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Social Media as an Instrument of Public Diplomacy in the Digital Era: A Systematic Literature Review

Abstract

The rapid evolution of digital platforms has reshaped the landscape of diplomacy, creating new opportunities for public interactions. Social media has emerged as a pivotal element in the practice of public diplomacy, enabling nations and governmental entities to communicate with a global audience. However, the use of social media carries an underlying challenge in engaging foreign audiences, especially for developing countries, which is rather difficult to get attention from the international community. By utilizing the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses Method (PRISMA), this SLR will investigate the differences and strategies of social media utilization as a prosperous public diplomacy instrument between developing and developed countries. Moreover, the outcomes of this SLR are anticipated to provide methods for best practices in social media analysis and choose a fixed platform for information dissemination according to the public characteristics of each country. Findings indicate that developing countries have not yet utilized social media effectively and require additional strategies to improve its use. Furthermore, they still emphasize solving specific concerns, especially in politic area, while developed countries mostly focused in shaping public perception for nation branding. The results also suggest that Twitter is the predominant platform for conducting content analysis in social media. The study highlights the importance of implementing effective strategies and policy actions to address the challenges and optimize the positive impact of digital platforms in promoting international relations.

Keywords:

government; digital diplomacy; public diplomacy; social media; systematic literature review; SLR; PRISMA

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Introduction

In an era where digital connectivity transcends borders, a government's public diplomacy has been initiative led to a new working routine: reaching out to digital audiences (Manor, 2019). The digital age has revolutionized diplomatic practices, with social media platforms ---Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram -- disrupting traditional communication methods (Duncombe, 2019). Politicians and policymakers often turn to platforms like Twitter and Facebook to communicate their initiatives to a global audience, thus reinforcing the symbiotic relationship between social media and public diplomacy (N. Collins & Bekenova, 2019; Duncombe, 2019; Ittefaq, 2019). A 2018 analysis revealed that the majority of world leaders maintain Twitter accounts, and 97% of UN member states have established official presences on this platform, underscoring its global shift from conventional diplomatic method to engaging with a global audience (Ittefaq, 2019; Zytoon & Husain, 2023).

The literature on digital diplomacy underscores the role of social media in shaping a nation's image and bolstering its foreign policy objectives (Adesina, 2017; Ittefaq, 2019). Developed nations, particularly, have invested heavily in digital engagement as part of their public diplomacy initiatives (Ittefaq, 2019). For instance, the United States spent \$465.80 million

in 2020 on public diplomacy and international broadcasting, with a significant portion dedicated to enhancing digital engagement on platforms like Twitter and YouTube (The United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (ACPD), 2021). Conversely, developing countries, constrained by limited budgets and a lack of awareness, have been slower to capitalize on the potential of social media to engage global audiences (Ittefaq, 2019). The diplomatic challenges faced by countries such as India, in managing its relations with neighboring nations, and Turkey, amidst regional conflicts and crises, illustrate the complexities of using social media as a tool for public diplomacy (Garud-Patkar, 2022; Uysal & Schroeder, 2019).

The role of social media has been particularly salient during major global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Brexit, and President Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia, where it has served as a key instrument in setting agendas and framing public discourse (Albishri et al., 2019; Boatwright & Pyle, 2023; Jiménez-Alcarria & Tuñón-Navarro, 2023; Mboya, 2021; Šimunjak & Caliendo, 2020; Tran, 2023; Wang & Xu, 2023). While many countries use social media in public diplomacy, there are no established parameters or research to measure its effectiveness. Nevertheless, several studies assert that the

efficacy of utilizing social media hinges upon the precise definition and aim of public diplomacy, which involves actively engaging with the global community to accomplish a nation's objectives and the subsequent consequences (Bolgov et al., 2016; N. Collins & Bekenova, 2019; S. D. Collins et al., 2019; Garud-Patkar, 2022; Habibullah & Xiguang, 2022; Uysal & Schroeder, 2019).

Previous studies have employed a variety of methodologies and platforms to analyze social media's impact on public diplomacy. For instance, Ingenhoff et al. (2021) utilized Twitter to capture public perceptions of a country's image, while Sevin et al., (2021) combined Twitter and Google Trends to offer a more comprehensive analysis. Most of the research obtained employs content analysis to determine agenda-setting. Bjola and Holmes propose that agenda-setting can be a useful framework for assessing the effectiveness of public diplomacy on social media. This approach involves how ambassadors, embassies, and diplomats use social media to share information and influence public discussions and campaigns related to foreign policy. (Albishri et al., 2019; Bjola, 2015; N. Collins & Bekenova, 2019; Garud-Patkar, 2022; Mboya, 2021; Tran, 2023). Scholars S. D. Collins et al., (2019) investigate Twitter diplomacy in the U.S. during the Obama administration. It argues that the content shared on Twitter aligns with the rational actor model, with a particular emphasis on issues related to U.S. foreign policy. Meanwhile, Garud-Patkar (2022) argues that several content metrics were in line with the targets of foreign followers, but none of them corresponded with the key agendas of the Indian government on social media.

The existing literature extensively explores the role of social media in public diplomacy, particularly in developed nations. However, there is a noticeable gap in understanding the comparative effectiveness of this utilization between developed and developing countries. Moreover, while studies have documented the use

of social media during significant global events, they often overlook the nuanced challenges faced by developing nations in leveraging these platforms. This research aims to fill these gaps by providing a systematic comparison of social media effectiveness and strategies across different geopolitical contexts and offering a comprehensive analysis of their implications for global diplomatic engagement.

Given the rapid evolution of digital platforms and their growing influence on international relations, this article aims to deepen our understanding of the strategies and effectiveness of social media as a tool for public diplomacy in both developed and developing countries. This systematic review addresses the following research questions: (1) What are the key differences in the strategies and approaches used by developed and developing countries in utilizing social media for public diplomacy, and which strategies are most effective in enhancing public diplomacy outcomes in each context? (2) What analytical methods and specific social media platforms are most commonly employed to evaluate public diplomacy activities on social media?

By synthesizing existing literature, this study seeks to fill the existing gap in knowledge and offer a comprehensive framework for the effective use of social media in modern diplomacy.

The subsequent sections of this work are structured as follows: in section (2) related theory; (3) Research Methodology; (4) Results; (5) Discussion; and (6) Conclusion.

Related Theory

Digitalization of Public Diplomacy

First, we must define public diplomacy; what is public diplomacy? Manor defines public diplomacy as when the government of one country strives to communicate with foreign people. Public diplomacy is a broad word that encompasses the techniques by which

international organizations engage foreign publics to achieve strategic objectives such as cultural exchange, education campaigns, advocacy, and international broadcasting (Marcus, 2015). In other words, Public diplomacy is an international relations method that focuses on influencing public opinion to improve the perception of a nation. It is a method of disseminating information with global audiences and vice versa, basically across several practices of communication, cultural exchanges, and educational programs, to create mutual understanding, build benevolence, and convey a positive image of a country. To learn more about public diplomacy, consider the following examples:

1. The U.S. government sponsors cultural exchange programs like the Fulbright Program, where scholars and artists from numerous countries visit the United States to exchange ideas and support cultural understanding, just as China's Confucius Institutes promote Chinese language and culture worldwide.
2. The historic meetings between U.S. and Soviet leaders during the Cold War was one of a case of public diplomacy efforts to minimize tensions and improve understanding.
3. The Chevening scholarships accept students from all over the world who intend to obtain postgraduate studies in the UK.

Public diplomacy focuses on establishing lasting positive perceptions of a nation and building relationships with people in other countries, which can ultimately benefit diplomatic, economic, and political objectives.

The adoption of digitization is not an instant process; simply introducing a website by a foreign ministry does not indicate the immediate transition to a digital state. In many foreign ministries, the process of digitalization unfolds gradually. For instance, Sweden initiated this process in 2008, while the United States commenced in 2011 (Manor & Huang, 2022). The assessment of whether the tools and technologies

used in diplomacy signify a transformation or have the capacity to transform diplomacy primarily relies on the understanding of what diplomacy constitutes (Hayden, 2018).

To conclude, the digitalization of public diplomacy is how digital technologies impact the norms, values, and routines of those diplomats dealing with public diplomacy (Manor & Huang, 2022).

Social Media and Public Diplomacy

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have created global connectivity that presents both challenges and opportunities for diplomacy. This connectivity enables two-way communication between governments and foreign publics, as well as among people themselves. Diplomats can now engage with large audiences, and citizens have newfound influence over foreign policy and diplomacy. ICTs also allow for listening to the opinions and feedback of both domestic and foreign audiences. While states remain prominent in international relations, the concept of 'networking,' involving informal information and service sharing among individuals, groups, and institutions with common interests, has reshaped the global power dynamics (Allen et al., 2017).

ICT, specifically social media, has transformed public diplomacy by providing unequalled opportunities for engagement, communication, and influence in the international relationship. It has become an integral part of diplomatic strategies to connect with international audiences and advance national interests and foreign policy goals. Here are some examples of the utilization of social media in the 'new' public diplomacy:

1. Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (@MofaJapan_en) tweets about earthquake alerts and emergency contact information.
2. The British Council uses social media to promote British culture and education. The #ShakespeareLives campaign celebrated the

playwright's influence worldwide, reaching international audiences through digital content.

3. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, governments around the world used social media to provide health guidelines, updates on vaccination campaigns and information on relief measures.
4. The European External Action Service (EEAS) manages the "EU vs. Dis info" strategy, which utilizes social media to debate false information and narratives targeting the European Union.

Social media enables governments and diplomatic organizations to engage, inform, and influence foreign audiences. It has become an essential tool for modern public diplomacy efforts, empowering nations to guide the complex perspective of international relations in the digital age. For instance, Twitter has become a significant platform for diplomats, enabling them to engage with many stakeholders, including parliamentarians, leaders, journalists, editors, and fellow diplomats. Additionally, diplomats also use Instagram to connect with younger people (N. Collins & Bekenova, 2019; Manor & Huang, 2022).

The basic concept is that the efficacy of a digital diplomacy strategy relies on its ability to surpass simple information sharing, transforming into a reciprocal conversation between diplomats and the broader foreign public. In essence, interactive participation is more crucial than one-sided information exchange when assessing the impact of digital diplomacy operations (Bjola, 2015).

Method

This study utilizes a qualitative approach to investigate the differences and strategies employed by developing and developed nations in implementing social media for public diplomacy. To investigate these issues, the study complies with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic

Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) approach, which comprises an in-depth analysis of scientific literature from relevant sources.

Methodological Framework

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is a method to identify and evaluate all relevant research on a topic in order to derive conclusions about the question (Helbach et al., 2023; Rethlefsen et al., 2021). PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) is a widely recognized and respected guideline for conducting systematic literature reviews (SLRs) and meta-analyses (Page, McKenzie, et al., 2021).

Systematic review and meta-analysis protocols serve several important purposes. They aid in the planning and documentation of review methods, act as a safeguard against arbitrary decision-making during the review process, allow readers to evaluate whether selective reporting exists in completed reviews, and, when shared publicly, decrease redundant efforts and potentially encourage collaboration (Shamseer et al., 2015).

The PRISMA 2020 statement replaces the 2009 version, offering updated reporting recommendations that reflect methodological advancements in study identification, selection, appraisal, and synthesis. The items have been restructured for user-friendliness. This paper introduces the PRISMA 2020 27-point checklist, a comprehensive guide for reporting each item, the PRISMA 2020 abstract checklist, and revised flowcharts for original and updated reviews (Page, McKenzie, et al., 2021).

Employing PRISMA facilitates the identification, selection, and assessment of pertinent studies, guaranteeing the incorporation of high-quality evidence in the review. Additionally, it enhances transparency and consistency by offering an explicit description of the methods employed throughout the review process (Kwao Dawson et al., 2023).

Planning the SLR

Planning the SLR is an essential step to ensure the review is focused, efficient, credible, insightful, and allowing you to draw valuable conclusions and contribute meaningfully to your chosen field.

First, the authors develop a method for selecting substances for analysis that incorporates databases, key phrases, and search parameters (both inclusion and exclusion). During the initial phase, the researchers conducted a thorough assessment utilizing various database sources

to acquire comprehensive and extensive data, facilitating the identification of relevant studies (Page, Moher, et al., 2021). The literatures were identified using credible sources, such as *ProQuest*, *ScienceDirect*, and *Scopus*.

Second, Systematic searches on the three database sources have been performed using a combination of keywords. A combination of keywords was used to detect and identify the relationship/impacts/roles of social media or social networks in public diplomacy or digital diplomacy; thus, it was defined as ("PUBLIC

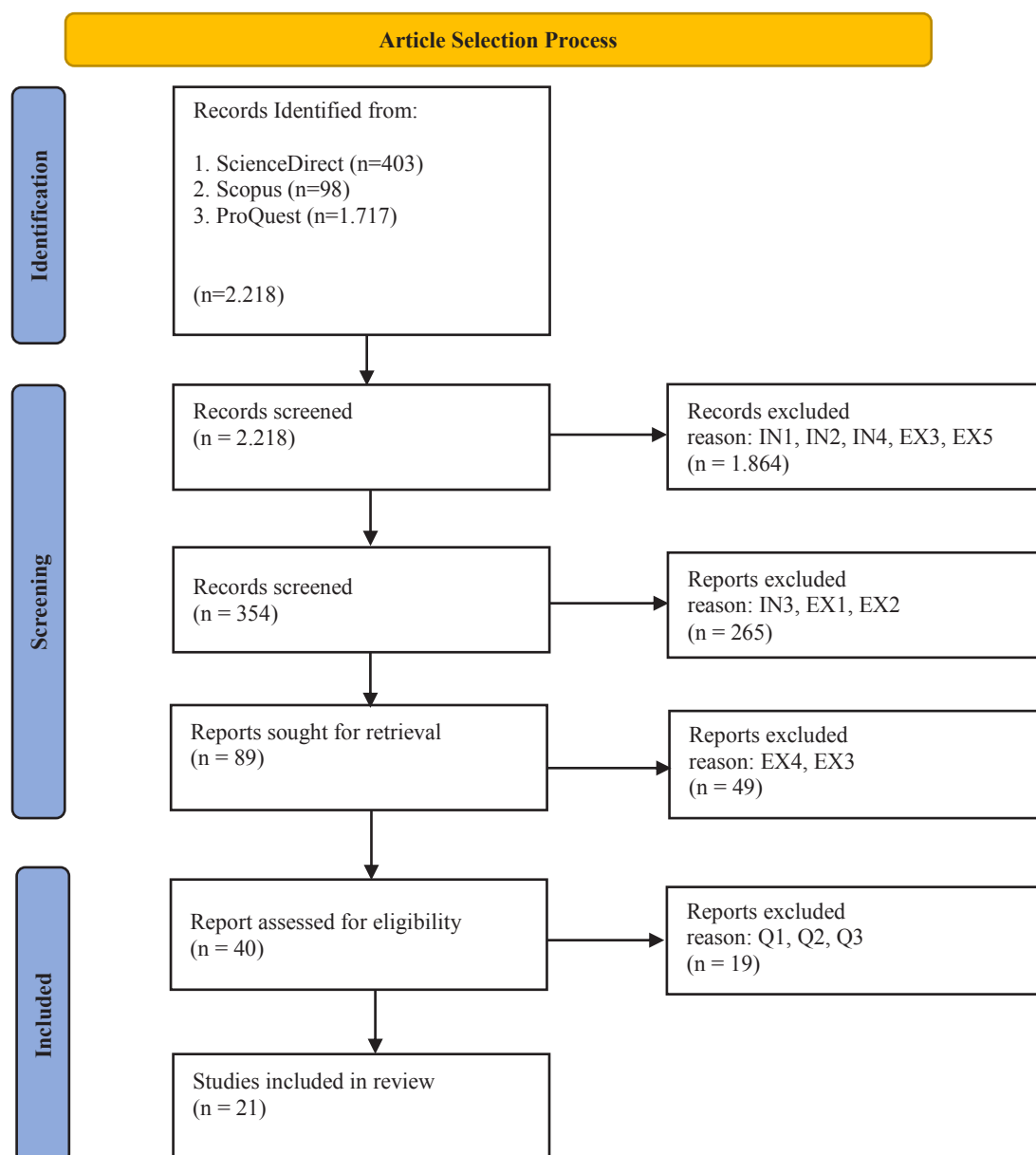


Figure 1. Research Flow Diagram

Source: proposed by the authors

DIPLOMACY” OR “DIGITAL DIPLOMACY”) AND (“SOCIAL MEDIA” OR “SOCIAL NETWORK”).

Lastly, we applied the period range 2019-2023 to ensure that the review encompasses the latest developments, trends, and research discoveries in the subject. The search query was subsequently employed on the publication title, abstract, and keywords to identify appropriate publications from the provided list. Then, the search criteria were performed. The inclusion (IN) and exclusion (EX) criteria explained the expected outcomes of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Search Criteria

Category	Parameters	Code
Inclusion	Articles were published from 2019 to 2023	IN1
	Articles are written in English	IN2
	Articles associated with and focus on public diplomacy or digital diplomacy utilizing social media.	IN3
	Articles are published in international journals	IN4
Exclusion	Articles focused on other than public diplomacy or digital diplomacy	EX1
	Articles focused on other than social media	EX2
	Working papers, presentation	EX3
	Full-text access is not available	EX4
	Duplicate studies	EX5

Source: proposed by the authors

SLR Implementation

Systematic Literature Review is an important instrument for researchers in any subject who want to get a thorough overview of existing knowledge and guide their research. The SLR technique starts with the identification, screening and insertion phases, as shown in Figure 1. During the identification stage, the authors conducted the initial search query which discovered 2.218 articles across three databases. In the screening stage, the authors used parameters IN1, IN2, IN4, EX3, and EX5 to filter these publications removing 1.864 and leaving 354 papers for

further examination. Subsequently, authors implemented IN3, EX1, EX2 criteria to refine the search, eliminating 265 publications and leaving 89 for the retrieval phase. Next step, the authors applied EX3 and EX4 criteria, removing 49 articles and resulting 40 papers. Lastly, authors observed for paper eligibility including relevant method and platform used in the research, resulting in a final selection of 21 publications. During the screening process, some articles focused on other than the topic discussed, without full paper documents and no specific method or platforms are excluded.

Table 2.
Quality Assessment Question

Code	Question
Q1	Are the research objectives clearly stated?
Q2	Is the article about actual issues or solutions?
Q3	Are the provided results clear?
Q4	Are the findings acknowledged and discussed?
Q5	Does the conclusion address the research questions?
Q6	Does the article suggest any further research directions?

Source: proposed by the authors

Following the retrieval phase, the authors applied quality assessment criteria (QAC) to articles that aligned with the aims of the study. Table 2 has six questions focused on at evaluating the quality of the studies, with yes or no answers. The authors reviewed the selected publications together. In addition, the writers completed Q1, Q2, and Q3 to meet the quality assessment standards. Consequently, the result incorporated 25 publications in this procedure, following which the authors conducted an analysis to address the research questions.

Results and Discussion

Data Extraction

Following the search strategy described in the preceding section, we identified 21 studies aligning our inclusion criteria. These studies explored a range of subjects and used a variety

Table 3.
Research Study based on Country and Region

Literature Code	Literature	Country	Region
L1	(Zytoon & Husain, 2023)	Palestine	West Asia
L2	(Ittefaq, 2019)	Pakistan, India	South Asia
L3	(N. Collins & Bekenova, 2019)	EU countries	Europe
L4	(S. D. Collins et al., 2019)	US	US
L5	(Garud-Patkar, 2022)	India	South Asia
L6	(Atad et al., 2023)	Palestine	West Asia
L7	(Sevin et al., 2021)	South Korea	East Asia
L8	(Mboya, 2021)	Kenya	Africa
L9	(Habibullah & Xiguang, 2022)	Pakistan	South Asia
L10	(Wang & Xu, 2023)	China	East Asia
L11	(Uysal & Schroeder, 2019)	Turkey	West Asia
L12	(Jia & Li, 2020)	China	East Asia
L13	(Zhang & Ong'ong'a, 2022)	China	East Asia
L14	(Shumba, 2021)	China	East Asia
L15	(Tran, 2023)	China	East Asia
L16	(Ingenhoff et al., 2021)	Austria, Switzerland, and the Netherlands	Europe
L17	(Boatwright & Pyle, 2023)	Ukraine	Europe
L18	(Luqiu & Yang, 2020)	China	East Asia
L19	(Šimunjak & Caliandro, 2020)	EU countries	Europe
L20	(Albishri et al., 2019)	Saudi Arabia	Middle East
L21	(Jiménez-Alcarria & Tuñón-Navarro, 2023)	European Commission, European Parliament and European Council	Europe

Source: proposed by the authors

of methodologies. In the subsequent section, we examine the primary discoveries from these studies and deliberate on their relevance to the research questions. These studies were classified into groups in terms of relevance, country where they were carried out, and methodology adopted. Table 3 highlights literature based on countries and regions where the studies were performed.

Social media has transformed into an official representation of governments, both individuals and institutions, in conveying policies to the public or in international relations. Table 3 illustrates that the implementation of social media in public diplomacy in East Asia, especially in China, has been the topic of numerous studies as it has the potential to alter diplomatic communication and engage the foreign public in a prolonged engagement (N. Collins & Bekenova, 2019). In addition, the Internet and social media platforms have become indispensable tools for diplomatic communication (Tran, 2023); the majority of

these articles analyze China's public diplomacy efforts about a specific issue by utilizing various social media platforms such as Twitter or X, Facebook, and Weibo.

The Utilization of Social Media in Public Diplomacy

RQ1: What are the key differences in the strategies and approaches used by developed and developing countries in utilizing social media for public diplomacy, and which strategies are most effective in enhancing public diplomacy outcomes in each context??

The authors categorize the area of study into developing and developed countries based on world development indicators (World Bank Group, 2024), in line with the first research question. The classification can be seen in Table 4.

To streamline the analysis, the author will use research by Bolgov et al. (2016) to evaluate the effectiveness of digital diplomacy by categorizing

Table 4.
Research Study Based on Developing and Developed Country

Type of Country	Article Code	Total
Developing	L1, L2, L5, L6, L8, L9, L10, L11, L12, L13, L14, L15, L17, L18	14
Developed	L3, L4, L7, L16, L19, L20, L21	7

Source: World Bank Group, 2024

the findings of each study into three criteria: the extent of information conveyed to foreign audiences (information level), the degree of influence achieved (influence level), and the level of interaction with these audiences (interaction level).

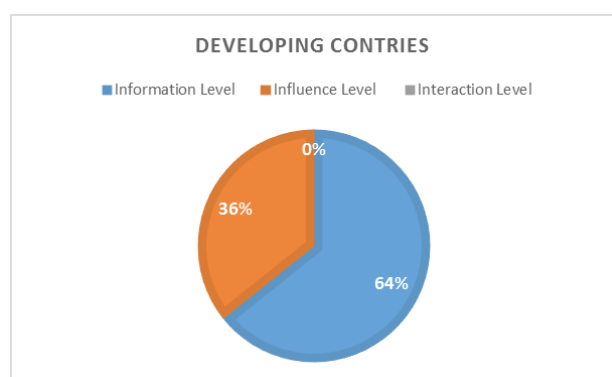


Figure 2. Level effectiveness of developing countries in digital diplomacy implementation

Source: proposed by the authors

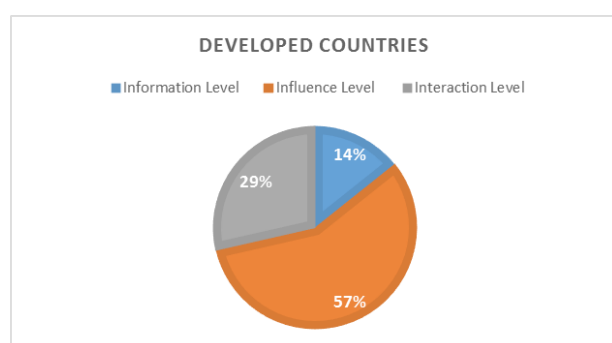


Figure 3. Level effectiveness of developed countries in digital diplomacy implementation

Source: proposed by the authors

Figure 2 displays the outcomes of the categorization of research carried out in developing countries, according to the degree of efficacy in implementing digital diplomacy. The findings reveal that 64% of the 14 studies conducted

in developing countries are at the information level, where government or diplomatic officials primarily use social media to disseminate information, engaging in one-way communication with the public (Garud-Patkar, 2022; Habibullah & Xiguang, 2022; Ittefaq, 2019; Jia & Li, 2020; Mboya, 2021; Uysal & Schroeder, 2019; Wang & Xu, 2023; Zhang & Ong'ong'a, 2022; Zytoon & Husain, 2023). Research conducted in Kenya and Pakistan found that while the government uses social media to disseminate information, there is no engagement with the international public (Habibullah & Xiguang, 2022; Mboya, 2021). Other research indicates that although the government has established a public diplomacy agenda, it has garnered minimal attention from the international community (Jia & Li, 2020; Uysal & Schroeder, 2019; Wang & Xu, 2023; Zhang & Ong'ong'a, 2022). Research categorized at the influence level involves studies conducted around specific events that aim to achieve political goals by impacting the audience. A study by Boatwright & Pyle (2023) analyzes the use of social media during the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, while the other studies examine social media usage during the COVID-19 pandemic (Shumba, 2021; Tran, 2023).

The results in Figure 3 show the categorization of research conducted in developed countries. It indicates that out of the 7 studies, 57% are categorized as being at the information level, 29% have reached the influence level, and 14% have advanced to the interaction level. This indicates that engaging foreign communities in digital diplomacy is challenging even for developed countries, with the influence level typically being reached during specific events like COVID-19 and Brexit (Albishri et al., 2019; Jiménez-Alcarria

& Tuñón-Navarro, 2023). The interaction level was achieved in studies on the country image, where researchers observed that interactions took place on topics of interest to users, such as a country's uniqueness or strengths (Ingenhoff et al., 2021; Sevin et al., 2021). To further explore the differences in social media usage between developing and developed countries, the authors topics highlighted in the research.

Table 5 shows that politics is the prominent policy area developed by the government on social media, especially in developing countries. Political areas include foreign policy, bilateral arrangements, foreign meetings, collaborations, conventions, cooperation, and repatriation. 13 out of 14 literature reviews conducted on developing countries mentioned political issues in those countries. This is in line with the theoretical aspect where public diplomacy is basically rooted in political and social entities (Hayden, 2018; Sharp, 2009). Political content, whether presented by the government or by individuals or community groups, can quickly go viral on social media. This allows political issues to reach a larger audience and influence the political agenda. Governments and politicians are aware that their presence and engagement on social media can affect voters and political support. Moreover, developing nations can experience unstable domestic political

situations that require assistance or support from other nations. Consequently, numerous developing nations utilize social media platforms to communicate their public diplomacy, with a specific emphasis on political aspects.

An intriguing discovery from the literature analysis is that developed nations extensively discuss economics and the concept of nation branding, which involves shaping a country's image. Country image encompasses the subjective opinions held by international audiences regarding a nation, including their thoughts on the country's politics and their experiences towards the country (Ingenhoff & Chariatte, 2020; Sevin et al., 2021). South Korea has progressed over several decades and is currently considered a developed country. Hence, research (Sevin et al., 2021) aims to investigate the general opinion of South Korea, and determine what aspects influence the opinion and its significance. Study (S. D. Collins et al., 2019) and (Ingenhoff et al., 2021) highlighted the importance of Twitter as a tool for nation-branding and presented multiple instances of how countries have employed Twitter for this purpose. These include the promotion of cultural events, addressing crises, and showcasing national accomplishments to enhance their international reputation. Developed countries commonly engage in nation branding initiatives because

Table 5.
Policy Area Mentioned in the Literatures

Policy area	Articles	Total Developing	Total Developed
Tourism	L3, L13, L16, L18	2	2
Education and culture	L3, L5, L7, L11, L12, L13, L18, L20, L21	5	4
Nation branding	L4, L7, L11, L14, L15, L16, L20, L21	3	5
Politics	L1, L2, L4, L5, L6, L9, L11, L12, L13, L14, L15, L16, L17, L18, L19, L20, L21	13	4
Environments	L4, L5, L12, L13, L15, L16	4	2
Terrorism	L4, L5, L13, L20	2	2
Human rights	L4, L16, L18	1	2
Economic	L5, L13, L15, L16, L19, L20, L21	3	4
Innovation and technology	L5, L12, L13, L16, L18, L21	4	2
Health and medicine	L5, L7, L8, L10, L13, L15, L16, L21	5	3
Military and defense	L5, L12, L17, L20	3	1

Source: proposed by the authors

they already have robust infrastructure and political stability, whereby they want to enhance their international reputation. This contributes to bolstering their global standing, enticing tourists, international students, and a high-caliber workforce.

In relation to economic matters, several developed nations employ social media platforms to enhance their commercial sectors. Social media is utilized to advertise high-quality products and entice international investment. Developed nations frequently possess exceptionally competitive and inventive business industries, so they employ social media platforms to broaden their markets and allure potential investors. For instance, a study (Albishri et al., 2019) conducted in Saudi Arabia discusses that one of the findings derived from the research pertains to the economy, which includes factors such as oil pricing, oil production, trade, and energy.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that most developing countries are predominantly operating at the informational stage, wherein they have difficulties in actively participating in the global community and only succeed in garnering international attention during certain occurrences. This indicates that developing countries are still not effectively utilizing social media for public diplomacy and need strategies to better capture international attention. In developed countries, the interaction level can be attained when the topic of analysis resonates with the international public, such as K-POP and tourism, which contribute to shaping public perceptions of a country. Moreover, in terms of policy areas mentioned in the research, developing nations prioritize addressing specific issues related to growth, international assistance, and foreign policies that align with their domestic objectives. Meanwhile, in developed nations, research mostly centers on assessing the efficacy of social media content and the strategic construction of public diplomacy agendas to affect the perception of the country.

According to an investigation of the literature, several strategies can be used to enhance the effectiveness of using social media in public diplomacy. First, understanding the key policy domains allows a nation to devise a more efficient social media strategy for public diplomacy, aligning with the country's objectives and interests in relevant fields. Furthermore, the strategic arrangement of elements on social media platforms, including tags, hashtags, hyperlinks, videos, and pictures also holds significant influence over public participation (S. D. Collins et al., 2019; Luqiu & Yang, 2020; Mboya, 2021; Uysal & Schroeder, 2019). Second, as governments wish to enhance their image or engage in national branding, they might form partnerships with influencers. For instance, Switzerland and Austria have utilized this strategy to promote tourism by showcasing their stunning landscapes (Ingenhoff et al., 2021). Similar to South Korea, which engages in public diplomacy by partnering with influencers, particularly in cultural areas, such as the worldwide phenomenon of K-POP (Sevin et al., 2021). Finally, assessing and evaluating public preferences, which are in line with the objectives of the country's foreign policy, is one of the strategies to increase public diplomacy effectiveness (Garud-Patkar, 2022).

Method and Social Media Platforms

RQ2: What analytical methods and specific social media platforms are most commonly employed to evaluate public diplomacy activities on social media?

First, the author conducted mapping to reveal which methods were used in previous research. Based on the study literature, content analysis is widely used to investigate approaches in the area of media and communication. It is composed of data collected from social media activities (Ittefaq, 2019). The results can be seen in Table 6, indicating that content analysis is the most commonly used method by researchers to

analyze content generated by users on social media.

Content analysis is an agile method that allows researchers to gain comprehensive insights into the utilization of social media (Albishri et al., 2019; Šimunjak & Caliandro, 2020) and is considered the most appropriate technique for analyzing the manifest or latent content of the messages broadcasted (Jiménez-Alcarria & Tuñón-Navarro, 2023). The findings revealed the issues the Indian government concentrates on in its 15 diplomatic social media accounts geared at South Asian audiences.

Social network analysis (SNA) and Twitter analytics are some of the most popular methods researchers use. SNA helps us figure out which Twitter users have lots of connections and are very active (Ingenhoff et al., 2021). So, social network analysis can be a handy tool for measuring and evaluating public diplomacy efforts. It helps us understand how public diplomacy affects things like people's opinions, the relationships built, and the discussions happening in the public (Jia & Li, 2020).

In terms of social media platforms, the authors discover that Twitter has become the most widely used social media platform used by researchers to analyze government activity in the field of public diplomacy as shown in Figure 4. Twitter is increasingly used by diplomats, politicians, and government officials because it's easy to study how they communicate and build networks. It also allows them to directly interact

with people, making it a valuable tool for their work.

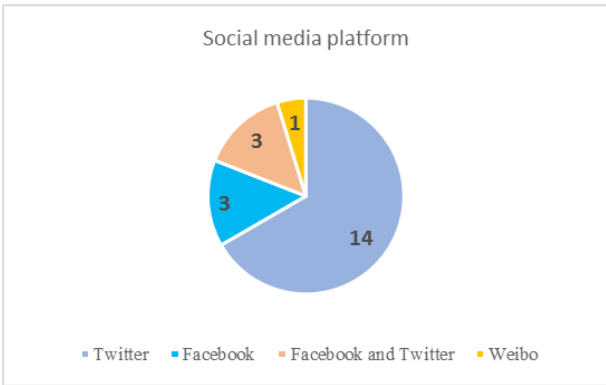


Figure 4. Social Media Platform

Source: proposed by the authors

Twitter sets itself apart from other social media platforms because it's primarily about sharing messages, receiving comments, and staying updated with the latest news. Unlike many social networks where people focus on making friends and connecting with family, Twitter users follow individuals and organizations they're interested in. This is what makes Twitter unique. Twitter may be an effective public diplomacy instrument in supporting the right to convey opinions and expressions. It can influence the thoughts and opinions of people in other countries, potentially impacting their foreign policy decisions (Zytoon & Husain, 2023).

Facebook emerged as the second platform largely used by researchers to study the adoption of public diplomacy in social media. Academics assert that the bulk of content disseminated by media and diplomatic entities on Twitter is

Table 6.
Method Used in Existing Research

Methods	Articles	Total
Content analysis	L2, L4, L5, L6, L7, L8, L9, L13, L14, L17, L18, L20, L21	13
Comparative research approach	L2	1
Bjola-jiang framework	L3	1
Social network analysis	L10, L12, L16, L20	4
Twitter analytic	L1, L11, L15, L19	4
Semiotic analysis	L14	1
Multiple linear regression analysis	L18	1

Source: proposed by the authors

replicated on their Facebook page. Therefore, the information shared on Facebook would include what is published on Twitter. The literature review indicates that CrowdTangle was employed by the researcher to analyze media presence in Facebook posts. CrowdTangle is an online, open-source tool designed to monitor the public content of verified Facebook pages and profiles, excluding private user comments or materials (*CrowdTangle*, n.d.).

In context of region, Table 3 reveals how social media use in European public diplomacy has been the focus of numerous research. The use of social media as a resource to obtain new data and content has been expanding in recent years. According to statecounter.com, the predominant social media platform between 2019 to 2023 is with a percentage of 79.33%, Instagram at 9.16%, followed by Twitter at 4.25% (StatCounter (1999-2023), n.d.).

However, despite the widespread use of Facebook in Europe society, the government institution employed Twitter as a tool to disseminate information and engage with the public. Based on the OECD working paper on public governance, government institutions in 26 out of 34 OECD member countries operate Twitter accounts (Mickoleit, 2014). Accordingly, the authors discovered that Twitter is the most popular social media platform employed in the studies as shown in Figure 2. Out of 10 papers in the region of Europe, 7 of them use Twitter as the platform to conduct the research (Boatwright & Pyle, 2023; Ingenhoff et al., 2021; Jiménez-Alcarria & Tuñón-Navarro, 2023; Šimunjak & Caliandro, 2020; Tran, 2023; Uysal & Schroeder, 2019; Zytoon & Husain, 2023).

Twitter serves as a prominent social media platform (Ingenhoff et al., 2021) for public relations and engaging specific audiences, enabling states to express their identity and foreign policies while validating their efforts. It's a valuable platform for studying public diplomacy and place branding due to its ability to examine content and user

interactions (Jiménez-Alcarria & Tuñón-Navarro, 2023; Šimunjak & Caliandro, 2020; Tran, 2023). Twitter's effectiveness in political communication and its extensive user base of over 300 million (Ingenhoff et al., 2021), makes it a preferred choice for digital communication strategies. Its character limitation promotes concise and information-rich communication, making it a powerful tool for reaching a broad audience in real-time (Ingenhoff et al., 2021).

Discussion

Social media has a significant impact on public diplomacy and international relations in both developing and developed nations. Developed nations widely employ social media platforms to effectively exert soft power, interact with worldwide audiences, and control their international reputation. They utilize advanced data analysis and focused promotional efforts to shape public sentiment and discussions on a worldwide level. In contrast, social media plays an essential role in developing countries by enhancing their global presence, attracting external investments, and facilitating cultural interchange. To address the issues related social media utilization in public diplomacy, it's essential to establish a social media management team in government as it guarantees the government's online presence remains consistent, professional, and in accordance with its communication strategy. Identifying the policy areas that are align with the country's objectives might be beneficial for the government in developing an agenda to communicate foreign policy and other relevant information, even though not all messages conveyed can be received and get a response from foreign audiences, including developed countries. Hence, it is important to assess public preferences that are in line with government objectives periodically. Furthermore, an attractive content design is essential in order to convey the message and captivate the global

audience effectively. This may be achieved by inserting elements such as images, videos, infographics, hashtags, and hyperlinks. Exploring alternative global social media platforms can be an effective method for spreading knowledge as they offer direct channels to communicate with global audiences and foster interactive dialogue. Additionally, collaborating with influencers and cultural ambassadors can help amplify messages and reach broader demographics. For example, South Korea, known for its K-POP culture, has achieved global recognition and Influencers from many nations frequently mention it in their content. Every country has its own uniqueness that can be highlighted to the world to gain public recognition. Diplomats may take advantage of these attributes if they align with the goals of diplomacy. Finally, enhancing diplomatic capacity that can be achieved by providing information and training, especially regarding regulations and procedures for creating substance and delivering messages on social media. Content analysis is an appropriate strategy for scholars and social media teams in government to conduct social media analysis and formulate public diplomacy strategies. Through performing comprehensive study and empirical research, scholars strive to identify practical solutions for addressing issues in public engagement. Therefore, it is possible to communicate all relevant facts and foreign policy effectively to the target audience.

Conclusion

Summary

The main objective of this study is to examine the use of social media in public diplomacy. Employing the PRISMA 2020 methodology, the researchers acquired 21 publications and conducted a quality check to select the final 21 publications for analysis. The study was predominantly conducted in developing countries, with 14 of the chosen publications focusing on this region as their area of investigation.

This study attempted to uncover the differences and strategies of the utilization of social media that are conducted by developing and developed countries in the field of public diplomacy. Developing countries primarily use social media in public diplomacy for information dissemination, focusing on addressing specific issues related to development, international aid, and foreign policies aligned with their domestic goals. Meanwhile, in developed nations, research mostly focused on evaluating the effectiveness of social media content and the deliberate creation of public diplomacy objectives to influence the perception of the country. The authors also revealed that politics is the prominent policy area that the government intends to build in social media, particularly in developing countries, because most of them still need political stability inside the country. Developed countries predominantly use social media to address policy issues like country branding and economic matters. They aim to enhance their global standing, build support on international issues, and strengthen their soft power by projecting a positive image. Additionally, social media is used to share information about business opportunities, economic policies, and ongoing activities, creating a more transparent and attractive environment for global economic actors. The government can optimize social media use in public diplomacy by focusing on key aspects identified in the literature review. Additionally, collaborating with influencers to promote a positive national image and regularly assessing public opinions can further enhance the effectiveness of social media efforts.

The authors found that content analysis is the most commonly used method by researchers to analyze content generated by users on social media. The results showed that thirteen of 21 studies used quantitative content analysis as a method. Social network analysis as well as Twitter analytics is the second most used method in existing research. Social network analysis, as

outlined by Ingenhoff et al. (2021), helps us find users who have more connections and are more active on Twitter.

Consequently, it can serve as a valuable instrument for evaluating and gauging public diplomacy efforts. This evaluation entails translating the impact of public diplomacy communication into factors such as public sentiment, the cultivation of relationships, and contributions to public discourse, as discussed by Jia & Li (2020). The outcome of this study is also anticipated to provide a profound overview of the role of social media in public diplomacy in the digital era, and also offer methods for best practices in its application.

The finding suggests that social media has a crucial role in public diplomacy, especially during significant events such as political issues, invasions, COVID-19, etc. Social media aid the government to connect directly with foreign audiences and disseminate information quickly and widely. Through an interactive engagement with the global audience, the government can obtain valuable insights that are beneficial in designing public policy and strategy.

Implication

This paper explores significant implications for both practitioners and academic research concerning the use of social media in public diplomacy. The findings suggest that it is essential for governments to develop comprehensive social media strategies that contain clear objectives, specific target audiences, and key performance indicators to assess effectiveness. This may require allocating budget resources and personnel to establish specialized teams for managing social media and providing training to diplomats and public officials in developing digital communication skills and the tactical utilization of various platforms.

Social media facilitates direct interaction, promotes greater transparency and trust by enabling the rapid and reliable sharing of

information, as well as offering a platform for receiving input and assessing public opinion. In doing so, governments should prioritize developing interactive content and establishing real-time communication channels to promote engagement and dialogue. This might involve implementing live streaming for events, interactive Q&A sessions, and providing real-time updates during emergencies. In addition, building partnerships with influencers, cultural ambassadors, and other influential figures may significantly amplify public diplomacy messages. To ensure messages resonate with various global audiences, policies should mandate the creation of localized and culturally relevant content. Finally, involving feedback methods, such as surveys, polls, and comment analysis, may provide beneficial insights into public sentiment and facilitate the necessary adjustments to strategy.

For academic researchers, this study emphasizes the significance of multidisciplinary approaches that integrate knowledge from international relations, communication studies, and digital media that pave the way for further research into the efficacy of social media strategies in different geopolitical circumstances. Moreover, this research highlights the necessity for scholars to create and improve theoretical frameworks that can more effectively elucidate dynamic interactions between governments and global audiences on digital platforms. These findings also suggest an opportunity for empirical research to evaluate the influence of particular social media campaigns and content types on public participation and perception.

Limitation

The constraint arises from the restricted number of sources utilized in the articles, with the authors relying on just three reputable sources and extracting only 21 articles. This limited the scope in terms of the geographic regions and potential to uncover additional relevant studies. Additionally, even though there are various

platforms available to be analyzed, Twitter is still the most popular social media platform because of its advantages including large sample size and its real-time information. This limited any further information or insight to be investigated in other social media platforms. Another limitation is the possibility of bias in choosing articles or examples that could distort the overall findings. To acquire an improved understanding of the role of social media in public diplomacy, future studies should focus on eliminating these constraints.

Future Works

Future research should focus on addressing the limitations found in this study and delving into novel areas of investigation. This study can be expanded as it may produce biased results. Some ways to improve the selection process involve increasing the number of databases, broadening the scope of publishing years, and improving the QAC. The author found that Twitter is the most used social media platform in the studies. Therefore, future research should consider the employment of another social media platform like Instagram which has been widely used by diplomatic officials around the world. Additionally, the author recommends further study specifically about social media analytics to gain insights and understanding about online conversations, and trends, and to analyze public sentiment related to specific topics, keywords, brands, or individuals. Moreover, integrating qualitative methodologies, such as interviews and content analysis, may obtain a more profound comprehension of public sentiment and the complex impacts of digital diplomacy efforts. By emphasizing these specific areas, future study can enhance the understanding of how social media can be utilized for effective public diplomacy in the digital era.

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