Original Article

The transnational discourse of political protests: setting the agenda through social media

Grażyna Piechota

Faculty of Management and Social Communication, Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University, POLAND

Abstract: This article analyses the role of social media as a transnational discursive space and the impact of networked communication on the formation of the traditional mass media agenda regarding political protests that began in June 2019 in Hong Kong. The aim of the present research was to indicate the degree of impact of the dominant themes in networked communication during the anti-extradition bill protests in the transnational network discourse and the impact on the news media agenda, taking into account the activity of user-generated network traffic around the published content. The research was based on two theories shaping the perception of political protests in an international context - theory on transnational discursive spaces and theories of agenda setting. The research was carried out using quantitative content analysis and confirmed that global social networking sites Facebook and Twitter are important channels in creating transnational discursive spaces that affect the news media's agenda. Findings show that social media plays an important role in organizing political protests, and is a tool for establishing transnational discursive spaces; despite the fact that the protesters used applications protecting their data for communication, with the assistance of information and integrated collaboration by other entities. The results obtained contribute to the research on media studies which highlight the role and importance of social media in the process of communicating about political protests.

Keywords: social media, political protest, agenda setting, transnational network discourse, Hong Kong, anti-extradition bill, one country-two systems