

Two Goals, One Thing: Ensuring Short-Term Political Efficacy Without Sacrificing Social Responsibility Crossing Powerful Social Media Platforms

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Abstract: Social media platforms develop rapidly into vital channels for information dispersal, raising questions about the effect on societal well-being and political landscapes. This study explores how social media companies can effectively balance long-term social obligations against immediate political imperatives. Through a comprehensive literature review, content analysis, and case studies, this research examines the policies and practices of popular platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. The objective of this paper is to propose a multifaceted approach for social media companies to advance in social responsibility. This study employed a comprehensive approach that involved optimizing algorithms to prioritize content quality, fostering strong collaborations with third parties, promoting community self-governance, investing in research initiatives, and implementing a comprehensive social responsibility strategy. The central argument of this paper is that tension between corporate objectives and social responsibility can be alleviated, paving way to enhanced sustainability and a stronger ethical foundation for these platforms.

Keywords: Short-term political goals, Social responsibilities, Social media platforms, Information, Social polarization

1. Introduction

In the field of media studies, there has been significant interest in examining the social impact of digital platforms, especially social media. While earlier research focused on user engagement and data privacy, current research addressed the platforms' societal and ethical roles. However, a research gap remains on how these platforms balance long-term social responsibility with immediate political objectives in a complex global context.

This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the strategies used by social media companies in striking a delicate balance between social responsibility and short-term political goals. To be specific, it tried to answer the questions of how social media platforms can modify algorithms to align with social responsibility, the role of third-party collaborations in building public trust, and how self-governance within digital communities contribute to ethical standards.

To find the answers of these questions, the study adopts a mixed-method approach that combines a comprehensive literature review and case studies. The findings of this research will contribute to the ethical discussions related to digital platforms, providing practical insights for policymakers,

industry stakeholders, as well as the academic community. Besides, it will shed light on the ways for platforms to engage in socially responsible behavior while still meeting corporate and political objectives.

2. The Impact of Social Media Involvement on Short-term Political Goals

2.1. Information Control and Dissemination

In today's digital world, social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook hold significant power, extending beyond social interaction. During the "Arab Spring," they showcased their ability to spread information rapidly and widely, turning tweets into protest tools and Facebook posts into catalysts for revolution. The 2017 Women's March, organized online, demonstrated Facebook's capacity to mobilize people in the real world. Similarly, the "Black Lives Matter" hashtag transformed from a digital outcry into a force influencing policies and legislation. These examples highlight the substantial impact of social media movements. Twitter and Facebook have become influential tools, shaping collective action and making their presence felt beyond the virtual realm [1-3].

2.2. Data and Manipulation

The modern digital era is characterized by a constant flow of data, with platforms like Facebook and Twitter serving as not just communication tools but also repositories of valuable information. However, the misuse of data for political purposes, as exemplified by the Cambridge Analytica scandal during the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election, has raised concerns about the vulnerability of a data-driven world. This incident highlighted the risks associated with manipulating digital footprints for political gain, leading to increased awareness of manipulative political marketing [4,5].

2.3. Social Segmentation and Polarization

The advent of digital platforms initially promised open dialogue but has increasingly fostered closed echo chambers. Underlying algorithms have solidified viewpoints, leading to societal polarization. The concept of "Filter Bubble" has tangible implications, notably observed during Brazil's 2018 presidential election, where algorithmic segmentation exacerbated political divisions. To address these challenges, it is crucial to recognize the consequences of algorithm-driven content curation beyond the digital world [6,7,8].

3. Importance of Long-term Social Responsibility

3.1. Information and Cognitive Stress

The contemporary digital environment presents a paradox where individuals have unprecedented access to information but also face cognitive stress and challenges in discerning truth from falsehood [9]. The rise of social media platforms exacerbates this dilemma by converging information streams and amplifying the difficulty of reliable information evaluation. Examples such as the influx of misinformation during the 2016 U.S. presidential election and conflicting data during the COVID-19 pandemic highlight the complexities faced by individuals and society [10,11].

3.2. Data and Manipulation

The utilization of vast data resources in the social media matrix presents both opportunities and risks [12]. On one hand, it enables customized user experiences, while on the other hand, it can be manipulated to shape public sentiment and influence elections. The Facebook-Cambridge Analytica

scandal exposed the dark side of data misuse, highlighting the ethical concerns of surveillance capitalism [13]. This commodification and manipulation of personal data violate privacy norms and threaten democratic foundations [14].

3.3. Socio-economic and Legal Concerns

Social media giants, like Facebook, exert significant influence on society, impacting the economy, digital law, and national security. Through adept use of user data, they dominate the economy, exacerbating economic disparities [15,16]. Legal challenges, such as copyright complexities and defamation disputes, pose a regulatory dilemma for platforms [17]. Exploitation of platforms for cyber espionage activities raises concerns about national security. Thus, stricter oversight and regulations are necessary to address the concerns [18,19].

4. Potential solutions

4.1. Optimizing Algorithms and Content Quality Management

The pressing need to align algorithms with societal well-being is evident. Algorithms primarily prioritize content that generates quick engagement, sometimes leading to the amplification of misinformation. By reconfiguring these algorithms, platforms can slow down the spread of misleading narratives. A notable example of proactive action is Twitter's initiative to highlight dubious political tweets [20]. That being said, the challenge lies in addressing concerns raised by users who claim it infringes upon freedom of speech. To translate this need into action, platforms must not only refine algorithms but also engage in ongoing dialogues with users to ensure transparency. Additionally, strengthening user education, as demonstrated by comprehensive information literacy programs in Finland, is essential for promoting responsible content consumption [21].

4.2. Strengthening Third-Party Collaboration and Transparency

Third-party verification and transparency are vital in the pursuit of public trust. Although Facebook's Oversight Board has shown promise, it has also faced skepticism [22]. To overcome these doubts, platforms must provide transparency regarding their data policies and partnerships. Google's biannual "Transparency Report" serves as a testament to this approach [23]. By collaborating with non-governmental organizations and government agencies, platforms can strengthen their commitment to societal welfare and avoid political agendas [24]. However, such collaborations might sometimes be seen as compromising user data. Therefore, practical steps involve establishing clear collaboration guidelines and ensuring users are consistently informed.

4.3. Community Self-Governance and Legal Compliance

Empowering communities to monitor their own content can foster a strong sense of ownership. The success of Reddit's science community moderation serves as evidence [25]. However, it is crucial to ensure that user-led moderation does not deteriorate into censorship or bias. From a legal standpoint, platforms' adherence to international norms is essential. The Indian controversy surrounding TikTok highlights the consequences of inadequate oversight [26]. To take actionable steps, platforms should actively collaborate with legal experts across different regions, ensuring compliance while also upholding user rights.

4.4. Continuous Research and Innovation

Conducting research steadfastly ensures that platforms develop in a responsible manner. Surveys conducted by institutions such as Pew Research have revealed the social impact of social media [27]. These findings should directly influence platform modifications. Additionally, inviting user feedback and taking action based on that feedback ensures that these innovations resonate with the user community.

4.5. Comprehensive Social Responsibility Strategy

The interaction between social media platforms and its social responsibility has long been a topic of academic interest. As Weller et al. emphasized, the multifaceted nature of social responsibility is crucial in today's digital age [28]. Firstly, adjusting algorithms to eliminate echo chambers is not only a technical challenge but also a societal urgency. Tufekci argues that platform neutrality often distorts genuine public discourse, underscoring the necessity of algorithmic transparency [29]. Beyond the digital realm, platforms can also find value in historical and cultural contexts. Inspired by European initiatives, public and educational programs that foster critical thinking can mitigate the challenges posed by misinformation. In this regard, Ito et al. highlight the role of "connected learning" in modern teaching strategies, which can align seamlessly with platform policies [30].

Research on the relationship between mental health and digital platforms is lacking. However, emerging tools like Woebot, as mentioned by Fitzpatrick et al., imply the potential of AI-driven mental health assistance in this field [31].

The current challenge remains in ensuring user trust and accessibility. Lastly, ethical considerations are crucial for the future development of platforms. According to Floridi's research on information ethics, it is essential to establish clear and user-centric technological guidelines [32]. From the perspective of academic insights, the implementation of these strategies can strike a balance between the platform's business ambitions and social responsibility.

The main focus of this article is to timely explore how social media platforms negotiate between short-term political objectives and long-term social responsibility. Due to its structural emphasis, this article inevitably overlooks other related factors such as international politics or the role of multi-stakeholder governance in shaping these dynamics. These additional factors can provide additional dimensions for analyzing the tension and coordination between short-term political interests and long-term social welfare.

5. Conclusion

This study delves into the balance between real-time political agendas and long-term social responsibility on social media. While presenting potential strategies for coordination, it acknowledges their limitations, particularly in terms of the feasibility of actual implementation due to potential government or corporate resistance. The key message emphasizes the importance of individual awareness of this tension. The practical constraints imposed by states or corporations on these strategies should also be a focus of future research.

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