Social Media and Political Communication: Studying the Interactive Component

Tuan Anh Nguyen[1]
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Moscow, Russian Federation

Trung Chi Bui
School of Journalism and Communication, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam

Konstantin Sokolovskiy
Department of General Subjects, Humanitarian and Technical Academy, Kokshetau, Kazakhstan

Abstract: The study purpose is to examine the measure of popularity of separate interactive components of political discourse delivery through social media in the modern Russian Federation. The research methodology builds on an empirical approach through a door-to-door survey. It involved a total number of 1,000 residents of Moscow, the Russian Federation. Respondents were divided into 5 groups of 200 people. They had to choose one of the following types of social media as the most frequently used: social networks, online video platforms (OVPs), blogs, and messengers. Accordingly, the research results demonstrated that social networks are the most popular (53.4%) among study participants. Less number of respondents (19%) consider messengers effective, 15.4% of study participants find video hosting the most significant type of social media, and only 12.2% believe that blogs are the most effective among others. Furthermore, the following factors determined the interactive component of political discourse in social media: the involvement of respondents regarding the participation in online voting, commenting and reposting content (48%), maintaining a blog with a political intent (34%), and refusal to participate in political dialogue (18%). The research results may contribute to further study regarding the behavioral features of media platform users and ways to establish communication between government structures and the public. It may also grant improving the methods of psychological influence on the citizen worldview within political science. The research has a practical significance as the results obtained may facilitate lobbying the interests of political subjects and develop campaigning activities.
Keywords: Internet, online platform, political discourse, public opinion, social media.

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[1] Corresponding Author: Postgraduate, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Moscow, Russian Federation.
E-Mail: tuananhnguyen5@yahoo.com, Anhnguyen3891@yandex.ru

In the information society era, communication between government institutions and society is primarily implemented through social media. This political discourse presupposes fighting for power through the formation of public opinion and worldview. It is worth noting that information is one of the most important factors that influence political reality; and social media directly affects the behavioral and social spheres of human life (Barinov, 2016; Zhumakhanova, Xanova & Bizhkenova, 2021).

Traditional media reached a new level of efficiency in the 80s of the 20th century, and thus, became one of the most decisive factors of the political environment (Toffler, 1999). The development of information technology has also brought changes in the methods of influencing the opinions of individuals. Newspapers, magazines, radio, and television had a significant impact on the consciousness and thinking of society through the means of information transmission (Ohiagu, 2011; Rohmadi & Sudaryanto, 2019). Even though these media types introduced citizens to the state course and international political realities, they also played a role of social and political propaganda or even a manipulative tool (Kenzhekanova et al., 2015).

In the modern world, the Internet has a leading position among all the media types. It differs from other methods of information dissemination by its interactivity and possibility of enabling the public to influence the political processes (Brenne, 2016). The popularity and accessibility of the Internet allowed different social groups to interact within a single platform, take part in discussions, and express opinions on political phenomena (Emruli & Baca, 2011).

The same features may apply to mobile gadgets since they also allow people of different ages and social groups to receive information promptly. It is worth noting that the principle of anonymity allowed users to share information and express their views freely, without any censorship (Barinov, 2016). Furthermore, public opinion has taken a leading position regarding political realities. Except for the possibility to absorb information, people can also independently change and disseminate it. Consequently, the Internet has set grounds to transfer social movements to the media cyberspace, giving individuals the opportunity to unite and express their civic needs and demands (Rafi, 2019) It also provides users with the possibility to demonstrate alternative opinions and ideas opposite to the official ones (Skogerbø & Kunelius, 2017). Nowadays, social networks, independent e-journals, podcasts, and other information and communication tools contribute to the modernization of the political sphere (Almqvist, 2016).

Most researchers consider social networks the fundamental factors influencing the consciousness of individuals in modern society. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumbler, and Instagram connect people in cyberspace, allowing them to consume and share the news (Khudaiberganova & Abdalova, 2021; Kushin & Kitchener, 2009).

Social networks have become incredibly popular since their emergence. Facebook was first launched on the global media market in 2004, and in 2008 the number of active users exceeded 70 million (Kushin & Kitchener, 2009). As of 2021, their number has reached 2.9 billion people (Kemp, 2021). As a result, the development of social networks contributed to the ability of individuals to participate in online discussions on political issues, put forward their own theories, and defend them (Klemenova & Ereshchenko, 2020).

Due to the explosive growth of social networks, scientists face the problem of understanding the nature of political discourse on the Internet. The complexity lies in the fact that this discourse takes place on completely new, constantly changing media and social platforms (Kushin & Kitchener, 2009). The principles and trends of the social network impact on civic consciousness within political discourse also proved difficult to study and understand since it differs from traditional communication on forums and media state platforms (Blommaert, 2020; Pătruţ & Pătruţ, 2014). The rapid development and modernization of applications for gadgets provided grounds for the appearance of a new online platform. Thus, it requires research of its potential as a place for political discussions (Azmi et al., 2018).

Anonymity on the Internet allowed people to become more involved in the political processes. Meanwhile, analyzing the audience, researchers experience certain obstacles regarding anonymity (Emruli & Baca, 2011; Opeyemi, 2018). Another factor that complicates relevant studies is gender, racial, national, age, and socio-cultural diversity among social media users. It perplexed assessing their opinions and the level of involvement in political discourse within communication interaction on online platforms (Bodle, 2013).

The present research aims to study the types of social media regarding political discourse and the popularity of online platforms in the socio-political communication of society and the Russian authority structures. The rapid development of information technology, the emergence of new online platforms, and their modernization prove the relevance of the present study. Furthermore, relatively unexplored features of political discourse and social communication on the newest media platforms also underscore the need to conduct the present study. Since the media environment is constantly changing and transforming, it is necessary to identify the most popular type of social media that can help individuals express their political views and civic position through dialogue with opponents and government structures. Consequently, political organizations need to identify a stable and most optimized platform for the possibility of influencing the opinions of voters.

The scientific novelty of this research lies in the comprehensive analysis of social media regarding the political discourse in the Russian Federation and its popularity among the population of different ages. The scientific significance also resides in the assessment of different social media types that can influence the worldview of individuals, their political awareness, and their involvement in socio-political processes.

Literature Review

The Russian Federation and other researchers pay little attention to the social media features and their mechanisms of influence on public opinion regarding political discourse. Most studies aim at understanding the reasons for the Internet and media platforms popularity within entertainment, educational, and social communication. These issues are relevant due to the rapid growth of new online platforms and their incredible popularity among young people who prioritize entertainment content (Lin et al., 2009). It is worth noting that the rapid development of information technology and the constant change in the microstructure of websites and applications make it impossible to respond quickly and conduct relevant studies (Kushin & Kitchener, 2009). Consequently, due to the frequent changes in the online environment, it is difficult to predict how popular one or other of the platforms will become, what audience they will have and how it will affect the political outlook of individuals. A few years ago, VK and Odnoklassniki were among the most popular platforms in the Russian Federation in terms of political discourse. Nevertheless, thorough screening and censorship led to the transition of users to more anonymous platforms like Twitter and Telegram (Gainutdinov & Chikov, 2016). Users prefer social media moderated by developers but not subjected to internal censorship by government structures. Accordingly, governmental interference undermines the trust of individuals (Shulga, 2015). It is crucial to understand that the use of social media interrelates with the growth of the political consciousness of citizens (Opeyemi, 2018). Twitter, Facebook and others provide perfect platforms for users to share not only information in general, but also exposing their political views. Studies have shown that in terms of political institutions, continuously collect, monitor, analyze and visualize politically significant information from social networks in order to improve communication with citizens and voters (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). Moreover, the role of social media also lies in the unification of citizens and the development of social movements (Kidd & McIntosh, 2016). Individuals may experience the development of their civic positions. Nonetheless, the ways of

establishing a dialogue with political actors remain disclosed. Presence politicians in social networks is a unique opportunity to combine the promotion of a politician and a party and the main feature of the image of any political subject is accessibility (Narayan, 2013). Social media makes it possible any person to become a content author and empower their users, thereby allowing the public to play an active role in political process. Social networks are changing the nature of political communications because they are tools that can be used to inform and mobilize users in new ways (Karlsson & Åström, 2018). Most researchers study the role of social media in political discourse in terms of audience manipulation. Some studies reflect the issue of political discourse in social media. However, no research fully corresponds to the political discourse in social media in the Russian Federation. Most studies either aim at the Internet resources analysis within traditional media or the influence of the Internet on the formation of the worldview exclusively among children and adolescents (Khudaiberganova & Abdalova, 2021). Consequently, such researches provide no analysis of the social media types and the mechanisms of their influence on the formation of political consciousness (Ohiagu, 2011). Despite that, many research papers regard the issue of social movements that arise on online platforms.

Accordingly, such studies describe different types of social media within the political discourse. A striking example is research with an extensive analysis of the Facebook impact on the formation of political and social awareness of citizens (Blommaert, 2020). Additionally, the materials of the scientific and practical conference The Pocantico Cente (2019) include the description and analysis of social media effectiveness in political discourse. It indicates that the mechanism of online platforms functions as forums for political speeches. The conference also regarded the problems of disinformation in social media and possible solutions to eliminate it (The Pocantico Cente, 2019). The results showed that public actors should act, change or develop laws and regulations that encourage removing misinformation from their social media campaigns. Also, it is recommended to include the improvement of the norms for the exchange of information about disinformation among the government and social platforms. An increase was recommended investment in disinformation detection tools and the use of tools that evaluate the credibility of the source.

The relevance of the study is due to the growing interest and popularity of social networks. With the huge rise in social media influence, particularly Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok, Vine and LinkedIn, social media is increasingly used in a political context in recent times - both by citizens and political institutions (politicians, political parties, foundations, think tanks, etc.).

Objectives

The main motivation for conducting this study lies in the desire to obtain new empirical data on the role of modern social media platforms within the political dialogue. Obtained results may affect the interaction between the public and the Russian authority structures. Consequently, the data obtained may contribute to developing the mechanisms of influence on the formation of political consciousness and improve the communication channels between the government and the public. The objectives of the present study are to:

1. Determine the level of social media popularity among the population of the Russian Federation of different ages compared to traditional media;
2. Obtain new empirical data on the most used types of social media regarding political discourse among different segments of the Russian population based on the analysis of surveys conducted in the study;
3. Identify the level of involvement of individuals in political dialogue.

The main tasks are to:

- Consider social media as a channel for implementing the phenomenon of political discourse;
- Identify the reasons for the popularity of different social media types among the population;
- Analyze the relationship between social media and changes in political processes;

Determine the influence of social media on the worldview of citizens and political phenomena.

Methods and Materials

Research Design and Sample

The present research presupposed the use of a door-to-door survey conducted through telephone interviews among different citizens of Moscow, the Russian Federation. The phone numbers were selected from the database of subscribers who participated in the loyalty program of the Vodafone mobile operator. Citizens of the Russian Federation registered in Moscow, aged 18 to 80 years, who filled out a questionnaire at the MTS (Mobile TeleSystems) service center while registering for the loyalty program became the study participants automatically. Five expert sociologists from the Center for Independent Sociological Research (CISR, Moscow) conducted a survey and analyzed the results. CISRus is a non-profit association of scholars and experts. They conduct unbiased, in-depth social research to enrich scientific knowledge and strengthen civil society. Experts are working to improve the scientific understanding of various processes in society, using knowledge gained as a result of interdisciplinary work in the social sciences. They are researchers in the field of sociology. It is significant to mention that the survey presupposed interviewing the respondents using an original questionnaire compiled by the authors of this study. Each respondent was asked to answer questions from the questionnaire, which meant choosing one correct answer. Due to the fact that the sample was large enough to interview all the participants, only three questions in the questionnaire were enough. At the same time, the questions were designed in such a way that their small number made it possible to obtain the necessary answers for qualitative and quantitative results. Data analysis took place in the SPSS environment (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). SPSS is software for editing and analyzing all sorts of data. These data may come from basically any source: scientific research, a customer database, Google Analytics or even the server log files of a website. The role of sociological experts in data processing using this resource was to collect responses and transfer them to a table for further processing. To do this, it was necessary to calculate the quantitative results.

The door-to-door survey necessitated the conduction of a telephone interview which lasted for 15 days. Thus, the survey covers the period from April 10, 2021, to April 25, 2021. The statistical error of the survey results does not exceed 2%. The study was divided into 2 stages. The first stage - 'the implementation stage' - presupposed the conduction of the interviews and data collection which lasted 10 days. Each respondent's responses were obtained from phone calls that were recorded. Participants were informed about this. During the telephone conversation, the researchers asked questions one after the other in a logical sequence. If they didn't get an answer to one question, they couldn't move on to the next. It is worth stating that at this stage, the respondents who answered that they do not use modern social media and prefer traditional means were separately noted. The remaining individuals in the sample were interviewed according to the approved questionnaire.

The second stage - 'the catamnesis stage' - included the analysis of the data obtained and the preparation of the reports. Accordingly, the second stage lasted 5 days. The analysis was carried out by counting the received data and converting them into statistical data (percentage ratio). They are presented in the form of diagrams. The data was automatically processed by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Also, at this stage, the statistical results obtained were compared with the data from the Digital report in the USA for 2020.

Participants

The present survey presupposed randomly interviewing 3212 subscribers to form a study sample of 1 000 respondents. The response rate was 31.1%. Male respondents comprised 50% and female respondents made up 50% of the total number of participants. Thus, the survey provided gender equality among study participants.

The respondents were selected according to a quota sample. Citizens of the Russian Federation living in Moscow of different social statuses and annual incomes formed a central frame of the study. As a consequence, the total number of participants was divided into 5 groups regarding their backgrounds:

- Group A included students who studied in higher educational institutions aged 18 - 22 years without additional earnings;
- Group B comprised homemakers aged 25 - 40 years;
- Group C consisted of individuals with an income of up to 35,000 rubles/month;
- Group D included persons with income over 45,000 rubles/month;
- Group E contained pensioners.

Limitations

Since there is a possibility of distortion of the answers by the survey participants, the present study may have inaccurate results. Furthermore, social pressure and the image of different social media types in modern Russian society could affect the objectivity of respondent answers. People also tend to portray their positions more positively, depending on trends in society. Ultimately, the survey results cannot be applied to the entire population.

Ethical Research Issues

It is important to mention that the present study guaranteed anonymity within the survey. Since this factor greatly affects the desire of respondents to indicate real information and opinions, it could minimize inaccuracies.

Results

According to the established objectives, it was possible to determine the most popular type of social media among residents of the Russian Federation who used it out of the entertainment context, assess the level of involvement of individuals in the political dialogue, and identify the social media type that most effectively sets up communication between the public and government structures. The present study presupposed the analysis of the following types of social media:

Social Networks

According to the Digital report for 2020, social networks comprised about 3.5 billion users worldwide. In particular, 70 million of them reside in the Russian Federation. Such international social networks as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Vine, LinkedIn, and Snapchat have provided society with the necessary platform not only for entertainment and self-development but also for discussing political and social issues. These platforms have opened up opportunities for full-fledged interaction between people and government agencies. Russian social networks Odnoklassniki and Vkontakte are also popular mainly among citizens of the CIS countries. However, the high level of censorship and screening of Internet activity makes these platforms less interactive regarding political communication.

Blogs

Blogs are essentially personal diaries and platforms for taking notes. Anyone can create a blog and become not just a page administrator in a social network but the head of an entire independent online community. Blogs provide an opportunity to express personal opinions to the public while allowing other users to comment. The interactivity of an independent blog is preserved due to the low censorship level (the government does not interfere with the content moderation, which builds on the hosting rules).

OVPs (Online Video Platforms)

The most popular video hosting service in the Russian Federation and the world is YouTube. According to Digital data for 2020, the number of active users of YouTube is two billion per month. YouTube allows anyone to start blogging on any topic. The platform creators determine the rules and do not allow the influence of political actors on the content of individuals. Nevertheless, in recent years, statements of political opinion on YouTube by Russian bloggers have caused a wave of arrests and administrative penalties, resulting in tacit censorship in the Russian media space.
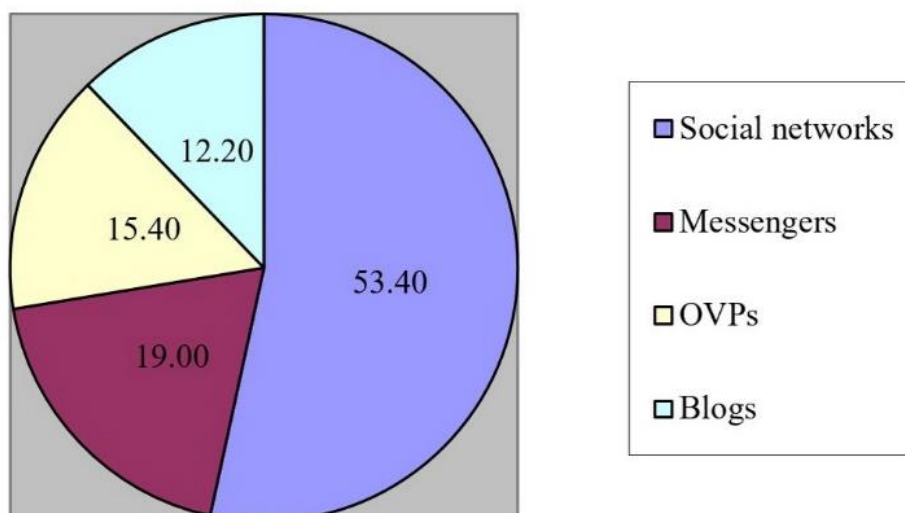
Messengers

Messengers are a unique media communication system. They provide communication between a wide range of users. If young and middle-aged people mainly focus on social networks and blogs, older citizens prefer using messengers. The relative accessibility of mobile gadgets has allowed older people who do not use the Internet to search for information or entertainment on their own to receive news from friends and family on the principle of word of mouth. The peculiarity of messengers is that most people of retirement age, receiving information from acquaintances, do not double-check it, perceiving it as the truth. In this case, messengers work on the principle of traditional media that distribute news and allow citizens to discuss information in small social groups, not publicly. The number of active users of messengers around the world, according to Digital data for 2020, is 6 million people per month. The SPSS analysis of the survey demonstrated that the number of respondents using social media is 98%. Accordingly, 2% noted that they do not use social media and prefer using traditional media (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Number of Respondents Using Social Media
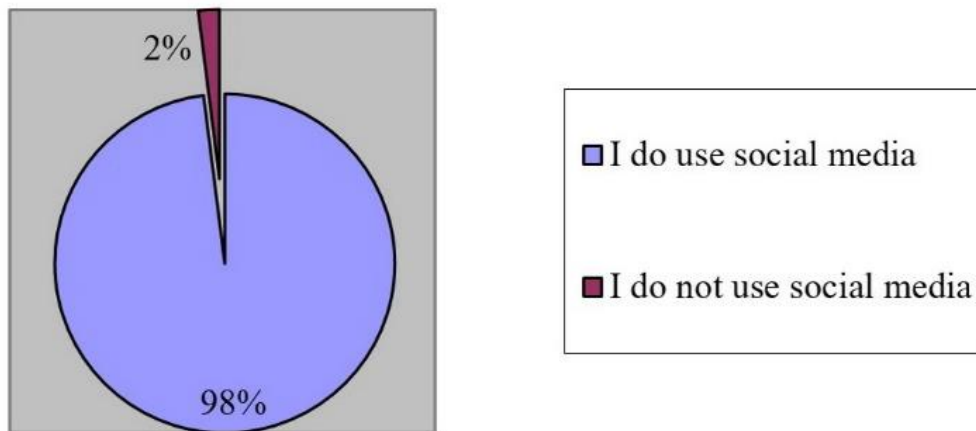
Accordingly, 2% of 1000 respondents are 20 people. The subsequent survey and the analysis of the results regarded the remaining sample of 980 people. Based on the survey, the respondents of Group A indicated that they use social networks in terms of political discourse most frequently (55.5%). Consequently, they used OVPs (21.5%), messengers (12%), and blogs (11%) less frequently. It shows that young students are more likely to use social networks since there is the most simple and accessible way to get information about political discourse. The answers of homemakers show the same. Among the respondents of Group B, social networks were the most popular (61%) while messengers (20.5%), OVPs (14.5%), and blogs (4%) had less popularity. Group C also indicated that they used social networks most frequently (59%). Video hosting (31%) was rated the second most popular social media, while messengers (8%) and blogs (2%) had lower results. The respondents of Group D indicated that social networks (54.5%) and blogs (29.5%) are the most preferable social media. Accordingly, messengers (12%) and video hosting (4%) had less popularity. It proves the ease of use and the reliability of the information perceived by users of different social and age statuses. The respondents of Group E demonstrated other results. They mostly use messengers (45%) and social networks (35%), while blogs (15%) and video hosting (5%) had less significance in their lives.

Figure 2
Social Media Popularity among Study Participants in Terms of Political Discourse

Thus, according to the conducted survey, social networks (53.4%) are the most popular social media type among respondents who use them out of the entertainment context. The second most popular social media was messengers (19%). Accordingly, OVPs (15.4%) and blogs (12.2%) were among the least usable social media types (Figure 2).

Based on the responses received about the interactive component of political discourse within social media, the following 3 response methods determined the level of respondent involvement in political dialogue:

1. Participation in online surveys, commenting, and reposting;
2. Blogging;
3. Refusal to participate in the political dialogue.

Consequently, 57.5% of Group A respondents consistently comment on political content, make reposts, and vote in online polls. Some respondents of Group A (39%) maintain blogs, and the rest (3.5%) are not involved in political dialogue at all.

Among the respondents of Group B, the results are slightly different. Most of them (40.5%) refuse to participate in political dialogue, only 31% actively vote in online polls and make comments and reposts, while 28.5% maintain blogs. Group C expressed an active position regarding the first case (50%), moderate level of blogging (33.5%), and passive participation in political dialogue (16.5%).

The Group D respondents had similar results since the first case was the most extensive (47.5%), the second one was less interactive (35.5%), and the third one had the least percentage rate of persons involved (17%). Ultimately, 50% of Group E respondents expressed a high level of involvement in political dialogue, 33.3% maintained blogs, and 12.3% showed a refusal to be politically involved. The answers to this question also show a certain trend. It lies in the fact that participation in online surveys, commenting, and reposting is the most common way of interaction in political discourse on the Internet. This is explained by the fact that blogging or participating in the political dialogue requires more resources, time and money.

As a result, the highest level of the involvement of respondents in political discourse within social media platforms was revealed in the participation in online voting, commenting, and reposting (48%). Accordingly, 34% of respondents maintain their blogs covering topics of a political environment. The number of respondents who do not participate in the political dialogue and are not interested in political content in social media was 18% (Figure 3).

Figure 3
The level of Involvement among Respondents Regarding the Political Discourse on Social Media Platforms
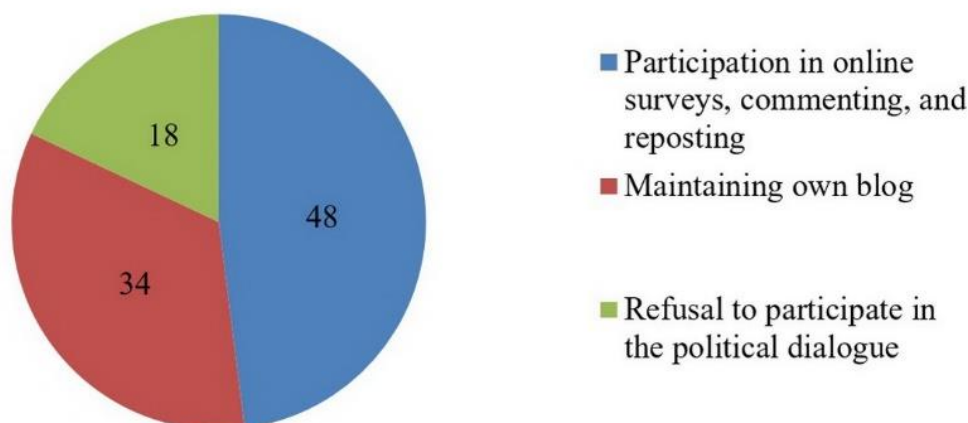
The study results demonstrate that the worldview of individuals of various socio-cultural strata directly affects the degree of their involvement in political discourse. Thus, social networks are generally popular among young citizens, while messengers are convenient for senior citizens.

Discussion

The present research presupposed the analysis of the most popular types of social media and their key features regarding political discourse. The Russian scientific environment lacks comprehensive studies on the role of social media in political discourse. However, this issue has its reflection in foreign studies.

For example, American politicians use social networks to publish information on politics. Thus, researchers studied the way politicians use Twitter to post messages about their beliefs to attract voters in the USA. They also pay attention to the role of celebrities as a tool of power structures to inspire the public to change (Kidd & McIntosh, 2016; Rogers & Niederer, 2020). In this context, it is worth noting that social networks have played a crucial role in the development and globalization of the MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements as civil associations that influence the political atmosphere and legislative bases of the countries worldwide. Nevertheless, according to several sources, the idea of the collapse of social networks as a platform for political dialogue is due to constant surveillance and screening that undermine public opinion (Kushin & Kitchener, 2009).

European countries also deeply study the role of social media in political discourse. Several studies emphasized the imperfections of social networks in terms of political communication due to the social level of the population. Moreover, mobile gadgets and personal PCs are not available to the entire population. Some people of different social backgrounds who constantly use social media note that they experience an overload of political messages; thus, they do not want to see political content in their feeds (Dobler, 2017). Several studies affirm that nowadays, most social media types act as an irritating platform that introduces politics into the interpersonal communication with the family and within entertainment means (Skogerbø & Kunelius, 2017).

For example, India has the highest percentage of active Facebook users worldwide. Accordingly, a surge of political propaganda and agitation on media platforms directly contributed to that (Darshan & Suresh, 2019). Indian studies prove that social media has fenced the population from actual involvement in the political process. The political situation in the country requires actions like attending protests and direct communication with legislators. However, since people began to express their beliefs on the Internet due to convenience and anonymity, they automatically walked away from actual participation in political processes (Neyazi, 2017).

Nevertheless, social networks are effective in increasing the political awareness of citizens and their readiness for dialogue with government representatives (Narayan, 2013; Okoro & Etumnu, 2021). According to the Digital report for 2020 in the USA, 72.3% of citizens prefer social networks to other types of social media.

The results of the abovementioned studies are similar to the data obtained during the present study since the popularity of social networks compared to other types of social media amounted to 53.4%. The OVPs in the United States are popular because the government does not interfere with censorship. Customarily, the developers moderate the rules on such platforms (Lin et al., 2009).

Despite that, public statements on video platforms can lead to arrests or administrative penalties in some countries. The present study also affirms this implication. Accordingly, the bloggers independently decide whether to disclose their identity in a blog or not (Gainutdinov

& Chikov, 2016; Shulga, 2015). The present research excludes the conclusion on the high level of involvement of OVPs in political discourse since the survey conducted within this study showed only 15.4% of the popularity of video blogs compared to other types of social media.

Meanwhile, messengers are one of the most effective means of obtaining information on socio-political life. This implication only partially confirms the results obtained during the survey since messengers were the most popular (19%) among senior citizens who receive information through word of mouth and do not check it in open sources (Kolozaridi & Ilyin, 2015).

On the other hand, a personal blog is a more effective type of social media since it allows individuals to identify their political and social concerns in the media environment and convey their ideas. Such blogs open up a platform for users to discuss political realities (Su et al., 2005).

However, respondents expressed relatively low interest in blogging – 12.2%. This social media type turned out to be the least used among respondents. Thus, the present study cannot confirm that blogs have high popularity. Nevertheless, blogging may act as a platform for establishing a dialogue between civil structures, individuals, and authorities. Accordingly, the principles of anonymity, accessibility, simplicity, and absorption of information may contribute to that.

Due to the overload of information, some respondents expressed unwillingness to participate in the political dialogue; thus, they refused to receive recommendations on political content in social networks and online video platforms. For example, in the United States, more than 55% of adult social media users note that they are tired of political information in their feeds (Boudreau Popovic, 2021).

On the contrary, the data obtained in the present study emphasize the low level of respondent refusal from participating in a political dialogue (18%). Furthermore, respondents expressed a high level of involvement in the political process through participation in online voting, commenting, and reposting information (48%) and maintaining their blogs (34%).

Conclusions

Nowadays, social media has a crucial impact on everyday life forming an exclusive environment regarding the political dialogue between the public and government. Consequently, this research aimed at identifying the role of social media in the political discourse of the Russian Federation through obtaining empirical data on the most popular social media types and determining the level of involvement of individuals in political dialogue.

As a result, the present study demonstrated that social network is the most popular social media type (53.4%) among participants involved in the survey. Accordingly, social networks are followed by messengers (19%), OVPs (15.4%), and blogs (12.2%).

Respondents also expressed a high level of their involvement in the political dialogue through participation in online voting, commenting, reposting (48%), and blogging (34%). Individuals experience positive trends regarding the formation of their worldview. It is due to the information variety and the possibility of expressing opinions anonymously.

The paradox lies in the high popularity of social networks as a means of political and social communication of citizens. Since Russian websites and applications are subject to censorship, it requires deliberate concealment of IP addresses to avoid persecution for expressing alternative political views and criticizing the established political regime. Furthermore, the problems of insufficient knowledge of political discourse in modern social media due to the rapid changes and constant update of online platforms, as well as censorship and screening of social media, undermining public opinion and destabilizing the dialogue between the public and political actors, emerged in the course of the present study.

Understanding the importance of social networks regarding political communication between society and government structures will help political scientists to establish a relevant connection with the public. It will give an opportunity to elaborate on the mechanisms influencing the political consciousness of citizens. The study results may also contribute to improving the effectiveness of campaign advertising. The survey results provided grounds for describing the peculiarities in the functioning of different social media types as platforms for socio-political interaction between citizens and political actors.

The present research has practical and scientific value as it demonstrates the effectiveness of social media in terms of political discourse. Accordingly, the results obtained during this study may contribute to sociological practice for conducting surveys and questionnaires and creating electronic newsletters of social organizations. It may also facilitate studying the methods of the social media impact on the consciousness of individuals. Furthermore, the study results may contribute to the effectiveness of campaigning activities and lobbying the interests of authorities. Thus, the results obtained during this study are universal and may be processed not only in the Russian Federation but also in other countries. They can also replenish the theoretical and empirical knowledge base in the field of sociology, media literacy and media linguistics, as well as be used in research aimed at analyzing the sociolinguistic, informational and political features of media communication.

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Notes on Contributors

Tuan Anh Nguyen is a Postgraduate of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia in Moscow, Russian Federation. Tuan's research interests include political studies, social media in policy etc.

Trung Chi Bui is a Ph.D, Associate Professor at the School of Journalism and Communication of Vietnam National University in Hanoi, Vietnam. Trung is interested in politics, campaigns, elections, social media and information technologies.

Konstantin Sokolovskiy is a Candidate of Juridical Sciences, Associate Professor of the Department of General Subjects of the Humanitarian and Technical Academy in Kokshetau, Kazakhstan. He specializes in interactive component of political communications, the role and impact of the social media in politics.

ORCID

Tuan Anh Nguyen, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2609-9550
Trung Chi Bui, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5423-2729
Konstantin Sokolovskiy, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5529-3865