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INVESTIGATING THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ALGORITHMS ON THE DIGITAL PERCEPTION OF POLITICAL PARTIES

In modern conditions, digital platforms act as arenas for the formation of collective goals and identity, being the main means of interaction with a diverse audience. The increasing political competition and the need to attract the attention of voters force political parties to skillfully use all communication channels. Within the framework of global informatization, this article examines the transformative impact of modern information and communication technologies on the political arena. It explores the evolving dynamics of the formation of the image of political figures in the online sphere. In the context of rapid technological progress, the study highlights the urgent need to study political and governmental structures of interaction with social networks, and identify tactics to influence a wide audience. Emphasizing the strategic imperative, the study advocates the skillful formation and promotion of one's image using the prevailing capabilities of relevant technologies and information channels, especially in the field of the Internet.

The research focuses on scrutinizing the methods and algorithms employed by political parties in Kazakhstan on social networks, aiming to identify the most active and widespread approaches. The study's significance lies in its potential to offer insights into diverse methods utilized by online media for promoting cultural and economic activities. By elucidating the intricate relationship between social media algorithms and the digital portrayal of political parties, this research provides valuable information essential for a comprehensive grasp of modern political communication in the digital age.

Key words: Social media, Audience, Political parties, Globalization, Algorithms, Digital perception, Influence, Information technologies, Communication.

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Әлеуметтік желі алгоритмдерінің саяси партияларды цифрлық қабылдауына әсерін зерттеу

Қазіргі жағдайда цифрлық платформалар әртүрлі аудиториямен өзара әрекеттесудің негізгі құралы бола отырып, ұжымдық мақсаттар мен сәйкестікті қалыптастыру араналары ретінде әрекет етеді. Өсіп келе жатқан саяси бәсекелестік және сайлаушылардың назарын аудару қажеттілігі саяси партияларды барлық байланыс арналарын шебер пайдалануға мәжбүр етеді. Жаһандық ақпараттандыру аясында бұл мақалада заманауи ақпараттық-коммуникациялық технологиялардың саяси аренаға трансформациялық әсері қарастырылады. Ол онлайн-саладағы саяси партиялардың имиджін қалыптастырудың дамып келе жатқан динамикасын зерттейді.

Қарқынды технологиялық прогресс жағдайында зерттеу әлеуметтік желілермен өзара әрекеттесудің саяси және үкіметтік құрылымдарын зерттеудің және кең аудиторияға әсер ету тактикасын анықтаудың шұғыл қажеттілігін көрсетеді. Стратегиялық императивке баса назар аудара отырып, зерттеу тиісті технологиялар мен ақпараттық арналардың, әсіресе интернет саласындағы басым мүмкіндіктерді пайдалана отырып, өз имиджін шебер қалыптастыруды және ілгерілетуді жақтайды.

Зерттеу неғұрлым белсенді және кең таралған тәсілдерді анықтау мақсатында Қазақстанның саяси партияларының әлеуметтік желілерде қолданатын әдістері мен алгоритмдерін мұқият зерделеуге бағытталған. Зерттеудің маңыздылығы оның мәдени және экономикалық қызметті ілгерілету үшін онлайн БАҚ қолданатын әртүрлі әдістер туралы түсінік беру әлеуетінде жатыр. Әлеуметтік медиа алгоритмдері мен саяси партиялардың цифрлық бейнесі арасындағы күрделі

байланысты нақтылай отырып, бұл зерттеу цифрлық дәуірдегі заманауи саяси коммуникацияны жан-жақты түсіну үшін қажетті құнды ақпаратты ұсынады.

Түйін сөздер: әлеуметтік медиа, аудитория, саяси партиялар; жаһандану; алгоритмдер; сандық қабылдау; ықпал ету; ақпараттық технологиялар; байланыс.

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Исследование влияния алгоритмов социальных сетей на цифровое восприятие политических партий

В современных условиях, цифровые платформы выступают аренами для формирования коллективных целей и идентичности, являясь основным средством взаимодействия с разнообразной аудиторией. Растущая политическая конкуренция и необходимость привлечения внимания избирателей вынуждают политические партии умело использовать все каналы коммуникации. В рамках глобальной информатизации в данной статье рассматривается преобразующее влияние современных информационно-коммуникационных технологий на политическую арену. В нем исследуется эволюционирующая динамика формирования имиджа политических партий в онлайн-сфере.

В контексте стремительного технологического прогресса, исследование подчеркивает настоятельную необходимость изучения политических и правительственных структур взаимодействия с социальными сетями и определения тактик воздействия на широкую аудиторию. Подчеркивая стратегический императив, исследование выступает за умелое формирование и продвижение своего имиджа с использованием преобладающих возможностей соответствующих технологий и информационных каналов, особенно в сфере Интернета.

Исследование сосредоточено на тщательном изучении методов и алгоритмов, используемых политическими партиями Казахстана в социальных сетях, с целью выявления наиболее активных и распространенных подходов. Значимость исследования заключается в его потенциале дать представление о различных методах, используемых онлайн-СМИ для продвижения культурной и экономической деятельности. Проясняя сложную взаимосвязь между алгоритмами социальных сетей и цифровым изображением политических партий, это исследование предоставляет ценную информацию, необходимую для всестороннего понимания современной политической коммуникации в эпоху цифровых технологий.

Ключевые слова: Социальные медиа; Аудитория; Политические партии; Глобализация; Алгоритмы; Цифровое восприятие; Влияние; Информационные технологии; Коммуникация.

Introduction

In an era marked by an unprecedented surge in global informational world, understanding the profound impact of digital platforms on political landscapes is crucial. This article undertakes a comprehensive examination of the intricate interplay between political entities and social media algorithms. To comprehend this dynamic relationship, it is paramount to clarify the essence of political parties and social media algorithms.

Political parties, integral to democratic systems, represent organized groups seeking to influence government policy and secure the electorate's mandate (Lilleker et al., 2010). Concurrently, social media algorithms are intricate sets of rules used by digital platforms to curate content, shaping user experiences based on preferences, engagement patterns, and demographic data.

The convergence of political parties and social media algorithms is a dynamic phenomenon. In an increasingly digital world, political entities leverage the power of social media to disseminate messages, engage with voters, and design their public image. In the dynamic interplay between political actors, mass media, and the public, the Internet fulfills diverse roles. Firstly, political opinions and messages initially disseminated through traditional local and national media find replication online, providing political figures with a means to amplify their key messages within the target audience (Enli et.al., 2013). A crucial aspect of electoral strategy involves the careful designing of online campaigns, with each digital platform serving a specific purpose in the broader campaign narrative. The Internet emerges as a mobilization tool for voters, encouraging active participation, opinion expression, and engagement in discussions on matters of public interest. Signifi-

cantly, the Internet allows political actors to interact with voters in what appears to be a more efficient manner, overcoming institutional and bureaucratic constraints. This multifaceted role of the Internet reflects its transformative influence on the dynamics between political entities, media, and the public.

This symbiotic relationship is particularly pronounced in Kazakhstan, where the number of Internet users surged dramatically during the pandemic. Notably, by the beginning of 2021, Internet penetration reached 81.9%, encompassing 15.47 million people (Kassen,2016). Social networks serve not only to address political issues of mass importance but also play key roles in election campaigns, promoting positions, showcasing personality traits, and enhancing the recognition of political figures.

Despite the steady growth in Kazakhstan's demography and net users, there is a concerning trend in electoral participation. In 2023, the voter turnout was 54.83%, marking a significant decline from the 77.12% recorded in 2016 (Yergaliyeva, 2023). This downward trajectory indicates a diminishing interest among the populace in political engagement, elections, and political parties. Recognizing this, social media emerges as a potent tool that holds the potential to revitalize public interest, serving as a valuable resource for enhancing political images and promoting active participation.

In contemporary political landscapes, traditional methods of engaging voters through physical travels and speeches have given way to the influential role of media and social networks. A notable example is the 2008 U.S. presidential election, where the adept use of interactive tools, particularly social networks, significantly contributed to the success of the Democratic Party candidate. Innovative and non-traditional forms of political communication, specifically tailored for the younger demographic and first-time voters disengaged from conventional political appeals, played a pivotal role in the election triumph of Barack Obama (Montero, 2009).

While television news and traditional print and online newspapers remain pivotal sources of political information, the burgeoning significance of social media in politics is undeniable. Platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and others introduce novel avenues for fostering citizen engagement in political discourse, particularly within the electoral context.

The direct communication capability with voters via social media proves crucial in political campaigns, enabling politicians to connect directly with Internet users possessing specific demographic characteristics and political interests. This shift under-scores the evolving landscape where social media platforms play a central role in encouraging citizen participation, reshaping the dynamics of political engagement, and influencing electoral processes.

The transformative impact of social media extends beyond theoretical discussions, integrating insights from both foreign and Kazakhstani authors. To comprehensively explore the politicization of social network algorithms, the study initiates with an analysis of foreign literature. Subsequently, a comprehensive survey is conducted to discern public attitudes towards the digital representation of political parties. The ensuing analysis of the survey results forms the basis for a meticulous discussion on the influence of social media algorithms on the digital perception of political parties. Through a nuanced examination of the utilization of social media algorithms in political campaigns, this study aims to unveil the subtleties of digital perception shaping the political landscape, providing insights into the evolving dynamics of political communication in Kazakhstan.

Materials and Methods

The research methodology adopted in this study aimed for a comprehensive exploration of social media's transformative impact on political landscapes, merging qualitative and quantitative insights from both foreign and Kazakhstani authors. This dual approach, blending theoretical foundations with empirical data from diverse sources, sought to provide a nuanced understanding of how social media shapes the political landscape in Kazakhstan. It is essential to highlight that the qualitative dimension entails a thorough examination of the content on political party pages in Kazakhstan. This includes an exploration of how social network algorithms are strategically utilized, drawing insights from the practices employed by developed nations to enhance political awareness. Kazakhstan boasts seven officially registered parties with the Central Election Commission, namely Amanat, the Democratic Party of Kazakhstan "Ak Zhol," the People's Party of Kazakhstan, the People's Democratic Patriotic Party "Auyl," the National Social Democratic Party, the "Respublica" Party, and the Green Party "Baytaq"(Mazhilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023). Given the extensive use of Facebook (2 million users) and Instagram (10.45 million users) among Kazakh citizens, a thoughtful approach would entail a meticulous content analysis of each of the seven parties' pages (Yakasai, 2022). This examination would delve into various aspects,

including post frequency, engagement strategies, and how clearly the goals and objectives of each party are communicated on these popular social media platforms. This analysis would encompass parameters such as subscriber count, post frequency, adept utilization of social media tools, and the clarity with which each party's goals and objectives are articulated.

The paper acknowledges the scholarly work of modern researchers such as Graham T., Effing R., Zaikina K.L., Yakasai B.A., Patrut M, and others. Furthermore, it underscores the empirical contributions of domestic authors like Simtikov Zh.K., Yergaliyeva A., Kassen M., and others. These academics, whether directly or indirectly, delve into the intricate problem of social networks' influence on society, exploring the behavioral motives and communication dynamics manifested in the virtual space. It is posited that a comprehensive understanding of social network algorithms is crucial for the study's progression. Consequently, an examination of popular social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram is also undertaken.

Drawing a parallel between the findings derived from the study of these public pages and instances from developed countries enables a comprehensive understanding of the impact of social network algorithms on the success of political parties in election campaigns and their overall image. Additionally, the inclusion of quantitative data is paramount in this context, as the article incorporates diverse statistics from official sources. This dual approach, combining qualitative content analysis with quantitative metrics, enriches the depth of insights into the intricate relationship between social network algorithms and the efficacy of political parties in Kazakhstan.

Results and Discussion

Instagram and Facebook have emerged as central platforms for political engagement globally, including Kazakhstan. This analysis seeks to explore the impact of these social networks on the public perception of political figures, offering insights into effective strategies for political parties in organizing their web presence (Bursztyn et al., 2022). By examining examples from developed countries with established social media cultures, the goal is to discern the influence of online media on the overall image of political parties, providing valuable insights.

Facebook, reflecting users' offline social networks extensively, serves as a sociological model crucial for comprehending and enhancing political campaign practices. Through a sociological lens encompassing persuasion, socialization, and mobilization, Facebook significantly shapes voter engagement. As a robust campaign tool, it allows parties to target undecided voters, maintain cohesion, and attract an active online following. The platform's versatile capabilities empower parties to foster emotional connections, reaching diverse audiences through organic content, secondary virality, and advertisements (Goodnow, 2013).

Crucially, Facebook's distinctive role lies in enabling the socialization of interested users, transforming them into influencers within their networks by sharing content. Experts specializing in political media campaigns have identified two predominant trends: the victorious candidate is not necessarily the one constructing the most compelling content for society, but rather the one adept at uniting the audience around a common idea, forming a network of engaged users. A notable illustration is Donald Trump's 2016 election campaign, where he strategically leveraged Facebook and Twitter as primary channels for image promotion. Trump demonstrated skillful utilization of social network algorithms; for instance, when user entered "Donald Trump" in the search, the system suggested various phrase completions. Political technologists astutely applied these strategies, contributing to the Republican Party's success in the elections (Spenkuch and Toniatti, 2018).

The exploration of these dynamics sheds light on the transformative role of social media, not only in shaping political narratives but also in redefining the strategies political entities employ to connect with the public. The utilization of social media for image enhancement is notably exemplified by Barack Obama's 2008 election campaign, which aimed at increasing the turnout of democratically inclined voters (Pramuck, 2016). This strategic approach aligned with targeting a specific audience, demonstrating the effectiveness of tailoring efforts to engage the desired demographic. Social networks, employed to disseminate information, excel in analyzing and reaching the target audience based on factors like age, gender, geography, and political preferences. The meticulous analysis and strategic dissemination of information tailored to the target audience played a pivotal role in the campaign's success. The 2008 U.S. election witnessed a remarkable turnout of 64%, setting a record for those years (Grind, 2019). Key tools in Obama's strategy included active social network management, enabling user communication, local meeting organization, and online donations.

Furthermore, the close interaction with the public allowed the collection of user contacts, later utilized by political strategists for personalized email campaigns. This case underscores the instrumental role of social media in achieving specific political objectives through targeted engagement strategies.

In contrast to Facebook, which tends to appeal more to individuals aged 30 and above due to its limited entertainment content, Instagram provides a diverse range of recreational options for younger users. Originally designed as a photo-sharing platform, Instagram has evolved into a space for various content, including political discourse. Its user-friendly interface and distinct features, such as not revealing users' liked posts and saved content, create a sense of security against potential propaganda. The algorithms on Instagram operate based on the content consumed by the user, relying on subscriptions and followers. Essentially, in the realm of "interesting" content, users are presented with relevant material based on their geographical location, age, and gender (Talbot, 2008).

The efficacy of American technologies and tools in promoting political figures on social networks can be attributed to a confluence of factors. These encompass the substantial volume and frequency of publications, adroit utilization of diverse tools for post creation, the level of user engagement on the platform, and various other contributing elements. This transformative shift underscores the considerable influence of social media in shaping political narratives, emphasizing the profound impact of digital platforms on the landscape of contemporary political communication.

The research findings highlight that audience interest in political party representatives is particularly driven by their contributions to society and well-defined objectives. Trust plays a crucial role, and social networks play a facilitating role by providing a platform for seamless communication (Vergeer et al., 2013). Additionally, a notable distinction is observed between online and traditional political campaigns, as detailed in Table 1. These insights contribute to understanding the factors that capture audience attention and shape the dynamics of political engagement, emphasizing the evolving nature of political communication in the digital age.

Table 1 – A comparative matrix of traditional political activity and political activity in social networks

Features	Traditional political activity	Political activity in social networks
Audience engagement	Limited to geographic reach, face to face interactions	Broad online audience, chats and messengers
Interactivity and feedback	Direct interaction and delayed feedback due to the bureaucracy and paper-work	Direct engagement through likes, comments, shares, real-time quick feedback
Accessibility and inclusivity	Limited access to the people with disabilities and citizens abroad	Broader access to all demographics and disability-friendly tools of the social networks
Information dissemination	Primarily through TV, radio and newspapers	Diverse channels and tools in social networks such as posts, stories, live translations.
Target audience	Diverse age groups through mass media	Predominantly young adults, real-time digital engagement

In this section of the investigation, a content analysis is conducted on the Instagram profiles of seven political parties in Kazakhstan. Parameters such as subscriber count, interactions, average likes, comments, and proficiency in utilizing tools are considered. The data underwent analysis from January 5, 2023, to December 5, 2023, utilizing the "Popsters" online service. Table 2 provides an overview of the Instagram follower count for each political party. "Baytaq" and "Amanat" emerge as the most followed, indicating their popularity among active internet users. In contrast, the "People's Party of Kazakhstan" and the "Nationwide Social Democratic Party" are the least popular, collectively constituting less than 10% of the overall trend.

Table 2 – Table of followers' number of each of the political party in Instagram
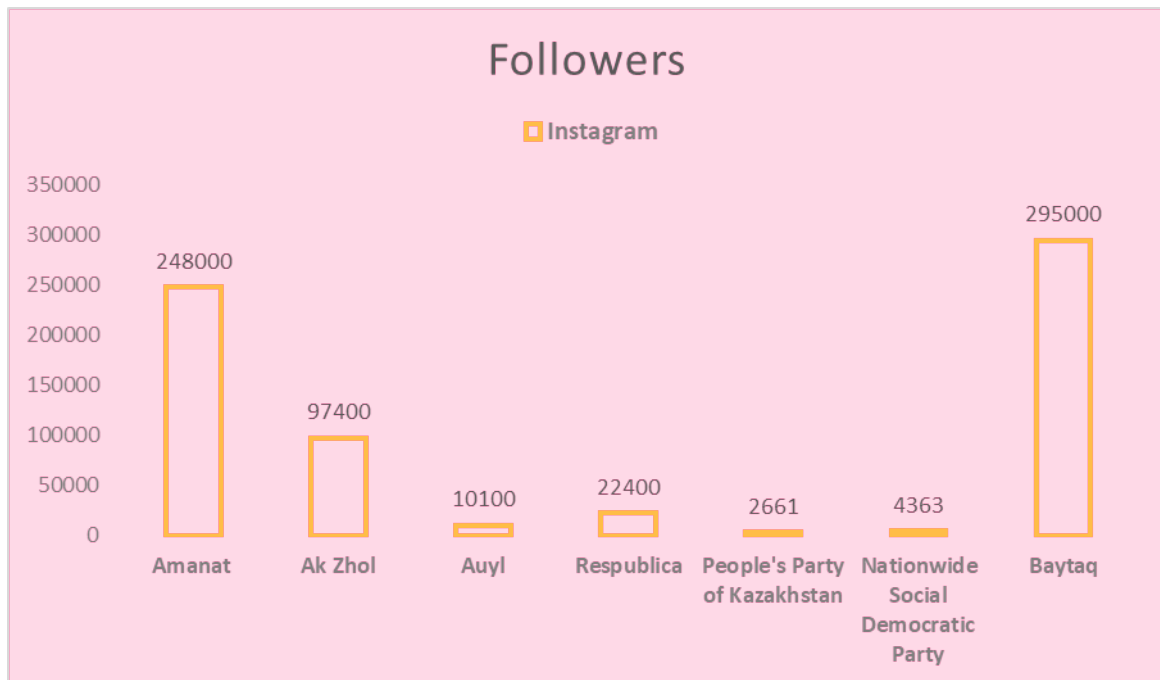
The follower count alone may not accurately reflect the success and active engagement of political parties. Therefore, a comprehensive content analysis of each political party's Instagram page is essential. The algorithms on Instagram are largely influenced by post frequency, emphasizing the significance of the content type and how well it aligns with the overall goals and mission of the parties.

Table 3 – Content analysis of Political Parties in Instagram

№	Political Party	Objective	Frequency of publications* *all the measurements are approximate and homogenized	Content-analysis, interesting features
1	Amanat	The «Amanat» party, as the prominent ruling and largest political party in Kazakhstan, aims to ensure housing and favorable conditions for all citizens (Amanat official website, 2023).	5 stories and 10 posts a day.	«Amanat» party extensively utilizes Instagram tools, including reels, posts, highlights, and stories. Moreover, they provide a link to their official website in the profile header. The Instagram page of the «Amanat» party effectively compiles weekly results, providing transparency, and shares video reports from various events aimed at supporting vulnerable populations. Additionally, the page includes video reports from meetings and discussions addressing critical issues affecting the population.
2	Baytaq	The Public Association of the Kazakh Green Party «Baytaq» aims to eradicate environmental disasters and environmental problems (Baytaq party official website, 2023).	3 stories and 1 post a day.	The Baytaq party predominantly shares meeting reports and photo coverage of environmental events on its Instagram page. Additionally, the page frequently features a section dedicated to answering questions, fostering a stronger connection between the people and the party.

Table continuation

№	Political Party	Objective	Frequency of publications* *all the measurements are approximate and homogenized	Content-analysis, interesting features
3	Ak Zhol	"Ak Zhol" party advocates for social justice, Alash national idea, democracy, anti-corruption, market economy, and entrepreneurship support.	2 to 3 posts and stories in a week.	The Ak Zhol party predominantly showcases visual content from recent conferences, meetings, and interviews with political figures. Engaging followers through creative competitions aligns with their mission, emphasizing the «Alash» ideology.
4	Auyl	Auyl party aims for prosperous families, an innovative education system, modern healthcare, fair wages, and prioritizing youth for the country's future (Auyl party official website, 2023).	3 posts and 4 stories a day.	The "Auyl" political party frequently shares quotes from the president and other political figures regarding economic matters, along with reports from conferences and seminars. The analysis revealed a lack of distinct initiatives for audience interaction and attention-grabbing strategies.
5	Respublica	Respublica party envisions a thriving business environment, national happiness through education, health, and a strong Kazakh culture, fostering a happy society.	5 posts and 7 stories a day.	The "Respublica" Party displays high activity on Instagram, evident in the frequency of its posts. The party adeptly utilizes highlights to convey information about its mission and strategies. Furthermore, the inclusion of a question and answer feature enhances transparency in their interactions with the public.
6	People's Party of Kazakhstan	People's Party of Kazakhstan aims for a just society where power and wealth belong to the people, fostering national prosperity.	3-4 posts and stories in a week.	The Instagram presence of the People's Party of Kazakhstan is fragmented across multiple city-specific or regional pages, with each locality independently managing its section. While the party effectively shares its activities through photo and video content, consolidating efforts into a unified, centralized page could enhance visibility and engagement. This approach would likely attract a larger user base, fostering broader reach and impact. This decentralization, though allowing for regional focus, may benefit from strategic considerations to optimize overall effectiveness and audience engagement.
7	Nationwide Social Democratic Party	Nationwide Social Democratic Party focuses on strengthening villages, political reforms, raising morale, exposing oligarchs, and providing social support for all (Sharipova, 2015)	2-3 posts and stories in a week.	The Instagram account of the Nationwide Social Democratic Party displays limited activity and content sharing. While there are occasional attempts to capture audience attention through videos and photos, the overall design of the page lacks clarity compared to previous instances. The utilization of the platform could benefit from enhancements in both content strategy and visual presentation to improve user engagement and convey a more coherent party identity.

As outlined in Table 3, Kazakhstan political parties exhibit active participation in the online domain, utilizing tools for transparency, engagement, and feedback. A relevant comparative analysis can be connected with the Instagram account of one of the most popular political parties globally, the Democratic Party, boasting a substantial following of 47 million people (Hampton and Hargittai, 2016).

In contrast, the Democratic Party's Instagram account has 507 thousand flowers, with an average daily output of 6 posts and 8 stories, fostering active engagement among its audience. It is noteworthy that the content on the Democratic Party's web page extends beyond official information and reports, encompassing entertaining materials and personal photos of party members (Enli, 2017).

In contrast to Kazakhstani political party web pages, which generally average 3 posts and 4 stories per day, the Democratic Party demonstrates a concerted effort to establish a closer connection with citizens. The deliberate inclusion of personal information fosters a sense of proximity between party members and the public, cultivating increased loyalty. This commitment to engaging content not only distinguishes the Democratic Party's approach but also underscores the potential impact of personalized and relatable content in building a stronger bond with the audience (Phua et al., 2017).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study delved into the intricate relationship between political parties and social media algorithms, focusing on the evolving dynamics in Kazakhstan's political landscape. The transformative impact of social media, particularly Facebook and Instagram, has been evident in shaping the image and outreach strategies of political entities.

By amalgamating insights from both foreign and domestic authors, the research provides a comprehensive exploration of the transformative impact of social media on political communication. The analysis commenced with a thorough review of foreign literature, establishing a theoretical foundation. Subsequently, a comprehensive content analysis gauged public attitudes towards the digital representation of political parties in Kazakhstan. The ensuing examination of results formed the basis for a meticulous discussion on the influence of social media algorithms on the digital perception of political parties. The research incorporated a comprehensive examination of the Instagram pages of seven political parties in Kazakhstan. The findings underscored the significance of content analysis, considering factors such as the number of followers, interactions, and effective utilization of social media tools. This qualitative analysis was complemented by quantitative data from official statistics, enriching the depth of insights into the intricate relationship between social network algorithms and the efficacy of political parties.

Furthermore, the study identified the impact of online media on political campaigns and public perception. Drawing on international examples, such as Barack Obama's successful use of social media in the 2008 U.S. presidential election, highlighted the potential of these platforms in influencing political outcomes. The changing dynamics of political engagement, marked by a decline in traditional methods and an upsurge in digital platforms, were evident. Social media not only provides a direct channel for politicians to connect with the electorate but also reshapes the nature of political discourse.

The study contributes valuable insights into the subtleties of digital perception shaping the political landscape in Kazakhstan. It emphasizes the need for political parties to adapt their strategies, considering the unique features of platforms like Facebook and Instagram. As social media continues to play a central role in political communication, understanding its nuances becomes imperative for effective and resonant political engagement. In the ever-evolving landscape of global informatization, this research provides a foundation for further exploration into the intersection of politics and digital platforms, offering a nuanced understanding of the ongoing transformation in political communication dynamics.

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