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Mapping the Transformation of Government Political Communication on Global Social Media: A Bibliometric and Thematic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The growing centrality of social media in government–citizen interaction has reshaped the scholarly landscape of government political communication, yet its geographical, conceptual, and thematic development remains fragmented across political contexts, platforms, and research traditions. This study maps the global development of research on government political communication through social media by examining geographical contributions, dominant concepts, influential publications, conceptual structures, and thematic evolution. Its novelty lies in integrating cross-country, conceptual, citation-based, and temporal evidence within a single framework to clarify the development of government political communication at the intersection of institutional communication. A systematic bibliometric review was conducted using 875 English-language journal articles indexed in Scopus for the 1999–2024 period, with the identification and filtering process reported with reference to PRISMA 2020. Bibliometric performance analysis and science-mapping techniques were used to examine geographical distribution, keyword patterns, citation influence, conceptual structure, and thematic evolution. The findings reveal a geographically concentrated research landscape dominated by Western contexts and a conceptual structure centered on social media and political communication, with personalization, populism, platform characteristics, and political participation emerging as prominent themes. The thematic trajectory further indicates a transition from public communication and representation toward increasingly complex concerns involving digital communication, disinformation, platform governance, algorithms, and digital democracy. The study contributes to communication scholarship by showing that government political communication is not an isolated domain; it is embedded within a communication ecosystem in which institutional, public, electoral, and political communication intersect. This integrated perspective provides a conceptual basis for more comparative and theoretically differentiated research, particularly across underrepresented Global South contexts.

Keywords: Government political communication, social media, bibliometric analysis, thematic mapping.

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ABSTRAK

Meningkatnya sentralitas media sosial dalam interaksi pemerintah warga telah mengubah lanskap kajian komunikasi politik pemerintah, tetapi perkembangan geografis, konseptual, dan tematik bidang ini masih terfragmentasi dalam berbagai konteks politik, platform, dan tradisi penelitian. Penelitian ini memetakan perkembangan global kajian komunikasi politik pemerintah melalui media sosial dengan menganalisis kontribusi geografis, konsep dominan, publikasi berpengaruh, struktur konseptual, dan evolusi tematik. Kebaruan penelitian terletak pada integrasi bukti lintas negara, konseptual, berbasis sitasi, dan temporal dalam satu kerangka analisis untuk memperjelas perkembangan komunikasi politik pemerintah pada persinggungan antara komunikasi institusional. Penelitian menggunakan systematic bibliometric review terhadap 875 artikel jurnal berbahasa Inggris yang terindeks Scopus pada periode 1999–2024, dengan proses identifikasi dan penyaringan dilaporkan mengacu pada PRISMA 2020. Analisis kinerja bibliometrik dan teknik science mapping digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi distribusi geografis, pola kata kunci, pengaruh sitasi, struktur konseptual, dan evolusi tematik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa lanskap penelitian masih terkonsentrasi pada konteks negara-negara Barat, dengan struktur konseptual yang berpusat pada media sosial dan komunikasi politik serta tema menonjol berupa personalisasi, populisme, karakteristik platform, dan partisipasi politik. Evolusi tematik menunjukkan pergeseran dari komunikasi publik dan representasi menuju isu yang semakin kompleks, termasuk komunikasi digital, disinformasi, tata kelola platform, algoritma, dan demokrasi digital. Ini berkontribusi pada studi komunikasi dengan menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi politik pemerintah bukan merupakan bidang yang sepenuhnya terpisah, melainkan semakin tertanam dalam ekosistem komunikasi berbasis platform tempat komunikasi institusional, publik, elektoral, dan komunikasi politik yang lebih luas saling beririsan. Perspektif integratif ini menyediakan dasar konseptual bagi penelitian komparatif yang lebih terdiferensiasi secara teoretis, terutama dalam konteks Global South yang masih kurang terwakili.

Kata Kunci: Komunikasi politik pemerintah, media sosial, analisis bibliometrik, pemetaan tematik.

INTRODUCTION

The penetration of global social media as an ever more important infrastructure for the exchange of political information and government–citizen interaction has substantially accelerated the transformation of government political communication. Social media are not just a channel of message distribution but a way of reconfiguring power relations, political legitimacy, and public participation in contemporary democratic systems (Chadwick, 2017b; Kreiss et al., 2024). Governments in different countries are increasingly utilizing online platforms to increase their public visibility, responsiveness and trust especially during political crises and political competition (Moreno et al., 2023). However, such rapid development has not yet been completely balanced by comprehensive and systematic mapping of research at the global level, especially research that explores geographical patterns, thematic structures, and evolution of government political communication.

In this study, government political communication refers to the political communication conducted by, associated with, or directly relevant to governmental actors and institutions in the digital public sphere. This focus is different from political communication in general, which may also include electoral campaigns, political parties, candidates, citizens, and other non-governmental political actors. Nevertheless, these areas may intersect in the social media environment because government communication, public communication, electoral communication, and other political communication increasingly operate within the same platform.

Although the study of digital political communication is growing rapidly, the understanding of how governments transform their political communication through global social media remains fragmented and contextual. Most research focuses on electoral campaigns, populist actors, or specific platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, without systematically integrating cross-country and longitudinal perspectives (Jungherr, 2016). As a result, the dominant patterns, thematic evolutions, and relationships between actors, platforms, and issues relevant to the transformation of government political communication remain insufficiently integrated within a global research landscape (Engesser et al., 2017). This condition creates a gap in understanding the direction research on the transformation of government political communication in the increasingly complex and digitized global social media ecosystem.

The existing literature shows a number of fundamental limitations. First, many studies are single case studies or limited comparisons, making it difficult to draw global generalizations (Bossetta, 2018; Lovari et al., 2024a). Second, systematic research mapping the evolution of topics, conceptual clusters, and temporal dynamics of government political communication is still relatively scarce (Tong & Song, 2021). Third, although social media is recognized to play a role in polarization, populism, and political personalization, the relationships between these themes are rarely analyzed integratively within a single global bibliometric mapping framework (Lee, 2016). Existing studies therefore offer useful insights into particular platforms, political actors, communication practices and geographical contexts, but they do not adequately explain how these elements relate to each other in the broader development of research into government political communication through social media. The gap points to the need for an approach which can synthesize the research landscape as a whole.

In response to these limitations, this study offers a systematic bibliometric mapping approach to synthesize and integrate developments in the study of the transformation of government political communication through global social media. This study aims to

identify the main thematic structures, geographical contributions, the main platforms, and evolutionary dynamics of issues that shape contemporary government political communication through a mapping of the international scientific literature. This approach allows for a holistic understanding of how social media has been conceptualized within the literature on government political communication, while bridging the fragmentation of previous research that tended to be separate based on specific geographic contexts (Chadwick, 2017b; Kreiss et al., 2024).

The urgency of this research lies in the increasing role of social media as a major arena of interaction between governments and citizens at the global level. In situations of political crisis, pandemic, and disinformation, government political communication through social media has direct implications for public trust and the quality of democracy (Domalewska, 2025). From the academic side, systematic bibliometric mapping could clarify the direction of the development of digital political communication studies, identify dominant research clusters, and reveal the shift in the focus of studies from conventional public communication to a political communication ecosystem grounded to platform and algorithm (Mergel, 2013; Tong & Song, 2021).

The novelty of this research lies in the integration of inter-temporal, inter-country, and inter-thematic analyses within a single global literature mapping framework focused on the development of government political communication within the global social media ecosystem. In contrast to previous studies, this study systematically maps the evolution of key topics such as populism, personalization, disinformation, and the role of algorithms to strengthen the theoretical foundations of digital political communication (Chadwick, 2017a; Kreiss et al., 2024). The contribution of the study therefore lies in integrating geographical distribution, conceptual structure, influential literature, and thematic evolution within one analytical framework.

Accordingly, this study aims to map the global research landscape of government political communication through social media by examining geographical contributions, dominant research themes, influential studies, conceptual structures, and the evolution of topics over time. More specifically, it addresses the following questions: (1) How is research on government political communication through social media geographically distributed? (2) What themes, concepts, platforms, and influential studies dominate this research field? and (3) How have the conceptual and thematic orientations of the field evolved over time? By addressing these questions, the study seeks to provide an integrated empirical reference for understanding the development and future direction of digital government political communication research.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted by using a systematic bibliometric review to map the development of research on the transformation of government political communication through global social media based on bibliographic records retrieved from the Scopus database. The analysis combined systematic identification and screening of literature with bibliometric performance analysis and science mapping, including geographical distribution, keyword patterns, citation impact, conceptual structure, and thematic evolution. Scopus was chosen because of its broad scope and curated coverage of peer-reviewed scholarly literature and its suitability for bibliometric research (Baas et al., 2020). The identification and filtering of bibliographic records were reported with reference to the PRISMA 2020 framework to enhance the transparency and reproducibility of the search and selection process (Mishra & Mishra, 2023). The bibliometric mapping approach was subsequently used to identify dominant patterns, influential publications, conceptual relationships, and changes in research themes over time. Accordingly, PRISMA was used primarily to document the identification and filtering of records, while bibliometric analysis was used to examine the structure and evolution of the research field.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

After the search phase, the identified studies were screened using predefined eligibility criteria to ensure consistency between the research scope and the bibliographic corpus used for subsequent analysis. The search was limited to studies published between 1998-2025, to capture the current trend of the transformation of government political communication through global social media. This time frame was chosen to avoid historical bias and ensure the relevance of the data to current challenges and the implementation of the transformation of government political communication through global social media.

Inclusion criteria were defined as follows:

1. Language: publications written in English to maintain consistency in bibliographic and textual metadata analysis.
2. Publication type and source type: journal articles were included, whereas conference papers, books, book chapters, editorials, reviews, notes, and other non-article document types were excluded.
3. Topical relevance: records had to address political, government, or public communication in relation to social media, digital media, or online communication, consistent with the conceptual scope operationalized in the search query.

4. Database coverage: records had to be indexed in Scopus and satisfy the predefined search and filtering parameters.

Records were excluded when they did not meet the language, publication-type, source-type, temporal, or topical criteria established above. Because the present study primarily analyzed bibliographic metadata rather than conducting a full-text qualitative synthesis of every document, methodological quality, article length, and full-text availability were not used as exclusion criteria unless these criteria were actually assessed systematically by the authors.

Search and Data Processing Strategies

The literature search was conducted in the Scopus database using a TITLE-ABS-KEY search strategy designed to capture the intersection between political/government communication and digital social media. The search was conducted on 27 November 2025, using the following query: (TITLE-ABS-KEY (“political communication” OR “government communication” OR “public communication”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (“social media” OR “digital media” OR “online communication”) AND PUBYEAR > 1998 AND PUBYEAR < 2025 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , “SOCI”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , “English”))) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , “j”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , “Social Media”)) The first group of terms operationalized the broader communication domain relevant to government political communication, while the second captured the digital media environment in which such communication occurs. The additional filters restricted the corpus according to subject area, language, source type, and keyword relevance.

The broader terms “political communication,” “government communication,” and “public communication” were used because of the conceptual overlap in the platform-based communication environment. However, the corpus produced was interpreted in the specific context of the study, which was concerned with the transformation of political communication in government, and not in the sense that all forms of political communication are conceptually identical. The initial Scopus search identified 2,680 records. Following the database filtering process reported in the PRISMA flow diagram, records that did not meet the designated source- and document-type criteria were excluded, resulting in a final corpus of 875 journal articles for bibliometric analysis.

The identified publications were exported from Scopus to Microsoft Excel for further processing, including the examination and organization of bibliographic information such as titles, abstracts, author keywords, affiliations, countries, publication years, sources, and citation data. The identification and filtering process was documented using a PRISMA 2020 flow diagram to provide a transparent account of how the initial Scopus records were reduced to the final analytical corpus (Mishra & Mishra, 2023). This procedure provides a traceable link between the search strategy, database restrictions, and the final dataset used in the bibliometric analyses.

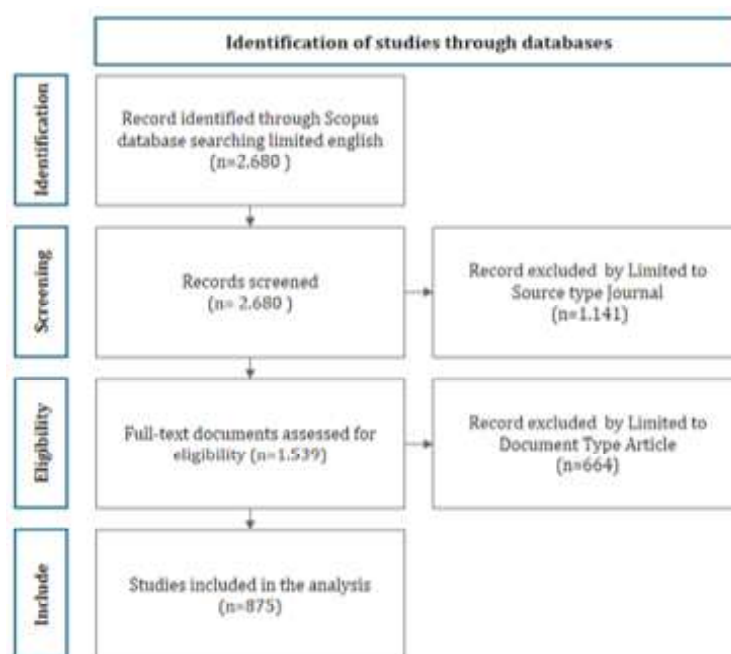


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram of the identification and filtering of Scopus records.
 Source: Adapted from Page et al. (2021); authors' processing based on Scopus data.

Data Analysis and Visualization

Bibliometric analysis was conducted on the final corpus of 875 documents to examine the intellectual, geographical, and thematic development of research on government political communication through global social media. Data were analyzed using RStudio-Biblioshiny, which was used to process bibliographic metadata and generate descriptive and science-mapping visualizations (Lawelai et al., 2025). The analyses reported in this study included document distribution by country, keyword-frequency visualization through a word cloud, identification of the most relevant and highly cited documents, factorial analysis of the conceptual structure, and topic-evolution analysis. These techniques were

selected because they correspond directly to the study objectives of identifying geographical contributions, dominant concepts, influential literature, and changes in thematic orientation over time. Together, these procedures provide an empirical basis for interpreting the geographical distribution, conceptual structure, influential literature, and thematic evolution of the field. They do not require causal claims, which cannot be established through bibliometric data alone.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Geographical Distribution and Keyword Patterns

This section examines the geographical distribution and dominant keyword patterns within the literature on government political communication through social media. The analysis addresses the first research question concerning the geographical distribution of the field and provides an initial indication of the concepts and platforms that have received the greatest scholarly attention.

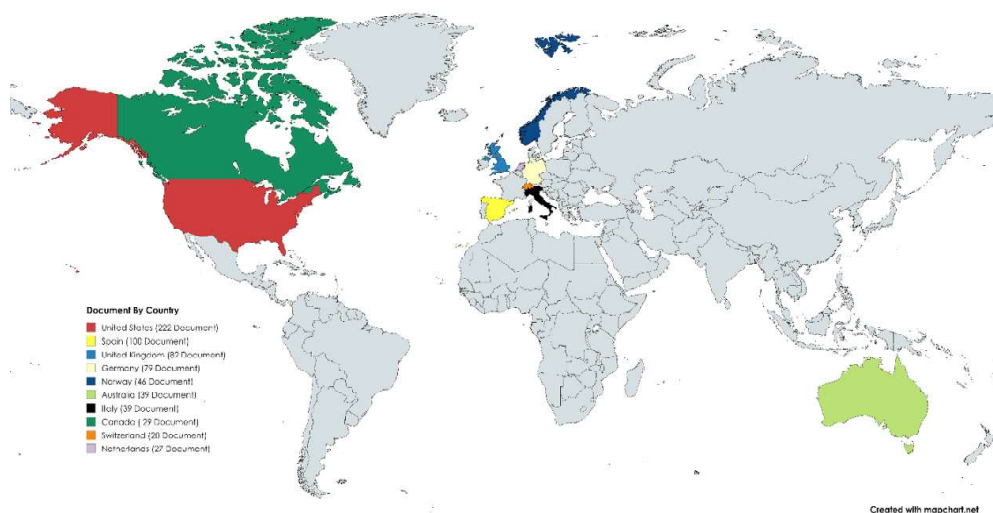


Figure 2. Geographical Distribution of Documents by Country

Source: Scopus Database.

Figure 2 indicates that research production is concentrated particularly in the United States, Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Norway, demonstrating an uneven geographical distribution of scholarship on political and government communication through social media. The prominent position of these countries suggests that the

intellectual development of the field has been strongly associated with Western research contexts. The United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany consistently occupy prominent positions in political communication publications and digital media studies, reflecting long-term academic interest as well as well-established research infrastructure (Sjoraida, 2025). This concentration should, however, be interpreted as a pattern of scholarly production rather than direct evidence that particular political or historical conditions cause higher publication output. Previous literature nevertheless provides contextual explanations for why these countries have become important empirical settings. Studies from the United Kingdom, Germany, and Spain, for example, frequently examine democracy, political legitimacy, European integration, and public trust (Medrano & Gray, 2010; Medrano, 2021), while research from Northern European contexts has increasingly addressed digital government, openness, and public participation.

Geographical distribution also matches the long-standing influence of Anglo-American perspectives on comparative political communication research (Aalberg et al., 2012; Aalberg & Curran, 2012). Norway and other Northern European contexts have been of interest as the adoption of digital technology, open-government initiatives, and citizen-oriented public communication are relevant settings to study digitally mediated government communication (Gomes & Soares, 2014). The European countries were also important empirical sites in the COVID-19 crisis, particularly for research on institutional communication, information seeking, and public trust (Moreno et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the concentration of publications in Western countries reveals a serious geographical inequality. The relative invisibility of the Global South suggests that future research should investigate whether concepts and patterns developed predominantly in Western political and institutional environments are transferable to different media systems and governance contexts.



Figure 3. Word Cloud of Dominant Keywords

Source: Authors' analysis using RStudio-Biblioshiny.

Figure 3 shows that “social media” and “political communication” are the most visually prominent terms in the corpus, followed by platform- and issue-specific terms such as “Twitter,” “Facebook,” and “populism.” Because word-cloud size is indicative of relative keyword frequency and not conceptual or causal relationships, these results suggest which topics are more frequently discussed within the literature rather than demonstrating relationships among them. The prominence of these terms reflects the development of platform-based political communication, in which political leaders and institutions increasingly communicate directly with citizens through social media (Hatakka, 2018). Personalization and populism have become recurrent themes in this literature because platform affordances facilitate direct, emotionally oriented, and highly visible forms of political communication (Sengul, 2023; Sintes-Olivella et al., 2020). These themes therefore constitute a substantial intellectual component of the corpus, not evidence that all government communication is populist or personalized.

The visibility of populism and campaign-related terminology also demonstrates the conceptual overlap identified in the Introduction between government communication and the broader field of political communication. Studies of populist leaders, electoral mobilization, personalized political communication, and party communication contribute substantially to the knowledge base from which government political communication has developed (Zarubin & Achkasova, 2024; Pureklolon et al., 2025; Rehan & Zolkepli,

2021). At the same time, their prominence indicates that the field remains strongly connected to electoral and actor-centered research. This suggests an opportunity for future scholarship to further differentiate institutional government communication from candidate-, party-, and campaign-oriented political communication.

Influential Documents and Citation Impact

This section examines influential documents from two complementary perspectives: topical relevance within the analyzed corpus and citation impact. Together, these indicators identify studies that are conceptually central to the dataset and publications that have exerted substantial scholarly influence on the development of digital political communication research.

Table 1. Top Five Articles Based on Topic Relevance

Author	Issued Discuss	Insight
(Bimber, 2014)	Digital Media in the Obama Campaigns of 2008 and 2012: Adaptation to the Personalized Political Communication Environment	Barack Obama's 2008 and 2012 campaigns successfully transformed digital media into a strategically personalized and commodified political instrument, enabling grassroots funding, more effective voter mobilization, innovative use of social media and data analytics, and a significant organizational advantage over its competitors as well as an important benchmark for digital campaign practices in the context of European elections contemporary.
(Darshan & Suresh, 2019)	The 'Social' in political communication: Social media enabled political discourse, engagement and mobilization in India	The influence of social media on voting behavior and political involvement, studies that discuss the determinants, typical characteristics of digital political communication, and gender dimensions are still very limited, thus marking an important research gap in understanding the transformation of political communication in the social media era.

(Lee, 2016)	Impact of social media on opinion polarization in varying times	The polarizing effects of political communication both through social media, interpersonal discussions, and news exposure are contextual, where extremities of political attitudes increase significantly only when political conflict is at its peak (such as during the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong), and do not arise under relatively normal political conditions, even in individuals with or without a clear political orientation.
(Lovari et al., 2024b)	WITHIN INSTITUTIONAL TIMELINES. PATHWAYS OF MAYORS' VISIBILITY IN SOCIAL MEDIA PUBLIC COMMUNICATION	The official social media of the city government serves as a hybrid space that connects public communication and political communication, where the mayor's visibility during the pandemic crisis varies mainly based on the purpose and topic of the message conveyed not by the personal or structural characteristics of the official and influences the public response and personalization practices of institutional communication.
(Koc-Michalska et al., 2024)	Digital media, democracy and civil society in Central and Eastern Europe	The digital media environment, especially social media platforms, has an ambivalent role in democracy in the Central and Eastern European region, because on the one hand it shapes the interaction of citizens, journalists, and political actors as well as satisfaction with democracy, but on the other hand it also contributes to affective polarization, political antagonism, the dynamics of strategic election coverage, and the challenge of civic engagement, especially among the younger generation.

Source: Database Scopus

Table 1 demonstrates that the most topically relevant literature covers several interconnected dimensions of digital political communication. Bimber (2014) illustrates the growing importance of personalized and data-supported digital communication through the Obama campaigns, while Darshan and Suresh (2019) emphasize political discourse, engagement, and mobilization in the Indian context. Lee (2016) extends this discussion

to political polarization, demonstrating that the effects associated with social media communication remain context-dependent. Collectively, these studies indicate that the intellectual foundation of the field has developed around personalization, political participation, mobilization, and changing relationships between political actors and digitally connected publics.(Bimber, 2014; Bossetta, 2018; Jungherr, 2016).

More directly related to government communication, Lovari et al. (2024b) show that official municipal social media represent a hybrid communication space in which institutional and political visibility intersect, particularly during crisis situations. Further, Koc-Michalska et al. (2024) show the ambivalent democratic role of digital media. They allow for political interaction, but are also associated with polarization and problems of civic engagement. The diversity in the five relevant publications therefore confirms that government political communication is embedded within a broader digital political communication ecosystem and not a research domain of its own. This finding strengthens the conceptual distinction introduced earlier in the manuscript while explaining the coexistence of campaign-, public-, and institution-oriented studies in the analyzed corpus.

Table 2. Top Five Most-Cited Articles in the Scopus Corpus.

Author	Issued Discuss	Findings	Citations
(Engesser et al., 2017)	Populism and social media: how politicians spread a fragmented ideology	Populism on social media emerges in a fragmented and cross-contextual form, where politicians from different countries, parties, and status levels utilize Facebook and Twitter to express populist elements in contrast to left-wing populists emphasizing attacks on economic elites, while right-wing populists more often attack media elites and ostracize other groups and assert that social media provides strategic space for populist actors to articulate and spread their ideology.	676
(Jungherr, 2016)	Twitter use in election campaigns: A systematic literature review	Twitter has been widely used by candidates, parties, journalists, and the public in election campaigns, related academic research is still fragmented and lacks uniformity of evidence, research design, and data collection and selection methods, thus confirming the need for a more systematic and standardized methodological approach in the study of Twitter-based political campaigns.	575

(Enli & Skogerbø, 2013)	PERSONALIZED CAMPAIGNS IN PARTY-CENTRED POLITICS: Twitter and Facebook as arenas for political communication	In a party-centric political system such as Norway, politicians continue to use social media primarily for personal marketing and voter dialogue, with Facebook being more dominant as a means of marketing personal image and Twitter being used more for ongoing dialogue, although these practices often have the potential to conflict with political parties' structural communication strategies.	557
(Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013)	Social media and political communication: a social media analytics framework	Although social media has great potential to increase political participation and dialogue, political institutions still face methodological limitations in tracking, analyzing, and utilizing complex and massive social media data, thus this study confirms the importance of an integrated methodological framework for social media analysis in political contexts.	466
(Bossetta, 2018)	The Digital Architectures of Social Media: Comparing Political Campaigning on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat in the 2016 U.S. Election	Political communication strategies on social media are significantly shaped by the platform's digital architecture, where differences in network structure, functional features, algorithmic filtering mechanisms, and datafigging models on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat influence the way political campaigns are designed and executed, as seen in the context of the 2016 U.S. general election.	454

Source: Database Scopus

Table 2 shows that the most highly cited literature is strongly associated with social media, electoral communication, populism, personalization, and platform architecture. Engesser et al. (2017), the most highly cited article in the dataset, conceptualize social-media populism as fragmented and context-dependent, whereas Jungherr (2016) demonstrates both the extensive use of Twitter in electoral campaigns and the methodological fragmentation of early research in this area. These influential studies reveal that electoral and actor-centered communication formed an important intellectual foundation for the subsequent development of broader digital political communication research.

Enli and Skogerbø (2013) further identify personalization as an important characteristic of political communication even within party-centered systems, while Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan (2013) highlight the methodological challenges created by large-scale social media data. Bossetta (2018) introduces an additional platform-centered dimension by demonstrating that different digital architectures structure political communication practices in different ways. Taken together, the citation analysis indicates that the intellectual development of the field has moved beyond viewing social media simply as communication channels toward examining the interaction among political actors, communication strategies, data practices, and platform affordances. For government political communication research, this intellectual foundation is relevant because governmental actors commonly operate within the same platform infrastructures and communication logics.

Conceptual Structure and Topic Evolution

This section discusses the conceptual structure and the temporal evolution of the research field by means of factorial analysis and mapping of topic evolution. The analyses reveal the frequently with which associated concepts are grouped into larger thematic clusters and how the thematic focus of the literature has shifted across the periods represented in the dataset.

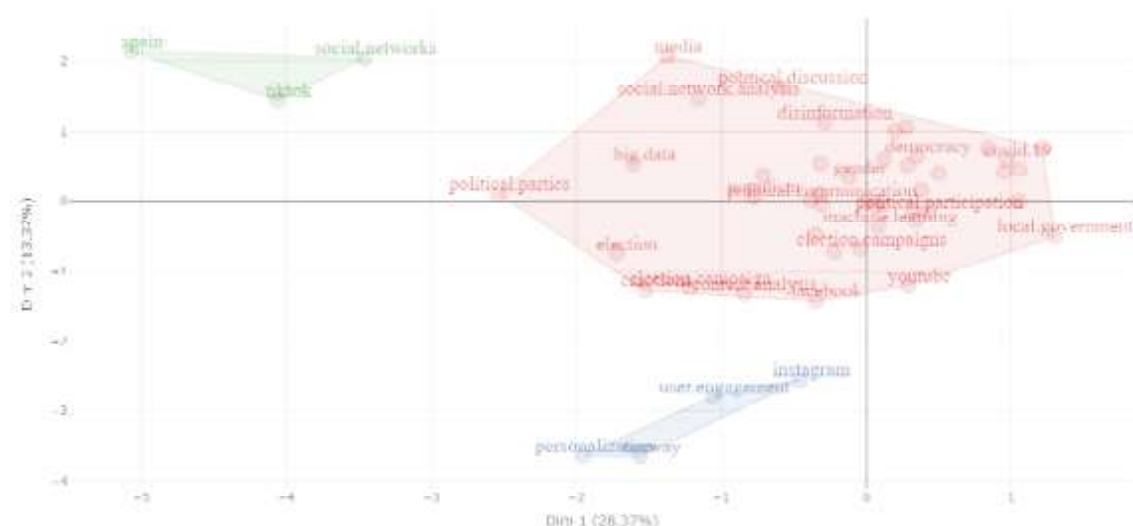


Figure 4. Factorial Analysis of the Conceptual Structure
Source: Authors' analysis using RStudio-Biblioshiny.

Figure 4 is not a homogeneous research theme but a multidimensional conceptual structure. The first two dimensions account for a large proportion of the conceptual variance represented on the map and the closeness of terms in space indicates stronger conceptual relationship between them. The largest cluster contains concepts about social media, political communication, political discourse, democracy, disinformation, political participation, and government-related communication. This cluster can be interpreted as a broad “platformed political communication and governance” domain, which shows the convergence of platform use, political actors, public communication, democratic processes, and emerging information-related challenges. This pattern is contextualized in previous research showing the close relationship among platform-based communication, populist discourse, political participation, and disinformation (Curiel, 2020; Magin et al., 2024; Domalewska, 2025).

The second cluster is more focused and has to do with Instagram, user engagement, and personalization. That it is separated from the larger cluster shows that the research on visually oriented platforms has evolved a relatively distinct conceptual identity around personalized political presentation and audience interaction. This interpretation is consistent with research that has identified Instagram as a site for visual personalization and engagement with individual political leaders (Larsson, 2019; Skogerbø & Larsson, 2021). The theme is government political communication. It highlights the increasing importance of visual and personalized institutional communication but also questions the balance between engagement-oriented content and substantive policy communication (Zumofen et al., 2025).

The third cluster embraces concepts associated with TikTok, social networks, and Spanish research context. This cluster is indicative of an emerging theme of “short-form platform and networked political communication”. Research on TikTok has become more and more centered on youth communication, informal visual stories, and the conversion of entertainment media into sites for political conversation (Cervi & Marín-Lladó, 2021; Cervi et al., 2023). More recent works also emphasize the importance of algorithmic visibility and platform-specific communication strategies (Figueroa-Benítez et al., 2025). This separation of these concepts from the larger cluster points to an emerging research trajectory in which platform-specific affordances are gaining ground in the understanding of contemporary political communication.

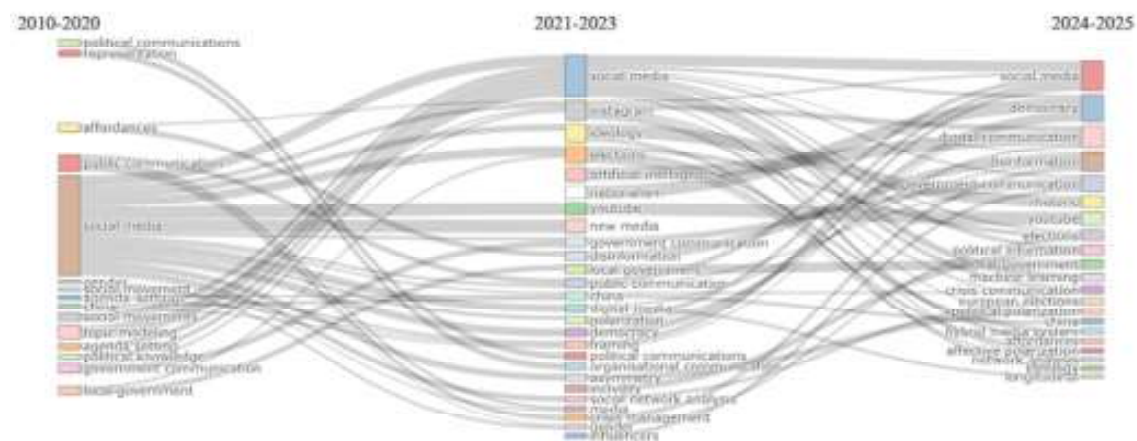


Figure 5. Thematic Evolution of Government Political Communication Research
Source: Authors' Analysis using RStudio-Biblioshiny.

Figure 5 shows a gradual thematic change over the three periods considered in the analysis. The literature in 2010–2020 was primarily concerned with established themes, including public communication, representation, political communication, and the expanding role of social media. In the 2021–2023, “social media” and “government communication” also started to link to a broader diversity of topics, indicating an increased diversification of the field. In the 2024–2025, the thematic structure expanded to include digital communication, disinformation, democracy, and other issues associated with the changing platform environment. This thematic progression does not show a direct causal transformation of governmental communication, but rather indicates that the scholarly literature is increasingly conceptualizing social media as part of the infrastructure through which governmental information, political discourse, public participation and institutional communication interact. Correspondingly, Mergel (2013) shows how government adoption of social media is connected with changing practices of communication and more interactive forms of public engagement.

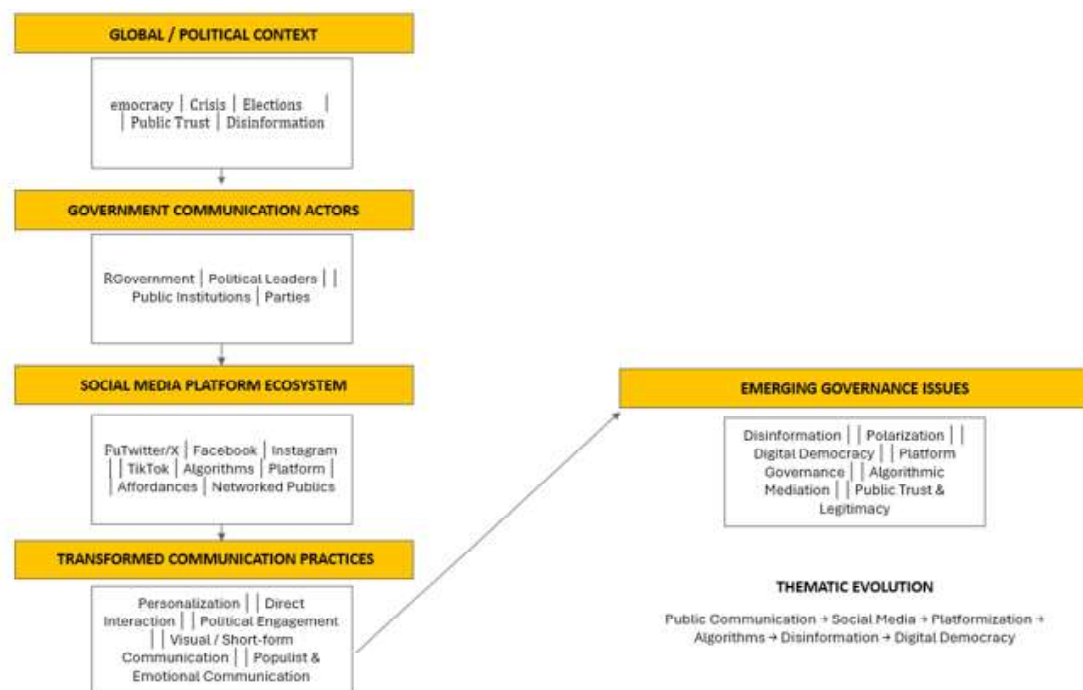
The recent phase also reveals an increased academic interest in algorithmic, information and platform related issues, which reveals a shift in research agenda toward a more complex understanding of digitally mediated political communication. In the hybrid media system, governmental and political actors coexist more and more with platform algorithms, networked publics, influencers and disinformation dynamics (Chadwick, 2017a). This thematic development thus indicates a shift from research largely focused on communication channels and representation to scholarship increasingly focused on

platform governance, information integrity, digital democracy, and algorithmically mediated communication. This development provides an important basis for future comparative research, especially regarding how these emerging dynamics differ across governance systems and between Western versus Global South contexts.

The combined geographical, conceptual, citation and thematic analyzes address the three research questions, suggesting that the field is geographically concentrated, conceptually rooted in social media and political communication, and increasingly differentiated by platform-specific characteristics and emergent digital-governance challenges. The results also show that the boundary between government political communication and wider digital political communication is porous, which is a feature of existing literature and an important direction for future conceptual refinement.

Conceptual Synthesis of Bibliometric Findings

This section integrates the main findings into a conceptual representation of the transformation of government political communication on global social media based on the bibliometric analysis on the geographical distribution, conceptual structure, citation patterns and thematic evolution. The synthesis aims at elucidating the interrelations between the dominant research themes, communicative actors, platform traits and emergent governance issues in the changing academic landscape. Instead of proposing a causal model, the framework offers an analytical interpretation of the patterns and thematic relationships identified in the reviewed literature, thus providing a concise basis for understanding the transformation of government political communication in the contemporary digital environment.



**Figure 6. Conceptual Synthesis of Government Political Communication Transformation
Derived from Bibliometric Findings.**

Source: Authors' synthesis based on bibliometric findings.

The main results of the bibliometric analysis are shown in Figure 6 in the conceptual framework of transformation of government political communication on global social media. The synthesis relates the geographical and conceptual features of the research landscape with the main themes extracted by keyword patterns, factorial analysis and thematic evolution. The literature is largely located in Western research settings, but the conceptual core is closely aligned with social media and political communication. Personalization, political engagement, platform-specific communication, populism and emotional communication are prominent fields of scholarly attention in this core.

The thematic structure also indicates a move from traditional public communication and representation to a more complex platform-based communication environment, marked by algorithmic mediation, disinformation, platform governance, polarization, and digital democracy. Thus, Figure 6 should be read as a conceptual synthesis of the bibliometric evidence, rather than as a causal model. Arrows denote thematic progression and conceptual association in the literature. This synthesis shows that government political communication is becoming more and more embedded in a wider digital communication ecosystem where institutional actors, platforms, networked publics and new governance challenges are coming together.

CONCLUSION

This study presents a systematic bibliometric mapping of the global research landscape on government political communication through social media by integrating geographical distribution, dominant concepts, influential publications, conceptual structures, and thematic evolution. The results respond to the three research questions by first showing that scholarly production remains geographically concentrated, particularly in the Western research contexts; second, that the field is conceptually anchored in social media and political communication, with personalization, populism, platform characteristics, political participation, and digital engagement emerging as prominent themes; and third, that its thematic orientation has progressively expanded from public communication and representation toward more complex issues involving digital communication, disinformation, platform governance, democracy, and algorithmically mediated communication. Rather than demonstrating direct causal effects, these patterns point to a growing tendency within the academic literature to frame social media as a central arena in which governmental, institutional and broader political communication practices intersect.

This study's main contribution is the integration of geographical, conceptual, citation-based, and temporal evidence within a single analytical framework. The results clearly show that government political communication does not evolve as an entirely independent research field but is closely connected to broader research streams on electoral communication, political actors, public communication, and platform-based political interaction. This conceptual overlap matters for understanding the development of the field, but also signals the need for more analytical distinction between institutional government communication and candidate-, party- or campaign-oriented political communication. The findings further emphasize the need to investigate government political communication in an increasingly heterogeneous platform environment where communication practices are conditioned by different technological affordances, patterns of audience engagement, and emerging information-governance challenges.

Several limitations should be taken into account when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the study is based only on Scopus, so relevant publications indexed in other databases might not be included. Second, the corpus is constrained by language, subject area, source type, document type and keyword search parameters, which might have an impact on the geographical and thematic coverage of the field. Third, citation-based indicators may favor older publications simply because they have had longer to receive citations. Fourth, bibliometric analysis can indicate trends in scholarly production, conceptual association

and thematic development, but it cannot establish causal relationships between social media use, the practices of governmental communication, political legitimacy and democratic outcomes. These limitations need to be considered when generalizing the findings. The evidence base can be further developed through comparative database coverage, more inclusion of Global South scholarship, and more focused studies that distinguish between institutional government communication and broader political communication in future research. Particular attention should also be paid to emerging themes such as artificial intelligence, algorithmic governance, platform regulation, disinformation and the governance of government digital communication in different political and media systems.

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