The Effect of Social Media on the World During Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

Inspired by Mr. Ramesh's class on "Social Media, the Internet, AI, and Our Lives" by understanding his thoughts on media. The article gives a more direct understanding about whether social media has been harming people by invisibility or has been playing a positive role for people. Also., how social media has altered human daily habits, to economic, and finally social changes during the time of the COVID-19 epidemic. The research synthesizes the positive and negative effects of using social media in the context of a new coronavirus pandemic, encompassing the individual, company, and government levels. It also summarizes the data reported in previous studies. This paper concludes with suggestions for allowing the beneficial effects to continue and how to control the adverse effects.

Keywords： *Social Media, COVID-19, Influences*

1. INTRODUCTION

In an era of rapid information development, it is easy to access all the information given from social media. At the same time, the thoughts and behaviors of people can be greatly impacted. With the fluctuation of the pandemic starting from end of 2019, social media trends have followed along. COVID-19 is a highly contagious virus that forces people to study and work from home to avoid it. Not only the impact on individuals but also the companies and government. This has resulted in a massive increase in average screen time usage. Social media refers to "the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks" [14], including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Zoom. The social network is a network structure that consist many relationships including individuals or organizations. It represents the various social relationships that connect people from casual acquaintances to tightly knit families. The rapid growth of social media has created an indispensable part of our lives, it has a subtle impact on people's health and behavior. Social media gives people the opportunity to virtually date, travel, meet, and conference. It allows people to stop feeling alone, provides a useful tool to review positive memories, and can even help those strangers find companionship.

2. POSITIVE EFFECT

During the pandemic, social media reaches far beyond its previous situation creating some positive effects on the public. Due to the quarantine in most countries, people spend more time on devices that allow them access to information more frequently, exposed to more information. As countries moved deeper into the epidemic, media consumption across all household channels increased. No single aspect of individuals, companies, and governments has escaped the rapid and profound changes of the digital revolution. During the latter part of the epidemic, web browsing increased by 70% and a 61% increase in social media engagement over normal usage. More specifically, WhatsApp in the US is the software that the majority of people use to communicate, with the largest growth in use as people look to stay in touch. Overall, WhatsApp usage grew by 40%; usage increased by 27% in the early stages of the pandemic, 41% in the middle stages, and 51% in countries in the late stages of the pandemic. In China, social media apps including WeChat and Weibo increased by 58% [11].

2.1 Targeting to individuals

For personal development, one advantage is people can better participate in society and become productive citizens. Social networks are like a public forum where you can speak up without caring who you are. In reality,

there are vulnerable groups or isolated people who do not have the opportunity or are even afraid to express their opinions. But the Internet offers the opportunity for people to speak out without restriction as well as to find a group of people with similar views, to present issues and opinions.

2.2 Targeting to companies

Companies can work with influencers to improve their performance with the power of social media. The advice of friends and family plays a huge role in consumer decisions, and so do reviews. When people talk about your product or company on social media, it builds brand awareness and credibility and sets the stage for more sales. If a brand has a large following on social media, this can draw followers to the brand. For example, the brand Adore Me, collaborate with some online celebrities, created a series of unboxing videos on Instagram, and saw a huge impact from content shown directly in the accounts of influencers. This resulted in a doubling of click-through rates and a 7% increase in sales conversions [1].

2.3 Targeting to government and officials

The use of social media by governments is becoming increasingly important. The role of the government is to reinforce the need to disclose information to citizens, demonstrate government commitment, and raise the level of preparedness and resource awareness among citizens. They also use social media to address federal agencies, national policies, and emergencies. For example, the 2017 election of Germany, the Alternative Party (Alternative für Deutschland) jumped to the third largest party with 12.6% support in the federal parliamentary elections. While there are many reasons for its success, one of the recognized reasons is that the Alternative Party is keen and adept at applying social media. It has twice as many followers as the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) and has more "likes" than the CDU and SPD (Social Democratic Party) combined. On Twitter, although the Alternative Party does not have a particularly large number of followers, they are the most active [13].

3. NEGATIVE EFFECT

Suppose people spend ten minutes a day browsing social media platforms, it may bring different results. They will probably get relaxed from it, or be addicted to keeping swiping. In fact, individuals will be affected by excessive screen time. It is true that the role of social media in communication and information transfer is further amplified in the current epidemic. However, the problem that accompanies it is that all kinds of false information can be spread widely in a short period of time

through social media platforms, which has a negative impact on both government and individuals.

3.1 Targeting to individuals

First of all, they are more likely to fail in their social relationships on the internet. Since we can't see people's true emotions. From facial expressions to physical movements, we can't be randomly guessed through the internet. For example, individuals will say the opposite of what they want to say in certain situations, or sometimes they don't want to admit something. They may say they don't care but they can always tell by their facial expressions that something is wrong. This is where we can better comfort these people instead of being told that they don't understand their hearts. Or, social media makes it easier for couples to spy on each other. When long-distance couples are separated, social media is the only way they can easily communicate. But sometimes jealousy or suspicion makes us keep an eye on each other to see if they are talking to someone else. This behavior is uncontrollable and can cause us to slowly fall into the hole. Many rumors about the epidemic have been constantly enlarged on social media platforms for a short period of time. For example, after Trump's televised announcement that "disinfectant injections can eliminate the new coronavirus," U.S. medical experts quickly issued a warning. But after the social media spread, many states in US received multiple emergency calls shortly afterward asking how to inject or inhale the disinfectant. Even some Americans actually injected the disinfectant and were fortunate to be taken to emergency care in time to die otherwise.

3.2 Targeting to companies (Zoom vs. Microsoft Teams)

3.2.1 Compare and Contrast

Due to the sudden outbreak of the infection, the online meeting became a tool that people could do almost anything with. Two of the most popular software are zoom and teams, and as can be imagined, they became the biggest competitors. It is likely that because Teams are included in Microsoft's office 365, more people are choosing to use zoom. In 2020, 36% of U.S. workers use zoom in 2020. 19% of employees use Teams. Zoom was introduced 19 years ago when only a few people used it. As of December 31, 2020, zoom's stock price has quintupled from $68 at the beginning of the year to $337 [7]. Zoom has truly enabled people to communicate without meeting in person. In particular, zoom has a popular free tier with a 40-minute call limit, and K-12 students are offered free unlimited use. Every business and school user is more likely to have a paid version, which is the reason Zoom's economy increased dramatically. And compared to teams, zoom has much simpler and clearer features that make it very easy for

students and newcomers to get started. However, Likewise, Teams has made changes. In 2018 to attract more users, teams created a free version. But for years, Teams has had considerable issues and glitches that have hindered user engagement. The team created a lot of new features for this, but it still couldn't keep up with the competition. Microsoft made consideration for the future. They believe that this outbreak will change the situation forever. Microsoft is taking steps to make the software more secure and easy to use so that people can stay productive and connected even when they are working separately [6].

3.2.2 Post-pandemic Era

Zoom's latest financial report showed that total revenue for the third quarter of 2022 was $1,050.8 million, up 35% from $777.2 million a year ago, with revenue growth dropping precipitously, a 15-quarter low. The company has foreseen ways to sustain during the post-COVID-19 world [7]. They have already has announced plans to introduce new features, such as virtual receptionists becoming voice assistants, where users can join Zoom meetings with just a voice command, without touching a tablet, computer or phone screen; or a physical product developed. Unlike Zoom, Microsoft team expressed a different view in their "post-covid work environment study". They were surprised by the effectiveness of remote work in many cases. Although some positions do not support remote work, for those who do, distance work can enhance productivity. The study suggests that telecommuting is likely to be replaced by smaller satellite offices that are closer to employees' homes to enjoy the benefits of public workspace without the expense of large city real estate. There will be a new sort of hybrid where people work and live at home, with smaller offices in the suburbs and less space in the big city. As healthcare intensifies, a worrying question comes to developers' minds: What about the growing number of people who are vaccinated? Will this online meeting trend continue to grow? Users also face another problem -- social media fatigue. Users began to lose patience with Live shows or chats, as people spent most of their time socializing during the home quarantine.

3.3 Targeting to governments and officials

Not only does it harm individuals, but also governments and officials. After counting, former U.S. President Donald Trump joined Twitter in 2009 and attracted worldwide attention through social media. As figure 1 shows below, the data reaches its maximum

before the president's election. In 2021, Trump has tweeted about 57,000 times, including about 8,000 during the 2016 campaign, and he has used Twitter as a platform to canvass votes. During his presidency, more than 25,000 were posted [2]. The White House said the tweets were considered official statements. But his tweets contained many typographical errors, teasing messages, and unofficial statements. Trump's communications have led to misunderstandings and are more likely to go on to spread disinformation. The first reason people tend to go and spread misinformation is because of consensus. Consensus is the degree to which people believe their behavior is consistent with the behavior of most other people. Seeing that information, they agree with has been widely shared may make people more likely to forward it to themselves. Not all people who encounter inauthentic material online will spread it further. In fact, the vast majority do not. A study linking behavioral and survey data found that during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, less than 10% of participants shared articles from the "fake news" domain [10]. The second reason is that research has shown that social media users find headlines that conform to their pre-existing beliefs more credible, even if they are clearly marked as false. In the case of disinformation, this may make the target sympathetic to the content of the message.
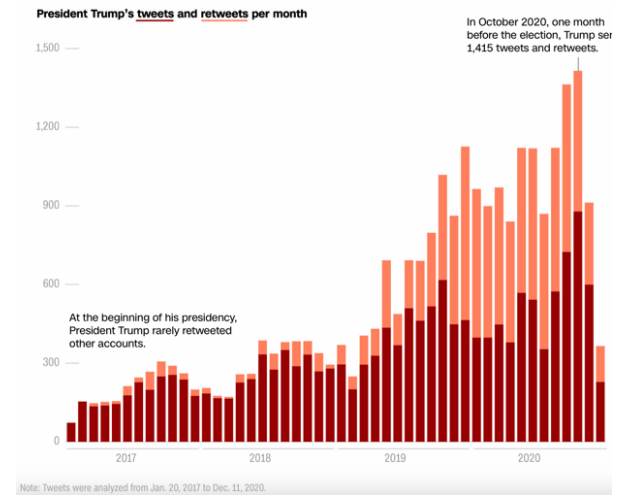

Figure 1 President Trump's tweets and retweets per month [10]

4. COMPARE THE GREATER IMPACT

In the time of easy-exposed information, the vast amount of social information, and Internet information brings not only knowledge, but also more noise information, making it difficult to distinguish and quickly access valid information. Figure 2 below shows the
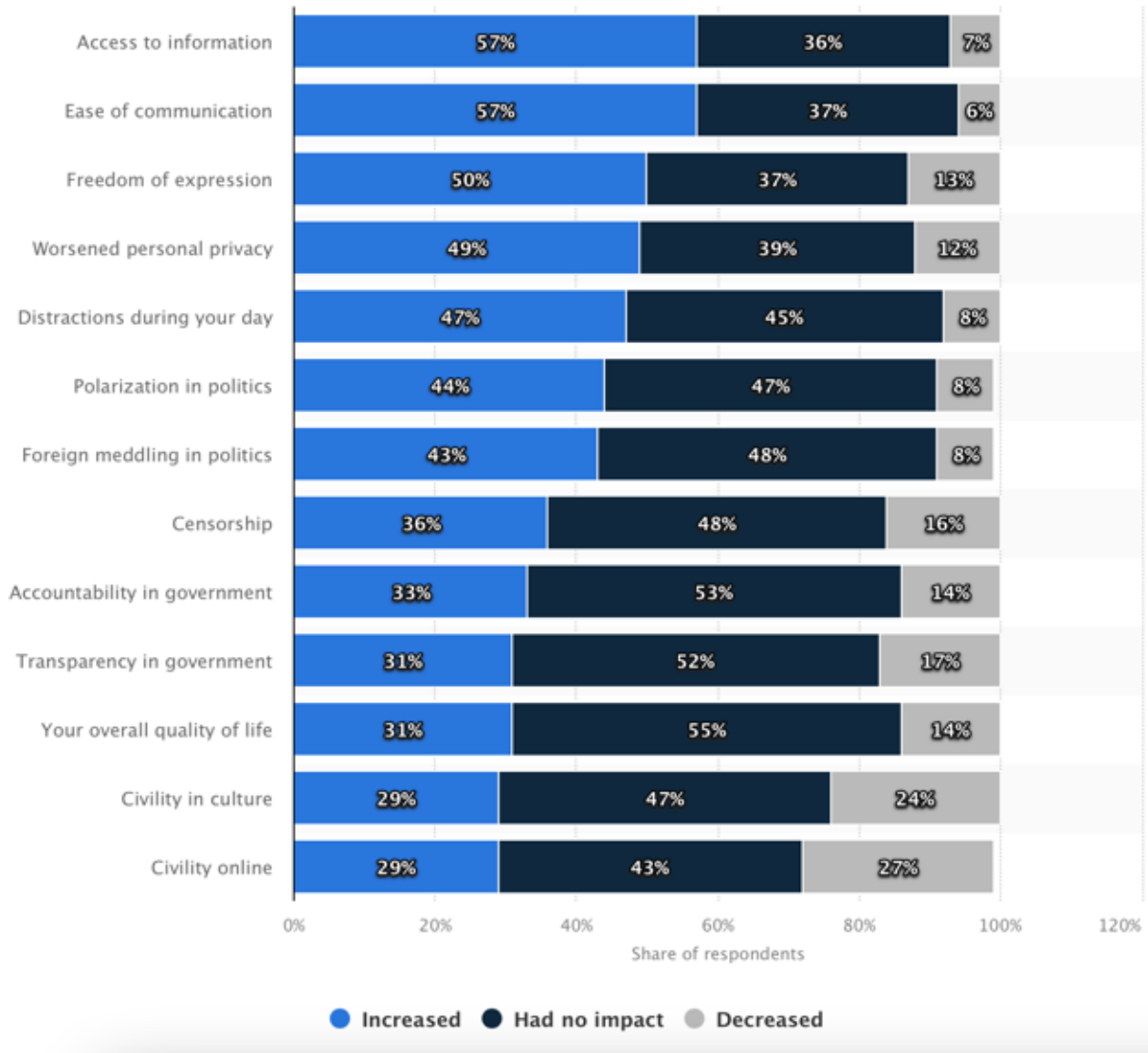
Figure 2 The percentage of effect from social media effect during COVID 19 [12]

percentage of effect by social media during COVID 19, although the top three percentage is advantages but they both have the inverse side-effect. As mentioned in the previous section, the frequency of checking electronics during an epidemic increase, which leads to an increase in the amount of time checking the news. People are eager to keep up with the latest news, however, there is a limitation to the amount of information people can receive in a day, and being in a constant state of passive information reception can be a burden to mental and spiritual health.

5. CONCLUSION

The impact of social media on people during COVID 19 can be conclude into two parts: The authoritative experts helped with spreading key epidemic information, and tracked the development of the epidemic in a timely manner; but also, the number of disinformation posts became high, increasing anxiety among people. It is undeniable that the new coronavirus has created both

positive and negative impacts on social media. Various rumours are continuously spread and fermented by the social media, causing certain adverse effects on society. The media must not become a booster that intensifies social conflicts and triggers social crises. The society is inevitably trapped in the mood of panic and anxiety. The media cannot passively followed by people, the viewers' panic may be exaggerated and prolonged by the media's reports, which will also form an unfavourable social opinion. In addition to providing information to the public instantly, the media should also actively play the function of social coordination and cooperate with the government to do a good job of social psychological guidance, instead of expanding the fear of disaster. While providing truthful and objective coverage of the incident, it is also important to let the audience see the positive side, such as what effective measures the government has taken, the progress of vaccine research against the virus, the status of cured patients, etc. The audience should be informed of the seriousness of the outbreak so that they can be alerted and take protective measures in a timely

manner. As countries begin to lift coronavirus restrictions, the new reality of post-epidemic society may not remain intact. People will certainly become freer and less confined to the world on the internet. Businesses are already adapting to this new way of working without different restrictions. Governments are certainly finding the best way to communicate with them as well. Some people who plan to work from home or remotely for long periods of time still need effective communication and collaboration tools to stay productive. These actions clearly show that although the epidemic is recovering quickly, these habitual ways of communicating are not going to disappear anytime soon. People's inner fear and anxiety originate from the uncertainty with the increased risk for the future. Minimize the information channels: ins, twitter, TV, news sites, TikTok, Facebook, every web page and app is a conduit for information. There is a need to keep only the serious and credible sources of information, and mentally treat other non-core information as invalid or gossip.

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