The Impact of the Rise of Social Media on the Ideology and Practice of Multiculturalism

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Abstract: The rise of social media has had a huge impact on multiculturalism. Multiculturalism has been associated with the coexistence of many different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, and it can refer to mixed ethnic communities with different cultural traditions, which its advocates see as a fairer system that allows individuals to properly express who they are in society; opponents argue that multiculturalism is problematic because it shifts the focus from demands for equality to specific demands for special treatment. This article analyses how the rise of social media has influenced the idea and practice of multiculturalism (nationalism) in five different ways in a particular context. And in the 'Discussion' section it gives a further analysis of the insights gained.

Keywords: Multiculturalism; Nationalism; Anti-Nationalism; Social Media

Introduction

Social media communication has become indispensable for the world (Somayya, Siddharth, 2021) as social media is the most influential communication tool nowadays (Zhao, 2018). In politics, social media influences political campaigns, social revolutions, demonstrations, etc (Bogdan, Patrut, 2014). For example, many political commentators pointed to the success of new media in politics during the campaign of Barack Obama in 2008, and the emergence of platforms like Twitter functions as the major social media platform to mobilise people to participate in various demonstrations. Social media also plays an important role in behavior guiding. Research by Willoughby and Jessica (2019) points out that the level of media use by American college students is positively correlated with skin damage behavior after social media platforms advocated for women to get outdoors under the sun (Fitts, Myrick, 2019). In creative and cultural industries, social media also functions largely. For example, the music, movies, and other cultural forms of the Korean Wave became a global sensation in 2012 with the success of Gangnam Style by Seoul rapper Psy through social media apps (Dal Yong, 2016). Similarly, the rise of social media also has had a huge impact on multiculturalism. This article analyses how the rise of social media has influenced the thought and practice of multiculturalism (nationalism) from five different aspects in specific contexts. While in the 'Discussion' section it gives the further analysis of the takeaways taken, and it summarises all the points and indicates the limitations for the research, and suggests topics for possible future analysis in the last 'Conclusion' section.

1. The impact of social media on multiculturalism

With the spread of ICT (information and communications technology), and based on the big data algorithms, the impact of the surge of social media on multiculturalism is very complex, which depends on various situations, including positive and negative ones.

2. More awareness of multiculturalism

The rise of social media has helped to increase understanding of multiculturalism, including its causes, historical

background, current developments, and vivid examples, based on the strong expansion, depth, and speed of social media (Zhang, Peng, 2015). Budirahayu Et al (2018) also indicated that 'understanding diversity is known by young people through various media outlets' (Budirahayu, Et al., 2018, p.2). This is due to the fact that currently, most people use social media platforms (Twitter, Weibo, Instagram) to get the latest news on politics, entertainment, education, livelihoods (Lee, 2015), and also information on multiculturalism. Such information, being disclosed among social media platforms, is especially important for those who do not have a multicultural background and experience. It allows that group of people who are completely unaware of multiculturalism to have a good understanding of what multiculturalism is, what it means, and what it is currently experiencing through social media platforms. These two examples show that it is the surge of social media that has enabled more people who have never had the opportunity to experience living in a multicultural area to understand what multiculturalism is and the various causes and the current situation of it. Without the rise of social media, only a small number of people who are in multicultural areas or have experienced multi-culture would be able to understand and contribute to multiculturalism. The rise of social media has therefore played an irreplaceable role in the spread of multiculturalism, increasing more awareness of multiculturalism, thereby increasing the generation of more ideas of multiculturalism.

3. More ideas of multiculturalism

'Social media as a source for news' (Sebastián, 2013, p.1), the surge of it has helped people to gain more insight into multiculturalism as the big data algorithms behind social media are good at pushing out hotly debated content (Hu, et al, 2018), which includs multiculturalism. Also, social media giving people the opportunity to voice their opinions on multiculturalism. This is because the relative freedom and accessibility of expression on it (Wim et al, 2004), compared that in the physical world, while the widespread use of ICT (information and communications technology) has lowered the barriers to social media use. In addition, according to the experiment of Valenzuela (2013), 'there is a positive link between the frequency of social media use and the expression of opinions and political participation' (Sebastián, 2013, p.3). This means that the rise of social media has lowered the threshold of social media use, making it available to more people, and thus giving more people the opportunity to express their attitudes towards various political topics, including multiculturalism, especially for those who, in their lives, are unable to boldly express their subjective views on it. Like the example mentioned above, voting and expressing opinions on multiculturalism is a daily occurrence on different social media platforms around the world. And it can be shown that such expressions of opinion on multiculturalism are often accompanied by heated discussions. One of the reasons is that the spread of ICT (information and communications technology), has led to more people having access to social media software; Another is that people can choose not to reveal their identity when speaking on social media, which allows them to realise more freedom of expression. Both of them led to more people debating the issue of multiculturalism, while different people tend to produce various ideas on it. Therefore, the growth of social media has helped to generate more various ideas about multiculturalism, and these important ideas published on social media will potentially lead to more practices of multiculturalism.

4. More efficient practices of multiculturalism

Attitudinal or behavioural outcomes of media use are positively correlated with the selection and attention to media content presented to each other (Michael D, 2007). This process may be described using a spiral of mutual reinforcement, which is similar to the positive feedback loop in general systems theory. (Slater, 2007). This means that more and more ideas about multiculturalism are being published in social media, stimulating the proliferation of practices of it, while practices of multiculturalism or anti-multiculturalism also stimulate more people to express their opinions about it on social media. Additionally, social media, on the other hand, makes it possible for acts of multiculturalism or anti-multiculturalism to be carried out more efficiently. This is due to the fact that the online communication channels of social media have a stronger appeal than other social channels, based on the speed, breadth, and depth of its powerful communication. The surge of social media has not only increased the opportunities for people to express their opinions about multiculturalism, but has also given rise to a large number of multiculturalist and anti-multiculturalist practices. And there is a mutually reinforcing relationship

between multiculturalist expression and action practice, such as the demonstrations in Republican North Carolina, Germany, and other regions. Additionally, the increase in social media has led to more accounts having more followers than ever before (Melissa, et al, 2013). This results in a wider audience for debating and practices of multiculturalism or anti-multiculturalism, which has led to more people getting involved in the practices and making these practices more effective than ever before.

5. More emotional people in multiculturalism

The surge of social media has not only prompted large audiences to speak out their thoughts about multiculturalism and engage in the practices, it has likewise led to more people acting emotionally when viewing multiculturalism. On the one hand, it is because social media gives people who want to express their political ideas the opportunity to have a more emotional reaction as social media allows users to express themselves on various social media platforms, in a variety of different identities, in the form of a real name, or through a fake identity. Such 'freedom' of choice has led people more emotional in the issue of multiculturalism. Another reason is that, in the post-truth era, people often react more emotionally to an event than they do to the fact of it. In the context of multiculturalism, what the term means from various perspectives, and whether the facts behind it are true or not, have been relegated to the back burner, and social media audiences, they tend to choose to believe only what suits their preferences (Cooke, 2018). Thus, there are more emotional people than ever in the context of multiculturalism. Prejudice functioned because people have a huge emotional reaction to anti-multiculturalism tweets of Barry based on their political identity (Andre, 2017). This means that in the post-truth era, people tend to believe only what they approve of, and thus ignore the details that contradict it (Ryan C et al, 2016), such as incorrect spelling of the 'Koran'. Therefore, it can be seen from this example that, the surge of social media has, on the one hand, giving users the opportunity to express their true ideas about multiculturalism maybe under fake accounts; On the other hand, in a media-saturated world, it contributes to social media audiences being overwhelmed by a huge flood of emotions, abandoning the expression of views on multiculturalism from an objective perspective. The combination of these two causes has resulted in the emergence of an increasingly emotive population in the context of multiculturalism, while they may contribute to the promotion of multiculturalism.

6. The promotion of multiculturalism

The increase of social media has led to more and more people understanding what multiculturalism is, allowed more people to have the opportunity to express their views on multiculturalism and to participate in multiculturalism-related practices, both online and offline, and more people becoming emotional when talking about it. These influences are reflected in different ways in various contexts (Canada, Australia, EU, etc), but all of them lead to the same result, which is to promote multiculturalism. This is because when people are generating a wide range of opinions and actions about multiculturalism or anti-multiculturalism, a series of changes in the process are not only driving the development of it, but all the processes are also seen by those in authority and used as an important basis for judging whether multiculturalism can be implemented locally (Víctor M, 2014). Specificlly, on the one hand, the upsurge in social media has given people the opportunity to fully recognise and talk about multiculturalism and to act and go crazy about it. On the other hand, these movements on social media has also given the authorities a very clear and intuitive basis for deciding whether multiculturalism should be implemented or not. Thus, the surge of social media is helpful for promoting multiculturalism and anti-multiculturalism. What is clear is that the rise of social media plays a crucial part in the promotion and implementation of multiculturalism worldwide. This is because, in a media-saturated age, many audiences who do not live in multicultural areas are informed about multiculturalism through social media. And most interested or uninvolved audiences post their views on multiculturalism through social media platforms and then advocate for a large number of marches through it too, thus inciting more people to emotional expressions. These actions and expressions, as the mentioned case demonstrates, As the above cases show, these actions and expressions can attract the attention of the authorities, who need to take public opinion into account in order to decide whether, in what way and to what extent a policy of multiculturalism should be implemented locally. Thus, the chain of reactions brought by the upsurge of social media helps to promote multiculturalism locally and worldwide.

Conclusion

 In summary, the rapid development of ICT has led to increasing changes in social media (Chetan et al, 2015). This results in the impact that the rise of social media has had on multiculturalism need to be viewed through a developmental perspective as it is unlikely to remain static. For example, the advent of the 5G era allows people to access and post information on social media software faster than ever before and makes people get more information about multiculturalism in the same amount of time than before. The question to ponder, then, is whether the arrival of 5g will again reinforce the impact of social media on multiculturalism, or whether it will give rise to even more new influences. Furthermore, the surge of artificial intelligence has prompted the gradual trend of virtual hosts and the widespread use of virtual bots in many social media software. So will social media accounts used by virtual host focusing on multiculturalism emerge in the future, and will this bring new implications for multiculturalism, these are questions worth exploring in the future.

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