THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: A BIBLIOMETRIC VISUALIZATION USING VOSVIEWER

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ABSTRAK
Tujuan penelitian ini untuk menganalisis perkembangan tren media sosial dalam partisipasi publik. Data penelitian 427 dokumen Scopus dalam kurun waktu lima tahun terakhir 2021-2025. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis bibliometrik. Analisis data penelitian menggunakan software VOSViewer untuk mengvisualkan data secara auto coding. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukan bahwa tren media sosial berfokus pada issue sentiment, tweet, survey, dan citizen yang banyak digunakan dalam menyampaikan kritik dan pesan yang cepat kepada negara. Ditambah pemerintah di Negara Maju juga menjadikan media sosial sebagai ruang menyampaikan informasi dan komunikasi publik. United States (42%) menjadi negara yang paling signifikan fokus pada pengembangan inovasi dalam tren media sosial yang dimiliki. Tren media sosial di Negara Maju didominasi pengguna laki-laki Reddit (68%), pengguna perempuan didominasi oleh Facebook (60%). Sedangkan, Instagram (59%) menjadi urutan kedua yang banyak digunakan oleh Perempuan. Media X (Twitter) juga menjadi urutan kedua (64%) yang banyak digunakan oleh laki-laki. Namun, berdasarkan usia 18-29 didominasi Tiktok (45%), usia 30-49 didominasi Reddit (46%), usia pada 50-64 (23%) dan 65+ (16%) didominasi Youtube. Implikasi penelitian ini menunjukan bahwa keberadaan media sosial menjadi bagian yang penting pada pesatnya perkembangan Artificial Intelligence, sehingga tren media tidak dapat dikesampingkan keberadaannya.

Kata kunci: *Perkembangan; Tren; Media Sosial; Partisipasi Publik.*

ABSTRACT
This study aims to analyze the development of social media trends in public participation. The research data is 427 Scopus documents from the last five years, 2021-2025. This research method uses a qualitative approach with a bibliometric analysis. The research data analysis uses VOSViewer software to visualize the data by auto-coding. The findings of this study indicate that social media trends focus on issue sentiment, tweets, surveys, and citizens, which are widely used to convey criticism and fast messages to the state. Furthermore, governments in developed countries also use social media as a space to convey information and public communication. The United States (42%) is the country that focuses most significantly on developing innovation in its social media trends. Male users dominate social media trends in developed countries on Reddit (68%), while female users are dominated by Facebook (60%). Meanwhile, Instagram (59%) is the second most used by women. Media X (Twitter) also ranks second (64%) and is widely used by men. However, based on the age group 18-29, TikTok dominates (45%), Reddit dominates (46%) for those aged 30-49, YouTube dominates (23%), and YouTube dominates (16%). The implications of this research indicate that the existence of social media is a crucial part of the rapid development of Artificial Intelligence, so its existence cannot be ignored.

Keywords: Development; Trends; Social Media; Public Participation

INTRODUCTION

The In today's technological era, social media is crucial, including providing information on public opinion (Zubaedah & Syaesti, 2025). Social media is also widely used by government institutions, universities, and the public (Zubaedah & Syaesti, 2025). Furthermore, social media facilitates quick

information searches with the support of artificial intelligence (Jumadi, 2024). Therefore, understanding the sophistication of social media is crucial for educating the public (Höttecke & Allchin, 2020).

Social media should offer two-way information to users in a wise manner that prioritizes ethics (Chamblee, 2022). It is hoped that social media can minimize news containing elements of hoaxes or lacking credibility (Majerczak & Strzelecki, 2022). Data security support and public education are needed to use social media effectively (Kurniawan et al., 2023). The government must provide space for open social media to provide healthy information to the public (Sahid, 2024). Social media is inseparable from society because information is now readily available, including on mobile phones (Harjanti, 2021).

China is the country that prioritizes social media, boasting one billion users. Interestingly, despite the country's blocking of Facebook and Twitter, its population remains highly active on various platforms, including WeChat, Weibo, and Doujin, the Chinese version of TikTok (Azad et al., 2020). Social media in China is not only used for information and communication but also for business and the digital economy (Jiao & Sun, 2021). In India, social media usage has reached approximately 467 million. Due to its dense population, social media is widely used, with platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram dominating social media usage (Meshram & Jayswal, 2020).

Furthermore, social media is used for transparency and accountability to maintain public trust in government announcements and activities (Song & Lee, 2016). In the United States, social media usage has reached approximately 246 million(Hruska & Maresova, 2020). One of the highest internet usages is on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat (Rozgonjuk et al., 2021). Furthermore, governments utilize social media to strengthen digital diplomacy as a crucial information tool for building international relations and conveying official state positions (Barman, 2024).

Between 2021 and 2025, the rapid evolution of social media has introduced significant conceptual and empirical challenges, particularly in understanding the shift from organic public participation toward algorithm-driven engagement, as emerging recommendation systems increasingly generate passive and fragmented interaction patterns that remain underexplored in terms of their impact on public deliberation (Masita et al., 2025; Weingart et al., 2021). This period has also seen intensified misinformation and polarization, yet consensus is lacking on the psychosocial mechanisms shaping virality and the consolidation of digital echo chambers (Guess et al., 2023; Shin & Shin, 2025). Concurrently, the rise of short-form, visually dominated content has deepened new forms of digital inequality, although empirical evidence on its long-term societal effects is still limited (Nanthanasit et al., 2025).

Despite claims of expanded participatory opportunities, scholars increasingly highlight "illusory participation," where heightened online activity fails to translate into substantive civic or political contributions, and existing theoretical frameworks remain inconsistent in capturing this phenomenon (Amadi, 2023; Desmedt et al., 2025). Moreover, the growing dominance of closed-data ecosystems has produced methodological blind spots by restricting data access and reducing algorithmic transparency, thereby undermining the robustness of longitudinal and comparative research in the social sciences (Gorwa, 2024; Just & Saurwein, 2024).

Problems with social media that still frequently occur include the spread of hoaxes and disinformation (Aïmeur et al., 2023). Furthermore, weak data privacy and security, and the rise of polarization and extremism (Burton, 2023). are also contributing to this. Social media user addiction impacts mental health (Ergün et al., 2025). Lack of bibliometric research linking social media trends with the dynamics of public participation. Therefore, this research is crucial for analyzing social media trends to capture the dynamics of public opinion and map the development of social media and its positive impacts and benefits for the public. The novelty of this research lies in its new mapping of social media trends in relation to public participation, achieved through bibliometric analysis. It provides a scientific basis for e-government policymakers and digital platform regulators.

METHOD

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a bibliometric analysis approach. The data source of this research was obtained from Scopus as many as 427 with searches (title-abs-key (social and media) and title-abs-key (public and opinion)) and pubyear > 2021 and pubyear < 2025 and (limit-to (subjarea , "soci")) and (limit-to (doctype , "ar")) and (limit-to (pubstage , "final")) and (limit-to (srctype , "j")) and (limit-to (language , "english")) and (limit-to (exactkeyword , "social media") or limit-to (exactkeyword , "public opinion")).

The inclusion criteria for this study included English-language journal articles indexed by Scopus, published between 2022 and 2024, that were finalized and from the social sciences, explicitly containing the keywords "social media" or "public opinion" in the title, abstract, or keywords. Exclusion criteria included documents that were not journal articles (such as proceedings, reviews, or editorials), not in English, not within the specified year range, irrelevant to the theme of social media and public opinion, outside the social sciences, duplicated data, and documents with incomplete metadata that could not be processed in VOSviewer. Following this screening, a total of 427 articles were selected as the primary dataset for the bibliometric analysis.

The data analysis of this research uses VOSViewer Software to visualize the data findings. The reason for using VOSViewer software is its ability to perform automated and relevant coding using bibliometric analysis (Martins et al., 2024). The analysis was carried out through co-word analysis with a minimum threshold of 5 occurrences per keyword and the complete counting method. Cluster interpretation was performed by identifying core keywords within each group, analyzing the relationships between keywords to capture dominant themes, and identifying subtopics that emerged from their interconnected patterns. The position and proximity of clusters on the visual map also helped demonstrate each cluster's role within the overall research structure. This research is crucial for analyzing the development of social media trends and their use in developed countries, providing additional information for current innovations in Artificial Intelligence (AI). Furthermore, it encourages government transparency in responding to public participation in social media trends.
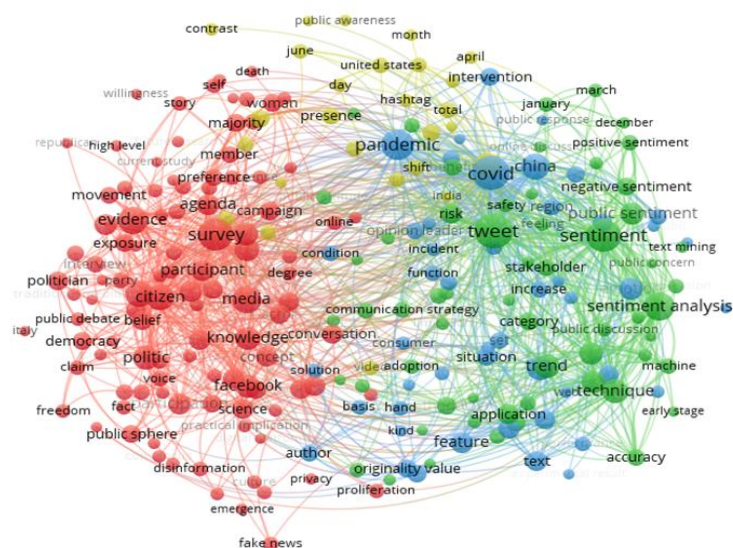
Figure I. Steps of Research Method
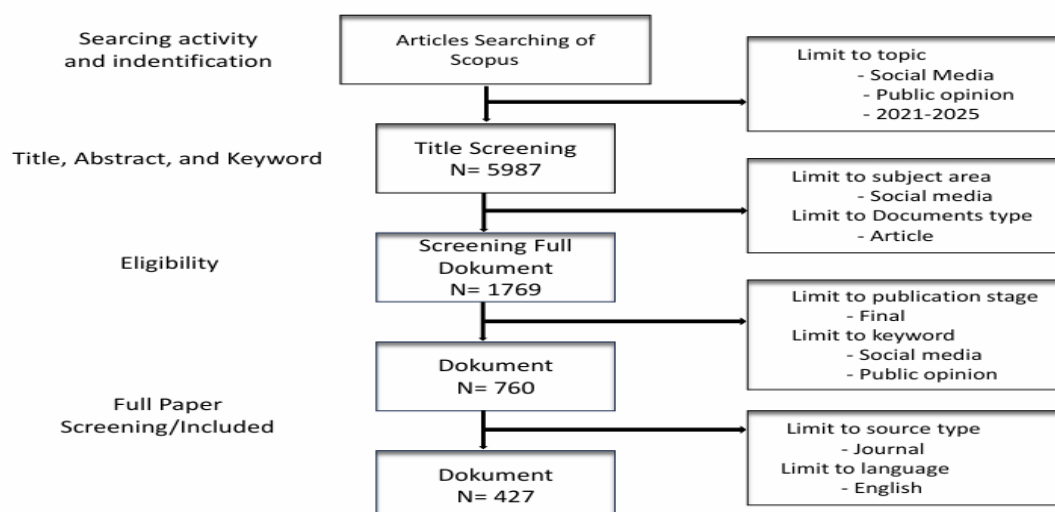
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Political Technology is crucial, reliable, and increasingly sophisticated, spreading worldwide to facilitate user activities (Lestyaningrum et al., 2022). Technology refers to social media as a communication tool for individuals, groups, and organizations (Hidayat et al., 2024). Every year, social media generates discussions across countries and creates trending topics, as seen in Figure II.

Figure II. Trending Topics on Social Media 2021-2025

Figure II above shows that social media trends from 2021 to 2025 are important topics to discuss. Sentiment, tweets, surveys, citizens, the pandemic, and China are the most prominent topics based on the visualization above. Therefore, public use of social media has become a widely used alternative for conveying criticism and messages quickly (Rawat et al., 2021). Social media has also become necessary

for every country, providing space and serving as a tool capable of assisting the government in conveying information and policies to the public (Ausat, 2023).

The red cluster on the left is strongly connected to public discussions and the dynamics of society and politics. The presence of terms like "survey," "participant," "media," "politic," "facebook," "evidence," and "citizen" indicates that this body of study examines individual and collective responses to the epidemic, the dissemination of information via media platforms, and the shaping of public opinion. The strong correlations shown in these studies suggest a common approach that combines behavioral research with media analysis. This commonly involves looking at misinformation, political framing, and how the public gets involved.

The green cluster, located on the right, focuses on sentiment analysis and computational methods. The frequent use of terms like "sentiment," "tweet," "trend," "sentiment analysis," "stakeholder," and "application" highlights the widespread use of machine learning and natural language processing techniques on social media data, notably on Twitter. This group represents the methodological foundation of modern digital observation, where algorithms are employed to analyze public opinions, discover changes in sentiment, and model emotional responses using massive datasets.

The upper section is where the blue cluster is located, representing discussions in epidemiology and public health that are focused on the pandemic. The use of keywords like "pandemic," "covid," "intervention," "public awareness," and "safety measure" indicates that this particular line of research focuses on health campaigns, communication methods, and societal interventions. The placement of this element between the red and green clusters visually emphasizes its role as a bridge.

Public health topics connect with both studies of public perception and computer methods for observing behavior and sentiment. This is supported by the fact that all important state institutions worldwide have social media big data for their internal strategies and innovations in providing information and communication in the public sphere. The following are the ten countries with the most focus and highest use of social media in managing public issues.

**Figure III.** Top 10 Countries in Social Media Trends

Aziz Reza Randisa, Asriadi, Inrinofita Sari
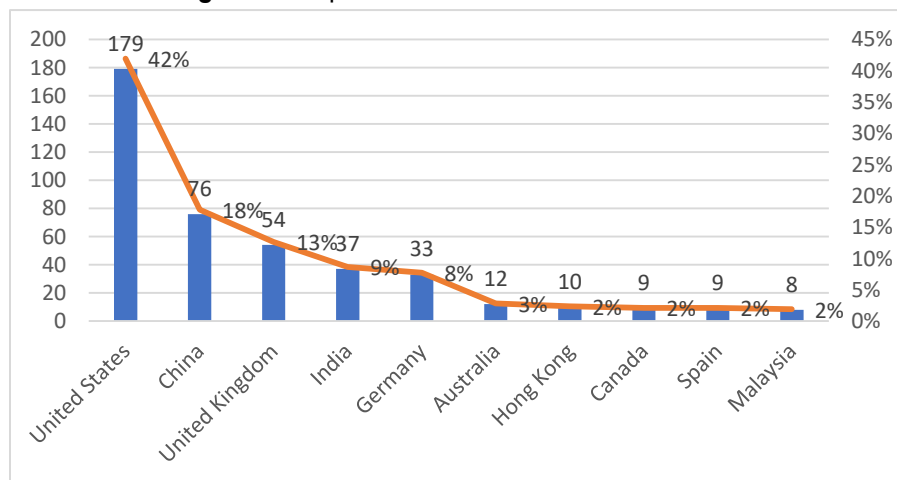
Figure III above shows that the United States (179) has the highest number of discussions on social media trends, with a percentage of 42%. One interesting aspect of social media in the United States is using TikTok among young people, which has a health impact on the community environment. Videos incorporating the social media trend theme on TikTok with the hashtag #climatechange received 156,677,200 (76.22%) views, 32,000,700 (79.60%) likes, and 563,195 (84.55%) comments. This indicates that climate change is represented on TikTok as a legitimate and anxiety-provoking issue (Basch et al., 2022). However, social media platforms like TikTok are crucial for understanding popular public opinion and providing information on current events.

Of the ten countries with the highest number of discussions on social media trends, Malaysia is the only Southeast Asian country with a percentage of 2%. In Malaysia, social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp are utilized as information and communication tools in a democratic political democracy. Twitter and Facebook are crucial channels for those seeking political information. Young people, in particular, have a strong interest in accessing social media as a public discussion tool in the political information (Kasmani, 2024). Furthermore, media trends have fluctuated over the past five years, as visualized in the figure below. The United Kingdom (53; 13%), India (37; 9%), and Germany (33; 8%) are in the middle tier, indicating their established academic positions and their renowned research strengths worldwide.   While their market shares are far less than those of the U.S. and China, they remain reliable players, consistently delivering across all sectors.

This chart's main feature is its ability to show both absolute and relative contributions at the same time. This provides for a more detailed understanding of the differences in global research.   Unlike many bibliometric studies that look at publication numbers or rankings, this graphic combines both measures into a single, two-part view.   This two-pronged methodology emphasizes not just which countries dominate in terms of raw output but also how their proportional impact decreases over the distribution. This reveals structural inequalities that aren't seen from data based solely on counts.

Figure IV. Media Trend 2021-2025
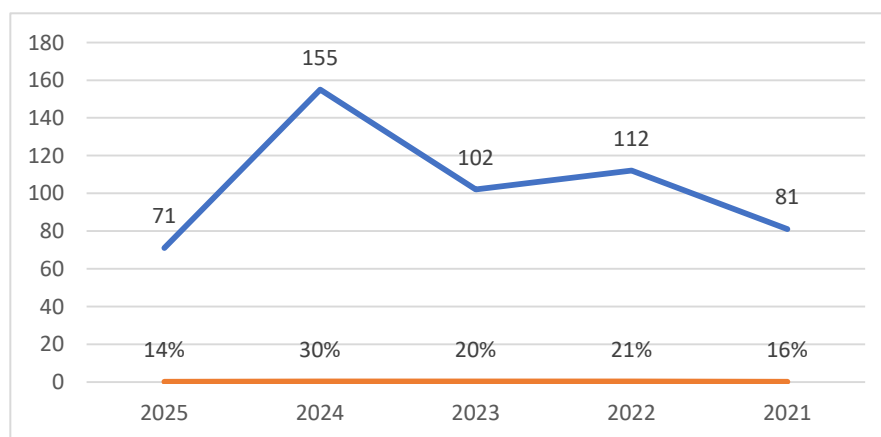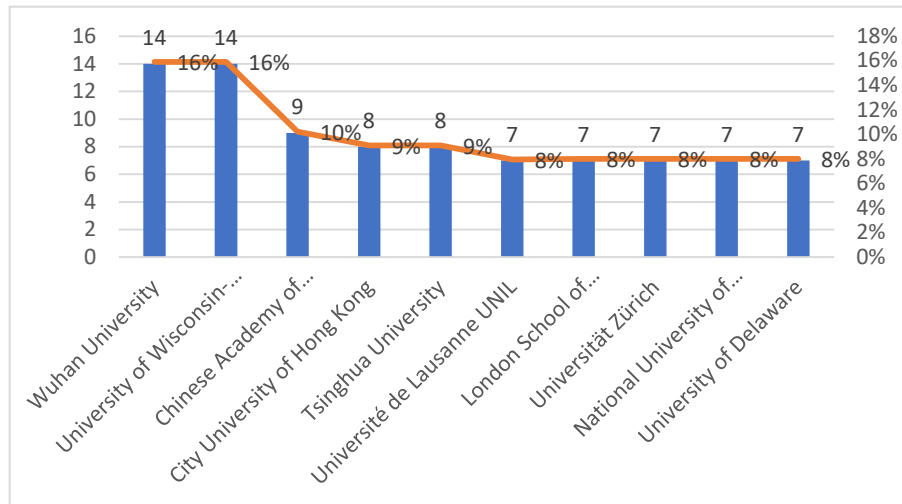

Source: Scopus processed by the author 2025

The graph illustrates the dynamics of publications on social media and public participation from 2021 to 2025, exhibiting a fluctuating pattern that peaks in 2024 (155 articles, 30%), indicating an intensification of academic discourse on the transformation of public participation in the era of algorithms. The significant

increase from 2021 (81 articles) to 2024 reflects the accelerated scholarly attention to changing public communication patterns, driven by the dominance of digital platforms and the expansion of increasingly data-driven forms of participation. However, the decline in 2025 (71 articles; 14%) indicates a consolidation phase, where research issues begin to shift or enter a stage of conceptual deepening. Furthermore, China was very enthusiastic in conducting research studies in universities by raising trending issues on social media, as shown in Figure V below.
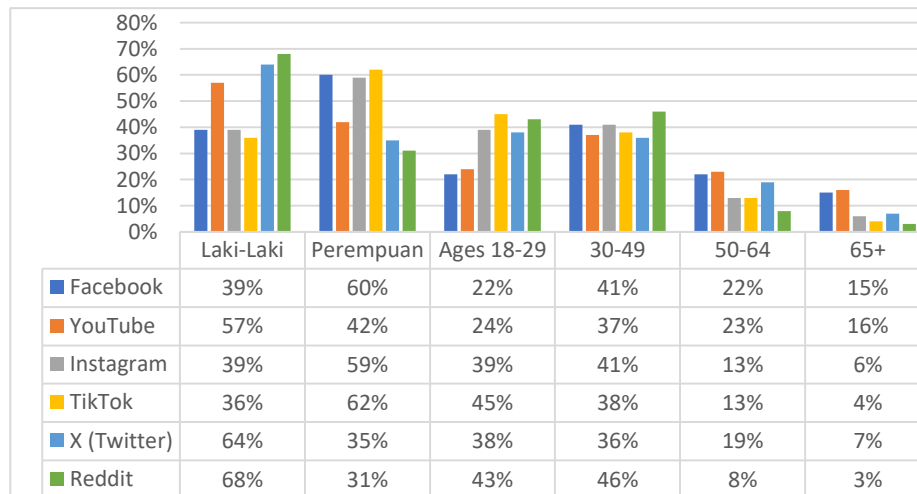
Figure V. Affiliations focused on media trends 2021-2025

Figure V shows ten affiliates focusing on media trends in the last five years. With this, four affiliates of Higher Education in China dominate, such as Wuhan University (14), Chinese Academy of Sciences (9), City University of Hong Kong (8), and Tsinghua University (8) (Krishna et al., 2025). In several scientific studies, issues of social media trends are discussed such as misinformation/disinformation spread, privacy and data disclosure behavior, social media and academic performance/impact on education, urban-rural differences in psychological expression/stress through social media, fact-checking and its effects on public attitudes, the influence of social media on international public opinion / foreign perceptions, regulations, identity policies and real identity obligations (real name policies) (Weizhao Li et al., 2023). China consistently discusses media trends in scientific writing (Reeves, 2016).

City University of Hong Kong, in the second tier, accounted for nine articles, or 10% of the total. Tsinghua University and Université de Lausanne (UNIL) each contributed eight outputs, representing 9%. These universities are noted for their strategic focus on interdisciplinary research, and their publication records show significant global involvement, especially in areas involving technology, data analysis, and studies of society. The third group includes institutions that produced seven outputs (8%), such as the London School of Economics, the University of Zurich, the National University of Singapore, and the University of Delaware. Even though their numbers are slightly down, their contributions are still important. This indicates that strong, specialized research groups are maintaining a steady level of publication activity. We also need to know which applications are frequently used in social media, as shown in Figure VI below.

Figure VI. Media trend issues 2021-2025

	Laki-Laki	Perempuan	Ages 18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
■ Facebook	39%	60%	22%	41%	22%	15%
■ YouTube	57%	42%	24%	37%	23%	16%
■ Instagram	39%	59%	39%	41%	13%	6%
■ TikTok	36%	62%	45%	38%	13%	4%
■ X (Twitter)	64%	35%	38%	36%	19%	7%
■ Reddit	68%	31%	43%	46%	8%	3%

Source: Adapted from Boulianne et al., (2024)

Figure VI above shows the percentage of the largest application users in social media. Social media applications make it very easy for users to search for information or send online messages through the application being used (Moyle et al., 2019). This indicates that application use is accessible to all groups from 18 years to 65 years and older who have a mobile phone to open the desired application (Helbostad et al., 2017). The social media application men widely use is the Reddit application, reaching 68% because the application allows discussions on various topics ranging from news, sports, technology, and provides information from all corners of the world.

However, the Reddit application has very few users aged 65 years and above, reaching only 3%. This is because the application is complex with a design and features that are difficult for those aged 65 and above to understand. Usually, people of that age prefer face-to-face and use simple applications to find information and communicate (Jaafar et al., 2014). The differences across generations become much more obvious when we look at them by age groupings. Individuals between 18 and 29 years old show a clear affinity for Instagram (39%), TikTok (45%), and X/Twitter (38%). This underscores the appeal of quick, graphically engaging, and trend-focused platforms for younger users.

In contrast, individuals aged 30 to 49 demonstrate a more balanced use of several platforms, with a consistent, though less intense, engagement on Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. People in this age bracket seem to diversify their online presence, rather than focusing on just one platform. Older age groups show a significant decrease in usage. Adults aged 50 to 64 use Facebook (22%) and YouTube (23%) at moderate levels, but they don't utilize trend-based sites like TikTok and Instagram very much. In contrast, the 65-and-over demographic exhibits the least engagement on all platforms. Facebook (15%) and YouTube (16%) continue to serve as their principal digital entry points, a pattern presumably attributable to established familiarity and reduced cognitive demands.

A key novel insight is the clear polarization in gendered platform usage: women gravitate toward community-building, image-based platforms, while men dominate text-oriented, debate-driven spaces. This distinction suggests that social media environments cultivate not only different forms of interaction but also

Aziz Reza Randisa, Asriadi, Inrinofita Sari

different types of digital cultures. Additionally, the analysis provides a fresh perspective on age-related patterns. The sharp contrast between younger users (who prefer multimedia and algorithm-driven platforms) and older users (who remain anchored to Facebook and YouTube) illustrates how generational experiences shape digital behavior. This offers a more refined understanding of media consumption beyond simple "youth vs. elderly" dichotomies. Apart from that, the six social media applications that are frequently used from all corners of the world can be seen in the six images below.

Figure VII. Ten Social Media with the Most Users in 2024
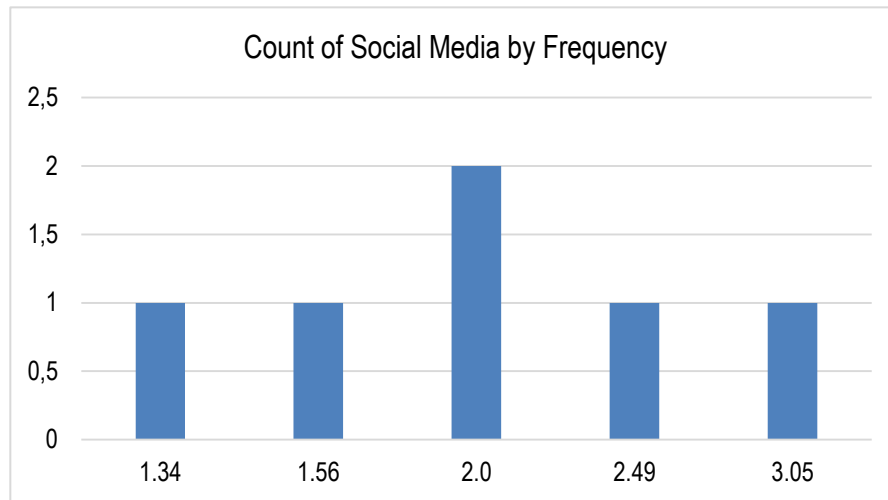
Source: Adapted from GoodStats, 2024

Figure VII above shows that social media is a tool that helps users find information and communicate. This is because several social media applications, especially Facebook, dominate, reaching 3.05 billion users. This Facebook application uses economical data packages to access the full range of features available on Facebook (Bechmann, 2013). Facebook has attractive features such as sharing statuses, videos, photos, and a marketplace to facilitate online buying and selling (Piranda et al., 2022). Furthermore, Facebook is also used for social and political engagement, such as political campaigns, social mobilization, and public discussions (Movements, 2020). Meanwhile, WeChat has the lowest user base, reaching only 1.35 billion users compared to the other five applications. This decline in users is due to WeChat's criticism of the misuse of personal data and users reporting frequent account blocking without their knowledge (Wan Li, 2023). This has resulted in a significant decline in the number of active users.

Social media is a powerful tool that helps people worldwide access information and communicate remotely using mobile phones, making it easier for users (Abel et al., 2021; Akanle et al., 2021). This makes social media essential to everyday life (Sikumbang et al., 2024). Social media must be properly understood to distinguish between hoaxes and genuine information (Wahyono et al., 2020). Therefore, we must be wise in using social media properly and correctly (Eryadini, 2021). However, social media is a learning tool through various applications such as YouTube, WhatsApp, and Instagram to deliver material, hold discussions, and provide online guidance (Appollis & Sutcliffe, 2022). Furthermore, in government, social media is also used as a political campaign tool to disseminate information about visions and missions and build public image so voters can see and interact with them (Lestari et al., 2024; Ugwuanyi et al., 2019).

Capturing the Dynamics of Public Opinion

Findings from the keyword network map suggest that public opinion on social media is shaped through a complex interplay between political issues, social dynamics, and crisis discourse. The red cluster containing keywords such as participant, citizen, survey, politics, and Facebook illustrates that social media has become a primary arena for opinion articulation and citizen participation. The presence of keywords such as "fake news" and "movement" also indicates that the process of public opinion formation is heavily influenced by the rapid flow of information and the uncertainty of sources.

Furthermore, the user demographics graph reveals that public opinion expression is not homogeneous; the 18–29 age group is more dominant on TikTok and Instagram, so their opinions tend to be quick, visual, and emotional. In contrast, users aged 30–49 on Twitter and Facebook tend to express more argumentative and political opinions. Previous literature confirms that demographic composition influences the types of opinions that dominate a platform (Mellon & Prosser, 2017; Mitchelstein et al., 2023). Therefore, the findings of this study confirm that differences in age, gender, and platform preferences influence the dynamics of public opinion on social media, which in turn affect how public issues are produced and disseminated.

Mapping the Development of Social Media

Bibliometric mapping reveals that content issues do not solely drive social media developments from 2021 to 2025, but are also influenced by technological transformations and the adoption of algorithms in user behavior analysis. The green cluster displays keywords such as trend, technique, sentiment analysis, feature, and application, indicating that social media studies are increasingly moving towards data-driven and artificial intelligence-driven approaches. This trend aligns with the literature, which states that social media is evolving into a "data laboratory" that records users' digital footprints on a large scale (Shiells et al., 2022).

Demographic charts show significant changes: new platforms like TikTok are experiencing significant growth among female and younger users, while Facebook remains dominant among older age groups. This shift in user base is an indicator of the increasingly segmented social media ecosystem, where each platform shapes a distinct culture of interaction and style of information dissemination. These findings reinforce previous literature that social media development is multidimensional, encompassing algorithmic transformation, changes in content consumption patterns, and shifts in user composition.

Positive Impacts and Benefits for Society

The blue cluster visualization results, which contain keywords such as public awareness, intervention, situation, safety, and knowledge, show that social media plays a significant role in raising public awareness and supporting crisis communication. Previous literature suggests that during the pandemic and post-global crisis, social media has become a primary channel for disseminating health information, public education, and psychosocial support (Jeremi & Tua, 2025). Findings from the demographic graph indicate that each platform has specific strengths: TikTok and Instagram are suitable for rapid educational campaigns targeting the younger generation, Facebook is effective for reaching communities across ages, and Twitter (X) serves as a space for rapid discourse and policy advocacy.

This combination demonstrates that the social benefits of social media emerge when content is tailored to user characteristics and orientations. This research reinforces previous studies that emphasize that social media not only triggers disruption but also provides significant benefits, including increasing digital literacy, expanding access to information, and empowering communities to respond more effectively to social issues and disasters.

In today's era, social media rapidly disseminates information this is further enhanced by artificial intelligence (Khanom, 2023). Furthermore, social media makes it easier to shop for clothes online, eliminating the need to crowd into traditional markets (Naeem & Ozuem, 2021). Therefore, we must understand how to simplify all activities involving social media (Luttrell, 2025). Meanwhile, various countries worldwide have prioritized using social media as a vital tool in digital diplomacy and international relations (Luttrell, 2025; Muaka, 2021). Furthermore, countries use social media to promote their national image, attract investment, and build collaborative networks with other nations (Kvasničková Stanislavská et al., 2020). These platforms facilitate the spread of national culture and values worldwide, strengthening a nation (Dahlan, 2024; Zalli, 2024).

Collectively, these trends signal a broader paradigm shift in public communication theory from traditional dialogic models toward frameworks centered on algorithmic mediation, platform-structured engagement, and increasingly fragmented forms of participation. The 2024 surge underscores the recognition of social media as a structural force shaping public opinion flows, while the 2025 downturn indicates a reflective phase in which scholars reassess the capacity of classical theories to explain participation that is now more passive, automated, and algorithmically conditioned.

CONCLUSION

Bibliometric mapping shows that the dominant themes in research on social media and public participation include sentiment analysis, public opinion, and policy communication. Publication trends increased sharply in 2024, driven largely by contributions from developed countries, particularly the United States. These findings reinforce that social media has become a primary tool for governments to disseminate policy information and for citizens to express both critical feedback and constructive solutions. However, significant challenges remain, particularly the need to strengthen cybersecurity and enhance public digital literacy to ensure that government–citizen interactions on social media can be utilized more effectively and safely.

The results also indicate a paradigm shift in public communication theory—from traditional linear and dialogic models toward new frameworks emphasizing algorithmic mediation, platform governance, and data-driven public engagement. The prominence of research on sentiment analysis and public opinion suggests that contemporary public communication theory must integrate the roles of algorithms, information distribution speed, and the emotional dynamics of online audiences to understand emerging patterns of digital participation better.

Furthermore, the findings highlight that social media has become a strategic infrastructure for governments in developing more responsive and participatory policy communication. High levels of public engagement on digital platforms enable governments to obtain real-time feedback, monitor public

sentiment, and disseminate policy information more effectively. Nevertheless, the optimal use of these opportunities depends on stronger cybersecurity measures, improved public digital literacy, and the capacity of governmental institutions to manage data analytics and public opinion dynamics in an ethical and responsible manner.

Future research is recommended to employ longitudinal and mixed-methods approaches to capture the dynamics of public participation in greater depth. Additionally, subsequent studies should broaden their scope to include developing countries, examine the role of algorithms in shaping public opinion, and address the increasingly critical issues of misinformation and digital security within the social media ecosystem.

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