



The Effect of Social Media Campaigns and Issue Salience with Moderating Role of Online Network Diversity

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Abstract: Social media campaigns have transformed the dynamics of communication, enabling rapid dissemination of information and mobilization of public opinion. This study examines the effect of social media campaigns on issue salience, with a particular focus on the moderating role of online network diversity. Social media campaigns are defined as organized digital communication efforts aimed at raising awareness and influencing public perception, while issue salience refers to the degree to which a particular issue is perceived as important by the public. Drawing upon agenda setting theory and network theory, this study proposes that social media campaigns significantly influence issue salience by amplifying messages, shaping narratives, and increasing visibility. Hashtag activism and digital campaigns provide platforms for marginalized voices and facilitate public discourse, thereby elevating the prominence of social and political issues. Additionally, research suggests that high salience issues are more persuasive and attract greater engagement in campaigns. Online network diversity, defined as the extent to which individuals are exposed to diverse viewpoints within their digital networks, is hypothesized to moderate this relationship. Diverse networks reduce echo chambers and enhance exposure to varied perspectives, thereby influencing how issues gain salience. A quantitative research design was employed using survey data collected from 330 respondents. Smart PLS was used to analyze the structural relationships among variables. The findings reveal that social media campaigns significantly enhance issue salience, and online network diversity strengthens this relationship. Individuals exposed to diverse networks are more likely to perceive issues as important due to increased information variety and reduced bias. The study contributes to the literature by integrating communication, network, and behavioral perspectives. It highlights the importance of designing inclusive and diverse online environments to maximize the impact of social media campaigns. The findings provide practical implications for policymakers, marketers, and activists seeking to influence public opinion and drive social change.

Keywords: Social Media Campaigns, Issue Salience, Online Network Diversity, Digital Activism, Agenda Setting, Communication

Introduction

The rise of digital communication technologies has fundamentally transformed the way information is disseminated and consumed. Social media platforms have become central to public discourse, enabling individuals and organizations to share information, mobilize support, and influence public opinion. Social media campaigns, in particular, have emerged as powerful tools for raising awareness and shaping perceptions of social, political, and

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environmental issues.

Social media campaigns involve coordinated efforts to communicate specific messages to a target audience through digital platforms. These campaigns often utilize features such as hashtags, multimedia content, and interactive engagement to maximize reach and impact. Hashtag activism, for instance, allows users to participate in discussions and contribute to collective narratives, thereby amplifying the visibility of issues. Campaigns such as #SayHerName demonstrate how digital platforms can bring attention to social justice issues and create spaces for dialogue.

Issue salience refers to the importance assigned to a particular issue by individuals or the public. It plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes, decision making, and behavior. Agenda setting theory suggests that media influences what people think about by highlighting certain issues over others. Social media has extended this process by allowing users to actively participate in agenda setting. Research indicates that the level of engagement in social media campaigns is closely associated with the salience of issues in public discourse.

The effectiveness of social media campaigns depends on various factors, including message framing, emotional appeal, and audience engagement. Studies show that high salience issues are more persuasive and generate greater public interest. Additionally, the interactive nature of social media allows users to share, comment, and engage with content, thereby increasing its reach and impact.

However, the influence of social media campaigns is not uniform across all users. One critical factor that affects how individuals perceive and respond to information is the structure of their online networks. Online network diversity refers to the extent to which individuals are connected to others with different perspectives, backgrounds, and opinions. Diverse networks expose individuals to a wider range of information, which can enhance understanding and critical thinking.

In contrast, homogeneous networks often lead to the formation of echo chambers, where individuals are exposed primarily to information that reinforces their existing beliefs. Echo chambers can limit exposure to diverse viewpoints and reduce the effectiveness of social media campaigns in shaping issue salience. Research suggests that increasing network diversity can reduce polarization and promote more balanced information consumption.

The relationship between social media campaigns and issue salience is therefore influenced by the diversity of online networks. In diverse networks, campaigns are more likely to reach a broader audience and generate meaningful engagement. Conversely, in homogeneous networks, campaigns may have limited impact due to selective exposure and confirmation bias.

This study aims to examine the effect of social media campaigns on issue salience, with a focus on the moderating role of online network diversity. By integrating theoretical perspectives from communication studies and network theory, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of how digital campaigns influence public perception.

Literature Review

Social media campaigns have become a central focus of research in communication and political science. These campaigns leverage digital platforms to disseminate information, mobilize audiences, and influence public opinion. Scholars argue that social media has transformed traditional models of communication by enabling interactive and participatory engagement.

Agenda setting theory provides a foundational framework for understanding the relationship between media and issue salience. According to this theory, media influences the importance assigned to issues by highlighting certain topics. Social media extends this process by allowing users to actively participate in content creation and dissemination. Studies show that online engagement is strongly associated with issue salience, as frequently discussed topics gain prominence in public discourse.

Hashtag activism is a key mechanism through which social media campaigns influence issue salience. By creating a

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shared label for discussions, hashtags enable users to organize and amplify messages. Research indicates that hashtag campaigns can mobilize large audiences and generate awareness about social issues. For example, campaigns addressing social justice and diversity have successfully brought attention to marginalized communities. The effectiveness of social media campaigns is influenced by message characteristics such as emotional appeal and framing. Studies suggest that high arousal and high salience messages are more persuasive and generate greater engagement. Additionally, the use of multimedia content and storytelling enhances the impact of campaigns.

Online network diversity plays a crucial role in shaping information exposure and interpretation. Network theory suggests that individuals' social connections influence their access to information and perspectives. Diverse networks provide exposure to different viewpoints, which can enhance understanding and reduce bias. In contrast, homogeneous networks can lead to echo chambers, where individuals are exposed to limited perspectives.

Research on echo chambers highlights the risks associated with limited network diversity. Studies show that selective exposure to likeminded individuals can reinforce existing beliefs and increase polarization. This can reduce the effectiveness of social media campaigns in influencing issue salience, as individuals may ignore or dismiss information that contradicts their views.

Recent studies emphasize the importance of network effects in digital campaigns. Evidence suggests that the impact of social media campaigns is often mediated by network interactions, rather than direct exposure. This highlights the importance of considering network structure in understanding campaign effectiveness.

Furthermore, algorithmic amplification and social bots have emerged as important factors influencing issue salience. Research indicates that automated accounts can amplify messages and influence public discourse by increasing visibility. While this can enhance campaign reach, it also raises concerns about misinformation and manipulation.

In summary, the literature suggests that social media campaigns significantly influence issue salience, but their effectiveness is shaped by network diversity and information dynamics. Diverse networks enhance exposure and engagement, while homogeneous networks limit the impact of campaigns.

Conceptual Model / Theoretical Framework

- **Independent Variable:** Social Media Campaigns
- **Dependent Variable:** Issue Salience
- **Moderator:** Online Network Diversity

Hypotheses

- H1: Social media campaigns significantly influence issue salience
- H2: Online network diversity moderates the relationship between social media campaigns and issue salience

Theories:

- Agenda Setting Theory
- Network Theory

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design using a cross sectional survey approach. Data were collected from 330 respondents through structured questionnaires. The sample included social media users from diverse demographic backgrounds to ensure variability in network structures and campaign exposure.

Measurement scales were adapted from established studies. Social media campaigns were measured using indicators such as exposure, engagement, and message interaction. Issue salience was assessed through perceived importance and attention to issues. Online network diversity was measured using indicators related to exposure to

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diverse viewpoints.

A five-point Likert scale was used for all items. Smart PLS was employed for data analysis due to its suitability for structural equation modeling and moderation analysis.

Reliability and validity were assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted. Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell Larcker criterion.

The structural model was tested using path coefficients, t values, and p values. Bootstrapping with 5000 resamples was conducted to assess significance. Moderation analysis was performed to examine the interaction effect of online network diversity.

Analysis and Results

Table 1: Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Path	Beta	T Value	P Value	Result
H1	SMC → IS	0.65	8.74	0.000	Supported
H2	Moderation Effect	0.38	4.92	0.000	Supported

Interpretation

The results of this study provide strong empirical support for the hypothesized relationships and offer meaningful insights into how social media campaigns shape issue salience in contemporary digital environments. The findings indicate that social media campaigns have a significant and positive impact on issue salience, suggesting that digital platforms are highly effective in influencing what issues people perceive as important. This aligns with agenda setting theory, which posits that media plays a critical role in shaping public priorities (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In the context of social media, this process is amplified by user generated content, rapid information sharing, and interactive engagement mechanisms.

The high beta value for the relationship between social media campaigns and issue salience demonstrates that campaigns utilizing hashtags, visual storytelling, and user participation significantly increase awareness and perceived importance of issues. Social media campaigns create continuous exposure and repeated messaging, which reinforces cognitive accessibility and keeps issues at the forefront of public attention. This supports previous findings that frequent exposure to media content increases perceived importance of issues (Neuman et al., 2014).

A key contribution of this study is the identification of online network diversity as a significant moderating variable. The results reveal that individuals with more diverse online networks exhibit a stronger relationship between campaign exposure and issue salience. This suggests that exposure to a variety of viewpoints enhances the processing and evaluation of information. Diverse networks reduce the likelihood of selective exposure and confirmation bias, enabling individuals to critically engage with campaign messages. This finding is consistent with network theory, which emphasizes the importance of heterogeneous connections in facilitating information diffusion and innovation (Granovetter, 1973).

In contrast, individuals embedded in homogeneous networks may experience limited effects from social media campaigns due to the presence of echo chambers. In such environments, users are primarily exposed to like-minded opinions, which can reinforce existing beliefs and limit the impact of new information. The moderation effect observed in this study highlights that network diversity not only influences information exposure but also enhances the persuasive power of social media campaigns.

Furthermore, the results suggest that the effectiveness of campaigns is not solely dependent on message content but also on the structure of the audience's social networks. This has important implications for digital communication strategies, as it indicates that targeting diverse audiences can significantly enhance campaign outcomes.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that social media campaigns are powerful tools for shaping issue salience, but their effectiveness is significantly enhanced when individuals are embedded in diverse online networks. This

Khan: The Effect of Social Media Campaigns and Issue Salience with Moderating Role of Online Network Diversity underscores the importance of promoting inclusive and heterogeneous digital environments to maximize the impact of communication efforts.

Discussion with Recommendations

The findings of this study contribute to both theoretical and practical understandings of digital communication and public opinion formation. From a theoretical perspective, the study integrates agenda setting theory with network theory to provide a comprehensive explanation of how social media campaigns influence issue salience. While agenda setting theory explains the role of media in shaping public priorities, network theory adds an important dimension by highlighting how social structures influence information processing.

The results confirm that social media campaigns are effective tools for increasing issue salience. This has significant implications for policymakers, activists, and organizations seeking to raise awareness about social and political issues. Campaign designers should focus on creating engaging and interactive content that encourages user participation and sharing. Features such as hashtags, multimedia content, and storytelling can enhance the visibility and impact of campaigns.

The moderating role of online network diversity highlights the importance of fostering inclusive digital environments. Platforms should encourage exposure to diverse perspectives to reduce polarization and enhance critical thinking. Algorithmic systems that prioritize homogeneous content may limit the effectiveness of campaigns by reinforcing echo chambers. Therefore, platform designers should consider incorporating mechanisms that promote content diversity.

Another important implication is the need for digital literacy. Users must be equipped with the skills to critically evaluate information and engage with diverse viewpoints. Educational initiatives that promote media literacy can help individuals navigate complex information environments and make informed decisions.

Recommendations

1. Encourage diverse online interactions through platform design
2. Develop inclusive and participatory social media campaigns
3. Promote digital literacy and critical thinking skills
4. Reduce algorithmic bias that reinforces echo chambers
5. Support policies that enhance transparency in digital communication
6. Foster collaborations between policymakers and digital platforms
7. Conduct future research on cross cultural differences in network diversity

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between social media campaigns and issue salience, with a particular focus on the moderating role of online network diversity. The findings demonstrate that social media campaigns significantly influence the perceived importance of issues, confirming the relevance of agenda setting processes in digital environments.

The results highlight that social media platforms have transformed traditional communication models by enabling rapid dissemination of information and active user participation. Campaigns that effectively utilize digital tools can shape public discourse and influence societal priorities. This underscores the growing importance of social media as a key driver of public opinion.

A major contribution of this study is the identification of online network diversity as a critical moderating factor. The findings suggest that individuals with diverse networks are more likely to be influenced by social media campaigns, as they are exposed to a wider range of perspectives. This enhances their ability to process information and increases the salience of issues.

The study also emphasizes the challenges associated with homogeneous networks and echo chambers. These environments can limit exposure to diverse viewpoints and reduce the effectiveness of communication efforts.

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Addressing these challenges requires a combination of technological, educational, and policy interventions.

From a practical perspective, the findings provide valuable insights for designing effective social media campaigns. Organizations should focus on creating content that appeals to diverse audiences and encourages interaction across different communities. Additionally, promoting network diversity can enhance the reach and impact of campaigns.

In conclusion, social media campaigns are powerful tools for shaping public perception, but their effectiveness is significantly influenced by the structure of online networks. By fostering diverse and inclusive digital environments, it is possible to enhance the impact of communication strategies and contribute to more informed and engaged societies.

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