracy and media use appear many times in the literature. Internet media is the place where people looking for political information and express their political interest. A study derived from survey data about exposure to various media including Internet from 34 countries, revealed the association of people satisfaction to democracy in comparison to Internet media use (Chang, 2018). In short, the more interest people have in politics the more satisfied with democracy they should be. This study also underlined that Internet media is one of the types of media for political news for people to express their democracy right to have clear information. Media use has indirect effect to people' satisfaction of democracy. The use of Internet media with their characteristic with hoaxes and sensitive information sharing make people less satisfy with democracy.

Modern democracy is highly related to digital media where political participation as medium of civic engagement happens in digital platform. Youth is associated with political audiences in this era. Despite internet-access gap between developed and underdeveloped regions, youth generally reported to be a citizen of digital culture (Oblak Črnič, n.d.). In this study, youth in Slovenia is observed in relation to how political parties communicate with them in digital platform. It discovered that political field needs to reconnect to its stakeholder, establish political voice channeling from youth and verify underprivilege element in the society have opportunity to participate in political process. The findings take place in digital platform which summing up the concept of e-democracy.

Relation between internet and democracy in underdeveloped country has its own unique trait. It carries the concept of e-democracy into causal relationship between the two. A study based on a panel of 38 African countries investigates how the utilization of Internet affecting the level of democracy (Olaniyi, 2019). Out of all African countries observed, when internet use increases democracy decreases. The findings resulted from restriction imposed by the governments in Africa and abusive use of the Internet during election.

The conversation whether internet use and democracy creating positive e-democracy was shown in literature as two opposing sides. The first side mentions that internet use nurtures e-democracy. The other side notes that the internet use disrupt e-democracy advancement.

CONCLUSION

This study explores what politics have done within the Internet. Data shows that studies have been focusing on some particular Internet media, drawing to important emphasis on how local political entity utilize the Internet and its relation to the global internet political web where political actors and organizations presence their content to attract public attention.

The second finding from this study portrays how the usage of the Internet invite political participation from political target audiences and how political knowledge is better after public exposed to information in the Internet.

Many literatures from diverse geographical origin conclude that political entity view the Internet as important as commercial entity view it to gain profit. The main difference is the end goal.

This emerging politics as a movement showing its appearances in digital platforms has had specific consequences. The literature has shown a pattern that the emerging politics have become a normal part of political landscape in the modern world especially when Internet- savvy individuals targeted as target audiences. After digital appearance of the politics become widely established it became imperative that all element of political field need to educate themselves about this particular media. A pile of evidence that emerging politics relate to digital platform has been showcased that new generation acted as the driving force (Ingrams, 2017; Lee, 2017; Oliveira, Bermejo, & dos Santos, 2017).

One of the primary limitations of this article is that the width of perspectives when it comes to examine all articles from academic databases. A different study looks at the same datasets can choose which pattern to focus on. Recent studies pointed out the relation between internet and politics with a wide range of perspectives.

Further examinations are necessary within this research area, to identify what kind of media millennial tend to flock to, in relation to political targeting and making sure that politics offer this new generation with beneficial information and digital literacies.

However, this article shows evidences that there are patterns indicating political organization utilizing digital platforms and it will enhance in the future, in terms of technology and actors behind the scene.

The recommendation for future research within the area should be directed to the Internet access from handheld devices when in the future, public will get unlimited access through handheld devices instead of computers.

AKNOWLEDGEMENT

This article is supported by the research facility in BINUS University. All the academic databases that the author used provided by the university. The author expresses sincere gratitude to the university for the facility and the opportunity to contribute to academic conversation by accessing university academic journal.

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