



## DIGITAL NATIONALISM AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: SOCIAL MEDIA NARRATIVES, IDENTITY FORMATION, AND PUBLIC SENTIMENT

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### Abstract

The rapid expansion of social media has significantly transformed political communication and the ways in which national identity narratives are constructed and disseminated in digital environments. This study examines the relationship between digital nationalism, political communication, and public sentiment by analyzing social media discourse on Twitter. Using a mixed-method research approach, the study combines content analysis, sentiment analysis, and engagement analysis to investigate how nationalist narratives are framed and circulated within online political discussions. The dataset consists of approximately 50,000 tweets, from which nationalism-related tweets were identified through keyword-based filtering. The results reveal that identity-centered narratives, particularly those emphasizing national pride, cultural belonging, and symbolic references to the nation, dominate digital nationalist discourse. Sentiment analysis indicates that a majority of tweets express positive attitudes toward national identity, while a smaller proportion reflects critical or opposing perspectives. Engagement analysis further shows that tweets containing nationalist narratives generate higher levels of audience interaction, suggesting that identity-based political messages resonate strongly within digital communication networks. The findings highlight the growing importance of social media platforms in shaping nationalist discourse, public sentiment, and political engagement in contemporary digital societies. This study contributes to the literature on digital political communication by providing empirical insights into how nationalist narratives operate within social media environments.

**Keywords:** Digital nationalism, political communication, social media discourse, national identity, public sentiment

## 1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital communication technologies has significantly transformed the landscape of political communication and public discourse. The social media sites have turned out to be powerful grounds where parties, institutions, media companies and citizens engage in real time communication and share political thoughts. Digital platforms also facilitate the communication process with users that is decentralized and participative and enables users to create, share, and amplify political messages immediately, unlike the traditional media (Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013). This shift has changed the modes through which political discourse and projects are presented and distributed, creating a new mode of digitally mediated political participation and political discourse. Social media has emerged as an effective instrument in the formation of political identities, mobilization of masses and perception of national belonging in this dynamic communication environment. Among the greatest changes that have been linked to this transformation is the creation of what can be described as digital nationalism whereby nationalistic ideologies, nationalistic feelings, and narratives about national identity are expressed and shared over the digital media. According to scholars, the digital communication space has facilitated the revival and redefinition of nationalist language through its fast distribution of symbolic discourses, cultural allusions, and political messages related to the nationality (Mihelj and Jiménez-Martínez, 2021; Bandara, 2024). The social media, including Twitter (X), are now more than ever relevant areas where political actors and citizens can share their nationalistic feelings and discuss politics, as well as form a narrative of national identity and political belonging that is shared by the collective (Haq, 2024). These online engagements are frequently in the form of hashtag-based political analysis, which links the scattered individuals into wider political debates, enabling nationalistic discourses to gain visibility and traction in networked online societies (Salih et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, the creation and bargaining of political characters in the networked publics occurs through the digital platforms. Online situations allow one to engage in identity-based discourse and identify with group narratives that support the idea of cultural belonging and ideological attachment (Barassi and Zamponi, 2020). This process is further enhanced by the rising personalization of the political communication by the social media which enables the individuals to ask and answer the question of political identity publicly and participate in participatory forms of political engagement (Bennett, 2012). It has also been demonstrated through research that digital nationalism takes different forms depending on the cultural and geopolitical environment, with researchers noting that social media discourse has helped accomplish the creation of nationalist identities and political discourse in different parts of the world (Zhang et al., 2024; Sohail and Aslam, 2024). Additionally, the recent technological trends, such as artificial intelligence and algorithmic systems are becoming more influential in the creation and distribution of nationalist discourse in digital media systems (Li et al., 2025). Likes, shares, and retweets are the indicators of participation in that environment that can give objective evidence of the population response to political stories and can amplify some types of discourse (Naranjo-Vinueza et al., 2025). In turn, media narratives matter as the important elements of forming the collective identity and sense of belonging by defining national values, cultural images, and common political experience (Gautam and Nainwal, 2025; Skey, 2022).

### Research Objectives

1. To examine how nationalist narratives are constructed and communicated within social media political discourse on Twitter/X
2. To analyze the role of digital political narratives in shaping expressions of national identity within online communication environments
3. To evaluate public sentiment and audience engagement patterns associated with nationalist political narratives on social media platforms

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Digital Nationalism

The emergence of digital communication technology has largely defined how nationalism is manifested and communicated in the modern communities. Digital nationalism is an expression and spread of national identity, nationalistic narratives and ideological discourses on the digital media platform. The researchers believe that digital space has altered classic forms of nationalism by allowing symbolic discourses, cultural allusions, and political messages to rapidly and globally disseminate through internet connections (Ahmad, 2022). Digital communication spaces, as opposed to the traditional systems of media that are dependent on core institutions, enable individuals, groups, and political leaders to actively engage in the building and selling of nationalist discourses. The social media is especially effective in influencing nationalist discourse and strengthening national stories of identity. The space of online communication allows people to get involved in political content, exchange symbols of the nation, and discussions concerning the culture and belonging to a particular nationality. Some studies indicate that social media discussion has a tendency to rebrand nationalist discourses by putting political matters into the perspective of national interests, cultural continuity, and solidarity as a group (Gan, 2020). In the same manner, populist-nationalist rhetoric is common in the digital space where political leaders actively manipulate online platforms to gain mass appeal and advance their ideologies (Pineda, 2021). Consequently, digital nationalism has emerged as a significant field of research in the field of media and communication.

## 2.2 Political Communication in Social Media

The advent of the social media has essentially altered the dynamics and form of the political communication. Traditional forms of political communication were mainly mediated by institutional forms of communication like newspapers, television, and political organizations. The digital platforms, however, have brought in what is generally more decentralized communication architecture where direct interaction occurs between political actors and citizens. Through social media platforms, political leaders, activists and audiences can exchange information, engage in political discourses in real-time and engage in political discourses in networked digital practices (García-Orosa, 2022).

In this respect, social media networks act as forums of political arguments, opinion expression, and the exchange of information. Networked public sphere as a concept brings to the limelight how digital platforms support participatory political dialogues by linking people in various social and geographic situations (Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013). Using these networks that are interconnected, political messages are spread into masses. Social media has therefore taken its position in toscapegoal in modern political communication systems.

## 2.3 Narrative Framing in Political Communication

Narrative Framing is important in shaping the interpretation and perception of political matters by the audience. The theory of framing implies that political agents and media organizations package information in a manner that emphasizes specific orientations or meanings and, therefore, influence audience perceptions of political developments and messages (Blumler, 2015). Political communication can legitimize certain narratives through the application of language, symbols and cultural references that will reinforce ideological views and collective identities.

Narrative framing has gained more importance in the digital communication environment because of the high rate of spreading short-form political messages on the social media. Political language is usually based on symbolic language, identities and appeal to emotions that touch the heart of the people and lead them to take political action. According to recent studies, it is commonplace in digital politics to employ narrative framing to appeal to audience perceptions and mobilize political backing with the help of cultural symbols, historical narratives, and identity-based rhetoric (Otmakhova and Frermann, 2025). These framing activities are part of the creation and support of the nationalist discourses in the online communication environments.

## 2.4 Social Media and Identity Formation

The significance of social media platforms in identity formation in the digital societies is also a reality. The virtual worlds offer platforms where users are able to engage in digital communication and construction of content to generate personal ideologies, cultural identities and political views. According to scholars, the digital communication networks enable the individuals to build and bargain their identities through involvement in online communities and interaction with collective narratives (Bozkurt and Tu, 2016). The development of identity online is usually based on interpersonal and intergroup interactions with virtual communities that affirm common values, cultural practices and ideological inclinations. It has been found that social media spaces can help users to co-create collective identities as they contribute to discussions that can be relevant to shared experiences and cultural stories (Soh et al., 2024). Also, digital storytelling activities enable people to exchange experiences and stories that help to establish collective identity in online communities (Ajitoni, 2024). Those processes demonstrate the significant role of digital media in the formation of the vision of national identity and social belonging.

## 2.5 Public Sentiment and Online Political Engagement

There is a great role of the behavior of the masses in the formulation of political rhetoric and participation in online interaction. Social media sites allow people to share their thoughts, feelings, and responses to political events on posts, comments, and online communications. Such expressions of sentiment are contributing to the development of the public opinion and the ability to make political stories more visible in the network of online communication.

Likes, shares, comments, and other mechanisms of engagement in online interactions offer quantifiable data on how the content of a political message has been received by the audience. These metrics of engagement are indicators of the interaction of the user with the political content and the subsequent amplification of some stories in social media (Yue et al., 2019). Emotional appeals used in political communication are a common way of creating more engagement in the sense that it appeals to common cultural values and identity. The media stories can shape the perceptions of the national identity and political belonging as well, putting social and political issues into the framework of the broader cultural context (Raza, 2024).

## 2.6 Research Gap

Even though the literature on digital nationalism and political communication is growing, several gaps exist in the research. Several studies devote their attention to theoretical debates of nationalism in digital space or look at one or another case study in a national context. Nonetheless, few empirical studies are available that attempt to study the relationship between nationalist discourse and mass opinion based on big data sets of social media. Also, the connection between digital nationalist rhetoric and identity formation as well as the interaction with the audience is under-researched. To fill these gaps, empirical studies need to be carried out to combine narrative analysis and sentiment analysis to comprehend more clearly the impact of nationalist narratives on online politics.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

The research design of this study is a mixed-method study that employs both quantitative social media analytics and qualitative content analysis to understand the connection between digital nationalism, political communication, and sentiment on the Internet. The mixed-method approach gives a possibility not only to determine the trends in the social media discourse on a large scale but also to interpret narrative senses within the political messages. These methods are frequently applied to the social media and political communication studies to consider digital political communication and audience engagement trends.

#### 3.2 Data Source

The researcher employs a secondary data which includes about 50, 000 tweets on Twitter (X). Some of the variables in the dataset are the text of the tweets, the details of the user, the date when the tweet was posted, the number of likes, and the number of retweets. Twitter is also popular as an information source in political communication studies since it provides real-time discussions of people and allows them to exchange political views and stories in the form of brief messages.

#### 3.3 Sampling Strategy

The selection of the tweets in terms of the nationalist discourse and political communication was conducted through a purposive sample based on the use of keywords. The dataset was filtered to remove Tweets with keywords that pertained to national identity and nationalism like nation, nationalism, patriotism, country, identity, sovereignty and national pride. The strategy helped to make sure that the chosen sample was narrowed down to tweets that spoke about the nationalist discourse and political identity as part of social media discourse.

#### 3.4 Data Analysis

Three complementary methods have been applied (content analysis, sentiment analysis and engagement analysis) to analyze the data. Themes and patterns of narration that pertained to nationalism and political identity were identified through content analysis. Sentiment analysis was used to categorize tweets based on their positive, negative and neutral sentiment to gain insight into the emotional reaction of people towards nationalist discourse. The analysis of engagement was conducted based on the likes and retweets measures to assess the interaction between the audience and the nationalist political content on social media.

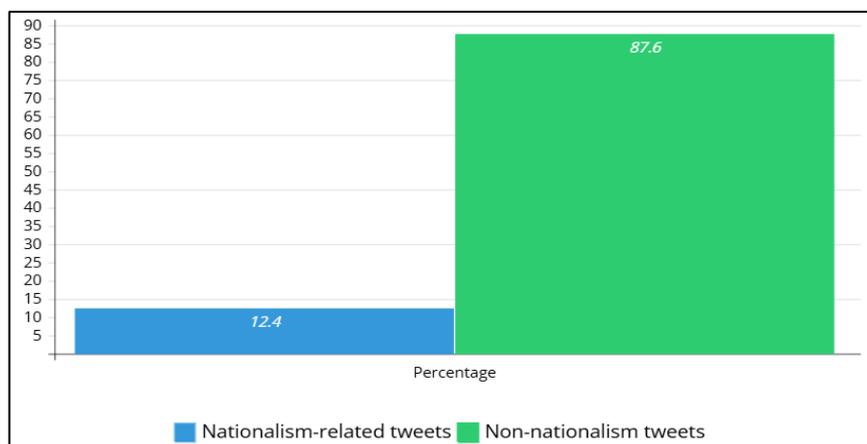
### 4. Results

#### 4.1 Dataset Profile and Analytical Sample

Table 1 displays that the tweets related to nationalism constituted 12.4% of the total dataset. This means that the nationalistic discourse was a large part of the political communication in the dataset (Figure 1).

**Table 1: Dataset Profile and Analytical Sample**

Category	Number of Tweets	Percentage
<b>Total tweets in dataset</b>	50,001	100%
<b>Nationalism-related tweets</b>	6,202	12.4%
<b>Non-nationalism tweets</b>	43,799	87.6%



**Figure 1: Distribution of Nationalism-Related and Non-Nationalism Tweets**

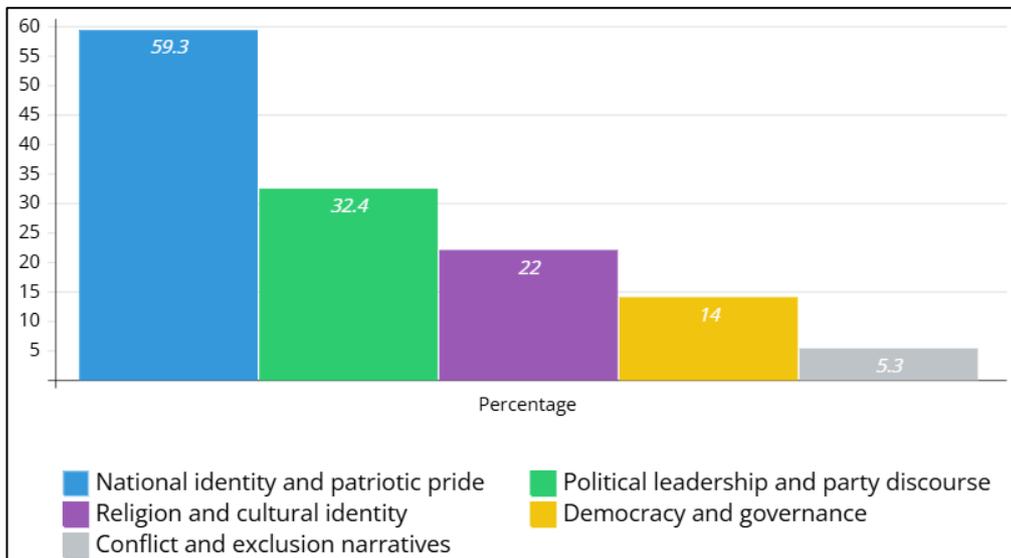
The figure illustrates the proportion of tweets related to nationalism within the dataset. Nationalism-related tweets account for 12.4% of the total posts, while 87.6% are unrelated to nationalism, indicating that nationalist discourse represents a smaller yet notable segment of overall political communication.

**4.2 Dominant Narrative Themes**

The national identity and patriotic pride were the most noticeable theme and were used in 59.3% of tweets as it was observed in Table 2. This theme had phrases that highlighted cultural affiliation, nationalism and identity. The second topic that appeared most of the time was the political leadership and political party discursiveness (32.4%), which suggested that the discourse of nationalism was commonly associated with political actors and political leadership issues (Figure 2).

**Table 2:** Dominant Narrative Themes in Nationalist Tweets

Narrative Theme	Frequency	Percentage
National identity and patriotic pride	3,676	59.3%
Political leadership and party discourse	2,007	32.4%
Religion and cultural identity	1,367	22.0%
Democracy and governance	871	14.0%
Conflict and exclusion narratives	328	5.3%



**Figure 2:** Dominant Narrative Themes in Digital Nationalism Discourse on Social Media

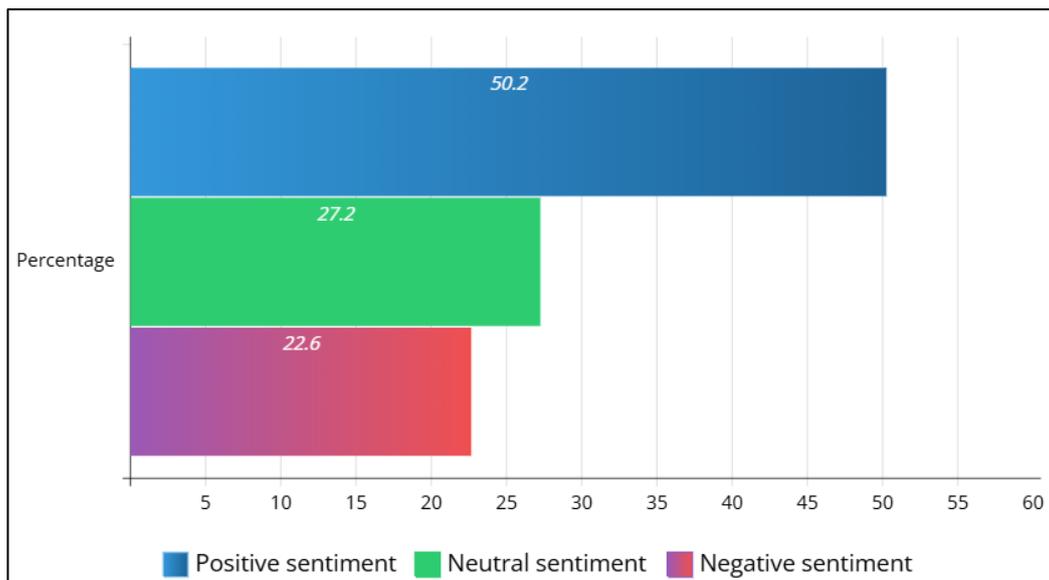
The figure presents the major thematic patterns identified in nationalism-related tweets. National identity and patriotic pride dominate the discourse (59.3%), followed by political leadership discussions (32.4%), religion and cultural identity (22%), democracy and governance (14%), and conflict narratives (5.3%).

**4.3 Public Sentiment Toward Nationalist Narratives**

Table 3 results suggest that positive sentiment prevailed in the nationalist discourse (50.2 percent of the analyzed tweets). There were 27.2 percent neutral tweets and 22.6 percent of the data comprised negative sentiment (Figure 3).

**Table 3:** Sentiment Distribution in Nationalist Tweets

Sentiment Category	Number of Tweets	Percentage
Positive sentiment	3,113	50.2%
Neutral sentiment	1,688	27.2%
Negative sentiment	1,401	22.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,202</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Figure 3: Sentiment Distribution in Nationalism-Related Tweets**

The figure illustrates the sentiment distribution within nationalism-related tweets. Positive sentiment dominates the discourse at 50.2%, followed by neutral sentiment at 27.2%, while negative sentiment accounts for 22.6%, indicating generally supportive attitudes toward nationalist narratives online.

**4.4 Audience Engagement Patterns**

Table 4 shows that the engagement of tweets by nationalist narratives was higher than the overall data set average. The average number of likes and retweets of nationalism related tweets was 22.64 and 4.98 respectively, whereas the average number of likes and retweets of the entire dataset stood at 16.21 and 3.59 respectively.

**Table 4: Engagement Comparison Between Dataset Categories**

Dataset Category	Average Likes	Average Retweets
Full dataset tweets	16.21	3.59
Nationalism-related tweets	22.64	4.98

**4.5 Engagement by Sentiment Category**

Negative messages were less widely shared compared to tweets with neutral or informational nationalism narrations as it is shown in Table 5. This indicates that the viewers might be more inclined to be exposed to content centered on balanced or identity politics, instead of the highly critical content.

**Table 5: Engagement by Sentiment Category**

Sentiment Category	Average Likes	Average Retweets
Positive tweets	24.47	4.65
Neutral tweets	32.98	8.43
Negative tweets	6.12	1.55

**5. Discussion**

The findings of this study highlight the increasing role of social media platforms in shaping nationalist discourse and political communication within contemporary digital environments. The findings prove that nationalistic discourses are one of the observable elements of political discourse on Twitter (X), which means that digital platforms have turned into significant arenas of articulating national identity and political views. The given observation can be connected to the prior studies indicating that digital communication technologies have turned how nationalist sentiments are expressed and spread in the mass media (Mihelj and Jiménez-Martínez, 2021; Ahmad, 2022). Digital nationalism is a form of political expression that is on the move whereby through online platforms, identity-oriented narratives that solidify shared belonging and ideological congruence are disseminated in a matter of minutes.

The prevalence of identity-centered discourses in the nationalist discourse is one of the most important discoveries of the study. The content analysis showed that the most conspicuous themes in the dataset were manifestations of national pride, cultural belonging, and reference symbols to the nation. These conclusions confirm previous research that highlights the importance of media discourses in national identity building and strengthening of common cultural values (Skey, 2022; Bandara, 2024). These identity narratives in digital communications are commonly conveyed in symbolic language,

references to familiar cultures and emotional messages that appeal to audiences. The media discourse has traditionally been identified as a strong tool of creating and sustaining cultural narratives in society (Durham and Kellner, 2012). The current results imply that social media platforms have become quite equivalent in creating the current discourses of national identity.

The findings further suggest that nationalistic debate often overlaps with the political leadership and party competition. This implies that digital nationalism has strong relationships with political communication tactics employed by political actors and their followers. Political communication in social media is usually presented in terms of narratives, which highlight the national interest, political legitimacy as well as ideological identity. Past studies have revealed that online platforms allow political players to address their audiences directly and shape political discourse by conveying messages in a strategic manner (García-Orosa, 2022; Haq, 2024). Hashtags and short form political messages further reinforce such narratives by linking individual discourse to larger political discourse in digital networks (Salih et al., 2025).

The other critical finding has to do with the sentiment patterns connected with a nationalistic discourse. The results of the sentiment analysis have shown that positive sentiment is prevalent across the datasets that are dominated by nationalist narratives. There are a lot of tweets filled with pride, solidarity or support of national identity and cultural values. Such results are in line with the literature that the research of digital environments frequently takes a form of emotional communication that enhances collective identity and social cohesion (Raza, 2024; Ajitoni, 2024). An emotional appeal is one of the most important aspects of political communication since emotionally framed messages have a higher chance of being noticed and getting an audience to interact.

Nevertheless, such a negative sentiment found in a large segment of the data also proves that the discourse of nationalism is not completely homogeneous and unchallenged. The social media are created as places whereby the various points of view exist, enabling the user to engage in critique, challenge or reinterpret nationalist narrative. These dynamics can be seen as the general properties of the networked public sphere, whereby politics is created by encounter between various actors and orientations (Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013). Past studies have also indicated that digital platforms serve as platforms to mobilize politically as well as an ideological platform (Naranjo-Vinueza et al., 2025).

The analysis of engagements also reveals that tweets that contain nationalist accounts have a greater level of interaction than tweets that are general political. The nationalist discourse attracted more likes and retweets, and it is possible to conclude that the identity-based political narratives are very close to online users. These conclusions are supported by the studies that show that identity-linked and collectively belonging political messages tend to establish a greater magnitude of digital activity (Yue et al., 2019; Bennett, 2012). The identity-based communication motivates users to communicate and share political messages that strengthen their social and cultural identities.

The results also add to the general knowledge of identity formation in the digital space. Through the social media, people are able to share their ideas, values, and culture by engaging in online conversations. The digital communication networks allow users to build and negotiate their identities as a result of engaging with internet communities and sharing stories (Bozkurt and Tu, 2016). Research on identity formation in digital environments demonstrates that people tend to consume the stories, which support their feelings of belongingness to a particular social or cultural group (Soh et al., 2024). On the same note, social media storytelling also allows people to engage in group storytelling that reinforces cultural and national identity (Ajitoni, 2024).

The results of this study prove that digital platforms are the key to developing the interdependence between political communication, national identity narratives, and public sentiment. The social media space allows creating, distributing, and challenging the discourse of nationalism as well as allowing the audience to participate in identity-based politics. These trends indicate that the concept of digital nationalism should be studied as one of the significant elements of modern political communication and the analysis of digital media.

Some limitations are associated with this study and are to be taken into account during the interpretation of findings. First, the analysis is confined to Twitter (X) data that might not be the most adequate reflection of political communication that takes place through other social media (Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube). Second, a set of keywords related to nationalism was applied to the dataset, which could have omitted the information contained in the relevant tweets that convey the nationalist ideas in an oblique way. Also, the research is based on the method of sentiment analysis, which does not always reflect the full extent of sarcasm, irony, or contextual meaning of social media communication. These limitations can be overcome in future studies by considering various social media sites, bigger and more heterogeneous samples, and implementing sophisticated natural language processing tools. Possibly, International comparative research on the situation in various countries or political situations would also be able to contribute to a better understanding of the development of digital nationalism in the global digital communication setting.

## 6. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between digital nationalism, political communication, and public sentiment within social media environments by analyzing a large dataset of Twitter (X) posts. The results indicate that social media sites are now emerging as key arenas where nationalistic discourses are built, propagated and discussed in cyber politics. The findings found that identity-related texts such as national pride, cultural belonging, and symbolic allusions to the nation are the most prevalent themes of the online nationalist discourse. Moreover, the analysis has shown that the nationalist discourse often overlaps with the discussions of political leadership and party competition, which makes the connection between nationalism and modern-day political communication tactics very close. Sentiment analysis also revealed that

the majority of nationalistic tweets contained positive feelings toward national identity and sense of belonging, and a lesser percentage contained negative or negative stands. The patterns of engagement also indicate that the nationalist narratives interest relatively more people in interactions, meaning that politics based on identity appeal to online users to receive high rates of interaction. The findings can be used to support the overall discourse on digital nationalism since they offered empirical evidence of how nationalist discourses spread in the social media, and how these discourses shape patterns of public participation. The paper addresses the importance of the digital platforms that are formed in political discourse, identity and the overall mood of the population in the modern communications setting, and urges further investigation into the changing nature of the digital political discourse.

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