A Structured Mechanism for Identifying Political Influencers on Social Media Platforms: Top 10 Saudi Political Twitter Users

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Abstract : Social media networks, such as Twitter, offer the perfect opportunity to either positively or negatively affect political attitudes on large audiences. The existence of influential users who have developed a reputation for their knowledge and experience of specific topics is a major factor contributing to this impact. Therefore, knowledge of the mechanisms to identify influential users on social media is vital for understanding their effect on their audience. The concept of the influential user is related to the concept of opinion leaders' to indicate that ideas first flow from mass media to opinion leaders and then to the rest of the population. Hence, the objective of this research was to provide reliable and accurate structural mechanisms to identify influential users, which could be applied to different platforms, places, and subjects. Twitter was selected as the platform of interest, and Saudi Arabia as the context for the investigation. These were selected because Saudi Arabia has a large number of Twitter users, some of whom are considerably active in setting agendas and disseminating ideas. The study considered the scientific methods that have been used to identify public opinion leaders before, utilizing metrics software on Twitter. The key findings propose multiple novel metrics to compare Twitter influencers, including the number of followers, social authority and the use of political hashtags, and four secondary filtering measures. Thus, using ratio and percentage calculations to classify the most influential users, Twitter accounts were filtered, analyzed and included. The structured approach is used as a mechanism to explore the top ten influencers on Twitter from the political domain in Saudi Arabia.