

## **Theorizing Social Media from Capitalism and Culture Industry Perspective**

*By Zelalem Jabessa Gabul\**

This article proposes PRANC as a theoretical framework to help rethink, understand, and deconstruct the monopolizing influence of mass media in this social media age. From Marxist perspective, mass media centered on and dominated capital accumulation through excessive culture production such as television drama programs. Mass media was also manipulated and controlled from the center with producer-consumer dichotomy. However, I argue in this article that through its affordances social media disrupts a centralized information production and dissemination discouraging mass media's monopoly on capitalism and culture industry. Social media also serves as a platform with which societies challenge dictatorship, expose, and withstand various forms of oppression as has been witnessed in different parts of the world over the last decade. Portability of communication technologies enabled users to carry along their devices that enables them have access to social media anytime anywhere, while retrievability allows users to search and recover information shared on social media. Affordability is another social media feature that promotes broader participation in sociocultural and political activities, while networkability is the ability of agile social media to empower marginalized voices to stand united for a common good fighting oppression. On the other hand, customizability of social media enables users to conceal and shape their identities to protect themselves from attack due to the content they share or due to their engagement with contents users share. Social media viewed from PRANC framework offers a new opportunity for the powerless communities to struggle for their rights. It fosters inclusivity, democratizes cultural landscapes, and redefines how culture is produced, disseminated, and consumed in the digital age, challenging capitalism and culture industry.

*Keywords:* PRANC, portability, retrievability, affordability, networkability, customizability, capitalism, culture industry, creative culture

### **Introduction**

In this digital age, social media has opened up new experiences challenging the hitherto dominant influence of mass media. It altered mass media's longstanding hegemonic supremacy by granting everyone with little technological knowhow the ability to produce and disseminate contents (Lisa Anderson, 2011; Aytac & Stokes, 2019b; Orth et al., 2020). The advancement in communication

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technologies offered netizens with a hybridized opportunity referred to as *prosumption*—production and consumption of contents through portable devices such as smartphones (Aytaç & Stokes, 2019b; Yamamoto et al., 2020; Zajc, 2015). This article proposes a theoretical framework with an acronym PRANC to argue how social media has disrupted long-standing notions of capitalism and the culture industry. In this article I offer a detailed theoretical discussion focusing on the concepts of *portability*, *retrievability*, *affordability*, *networkability*, and *customizability* encapsulated in PRANC shedding light on how social media has reshaped the landscape of sociocultural and political engagement. Through the lens of PRANC, I try to bring to the fore that the rise of social media platforms has triggered a shift in the dynamics of influence, with the dwindling impact of mass media leading to a diminishing significance of concepts such as capitalism and the culture industry.

While capitalism and the culture industry have historically been associated with homogenization and commodification, social media has introduced new avenues for individual expression and information consumption. The customizable nature of social media platforms empowers users to shape their online identities. The networkability of social media fosters the amplification of marginalized voices, providing a platform for alternative form of cultural narrative and dissent (Allsop, 2016; Arora, 2020; Harb, 2011; Moussa, 2013; Nummi et al., 2019).

In this social media era, the conventional understanding of capitalism and the culture industry requires reevaluation. The PRANC framework offers a lens through which we can explore the evolving dynamics of cultural production that transforms the majority from only-- consumers to *prosumers* (Andrews & Ritzer, 2018). Social media's dynamic nature of *portability*, *retrievability*, *affordability*, *networkability*, and *customizability* challenge the traditional power structure and producer-consumer dichotomy whose target was capital accumulation by the few through controlling the culture industry at the expense of the majority. Through critical observation of social media's transformative impact, valuable insights emerge regarding its potential influence on sociocultural dynamics and the engagement of everyday internet users.

## **Marxism vs Neo-Marxism**

This section elaborates on the classical theories of capitalism and the culture industry through the lens of social media theoretical framework proposed in the article. It highlights both theories within the context of social media one after the other. However, before delving further, it is important to explain the intrinsic human creative culture in relation to these classical theories. Marxism highlights the dominance of means of production, while Neo-Marxism builds on mass media technology as products of human creativity. By analyzing the applicability of these theories to social media, we gain insights into the evolving dynamics of cultural production and the inevitable transformation of the ordinary people into *prosumers* from consumers. Social media's transformative power challenges traditional power structures and offers new avenues for cultural expression. This examination

allows us to reconsider the theories of capitalism and the culture industry with specific focus on the impact of social media on cultural landscapes and human creativity in the digital era.

Undoubtedly, human beings possess an innate capacity for creativity that knows no bounds (Hilton, 2010; Veale & Pérez, 2020). Throughout history, we have witnessed the manifestation of this creativity from simple tools to the most advanced state-of-the-art technologies (Sawyer & Henriksen, 2024). Not long before a new product leaves manufacturing site, another one emerges with enhanced functions and features as a result of continuous innovation. Scholars have recognized the perpetuity of human creative capacity and its profound influence on our lives, which they refer to as creative culture (Bezklubaya, 2021; Sherman, 2006; Ucar, 2019; Wayne, 2012). Creative culture encompasses the culture of continuous creativity and its interconnectedness with the inherent creative potential of human beings, driven by real or perceived needs. The underlying motivation behind the concept of creative culture is the desire to address human needs and overcome challenges (Cabra & Guerrero, 2022; Gaut, 2010; Gomez, 2013; Sternberg, 2006). It is noteworthy that both Marxist and Neo-Marxist perspectives have gained significant prominence in academic and public discourse, applying concepts related to capitalism and the culture industry within the context of creative culture.

When the producers of creative culture are subjected to domination, control, abuse, or manipulation by a select few, they are transformed into tools of oppression (O'Connor, 2016; Rubio-Arostegui et al., 2016). The monopolization and domination of creative culture by a privileged few result in inequality, injustice, and repression (Cherrier, 2009; Gartman, 2012). This truth is evident in Karl Marx's theory of capitalism and Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's concept of the culture industry.

According to Marx, power lies in controlling the *economic base* through ownership of the means of production, such as manufacturing industries, machinery, production processes, and labor power (Bryer, 2006). The rich exert control over the working class and their labor, commodifying it to dictate social functions (Tucker, 1978; Wayne, 2012). This control over the economic base allows capitalists to wield power and influence over other social and political structures, known as the *superstructure* (Barker & Jane, 2016; Tucker, 1978).

Another crucial aspect of Marx's theory of capitalism is the concept of alienation, wherein the capitalists disconnect the working class from their inherent human potential by exploiting their labor for their own gain. The rich accumulate wealth at the expense of the labor of the poor, who receive meager wages in return for their continuous toil, far less than the value of their production (Longhofer & Winchester, 2016; Tucker, 1978). Therefore, Marx envisioned communism as a solution to this crisis perpetuated by capitalism.

However, the realization of the communist dream advocated by Marx and his followers resulted in destruction and crisis, as seen in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European nations, which eventually transitioned into capitalism and related democratic systems (Bogdan, 2012; Brzezinski, 1989). Even countries like

Russia and China, which adhered to communism for a significant period, have pragmatically embraced capitalism (Novokmet et al., 2018).

Although Marx proposed communism as an alternative to the capitalist system, capitalism continues to exert significant influence even after two centuries. This is due to the nature of capitalism, which encourages privatization of properties, companies, industries, and means of production. As a result, the rich continue to amass wealth while the majority, the working class, remains impoverished. Workers, whether white collar or lower-level employees, depend on the wages they receive from their employers in exchange for their full-time labor, without having any control, ownership, or management rights over the products they produce. Marx refers to this condition as alienation (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2022). In the subsequent section, I will discuss the concept of the culture industry, a pivotal concept that extends the reach of capitalism and its influence on cultural production and consumption.

### **Culture Industry**

Neo-Marxist thinkers and critical social theorists transcended capitalist view of control to another level through attaching the influencing power and control to the media industry. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in particular critically argued that control over the media industry exposes the mass to media programs that condition the audience to become obsessed with and enslaved by those programs in the long run (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2022). The programs broadcast in the form of reality shows, TV dramas, movies as well as magazines, etc. along with the advertisement industry are believed to differentiate between the consuming majority working class and the producing capitalist minority of cultural products (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2022).

For these critical theorists, media industries overtook the influencing power off from economy. Drawing on Marxism, they stressed that radio and television programs and magazines perpetuate class division shifting the power from 'economic base' to the cultural products (Adorno & Rabinbach, 1975; Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002). Likewise, Herbert Marcuse contended that the media industry shapes human society towards observing their social and material world unidirectionally thereof producing what he calls *one dimensional society* (Marcuse, 2006). Adorno and Horkheimer's concept of *culture industry* therefore followed the creation and proliferation of mass media industry. They critically theorized that the rich legitimize and perpetuate their dominion over the majority mass by monopolizing and controlling the media and its products (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2022).

However, the critical theorists particularly, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse asserted that media has a lasting controlling effect on emotional and behavior sphere of a society than Karl Marx's capitalism (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2022). The theorists further observed that the media and its cultural products serve as a powerful mechanism to maintain power. Cultural products fabricated and disseminated conditioned by the advertisement industry strongly controlling the

working class by reducing them to mere consuming subjects (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002; Marcuse, 2006). Influenced by the multitude and continued dissemination of media products, the working-class lose the ability to think critically resulting in eliciting in them false need and false satisfaction therein which Marcuse refers to as *false consciousness* (Marcuse, 2006, p. 13; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2022).

These Neo-Marxist thinkers critiqued the influence of culture industry that it has lasting effects unlike capitalism because working in factories require physical engagement resulting in bodily fatigue while culture industry inculcates strong and enduring psychological and mental effects that lasts (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002). Over time, cultural products create false desire where consumers need to work restlessly, often more than one job a day, to satisfy their desire and their family's (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2022). According to these theorists, it is not capitalism but culture industry that holds fast control over the mass (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2022). The owners' control over media has been so strong because the production and dissemination was from the center with no room for the consumers to decide on the contents produced nor the contents consumed. Now the question is whether the influence of and control over media by owners (whosoever owns) fully apply in this era of social media. The remaining sections will focus on elaborating this question and related concerns through the lens of social media theoretical framework introduced earlier.

### **Communication Technologies**

The effects of culture industry reverberate even today for dependency on media is undeniably growing stronger with agile social media. The internet technology that enhances connectedness and social networking leads to stronger dependency on mass media shaping social behavior (Moussa, 2013). Attachment to media and communication technologies becomes stronger than ever (Cohen, 2016). We depend on portable communication devices for online shopping, checking on news, content production, socializing, fast health status checking etc., by the help of customizable social media apps (Jain & Murugesan, 2021).

The widespread of the COVID-2019 virus taught us a new experience that mobile phones become more important communication devices than before not only for socialization and other benefits but also for instant checking up of individuals' vaccine status to access some designated public areas and locations (Al-turjman et al., 2021; Gandhi et al., 2020). This implies that living without the new media technology particularly mobile phones and the internet connection is unimaginable (Jia, 2021; Joy et al., 2021). The ubiquitous internet connection and social media and the growing dependency on communication technology is perhaps an indication of the pervasiveness and persistence of culture industry theory even today (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2022).

Marxist thinkers critique social media as an agent of capitalism through capacitating and accelerating its accumulation (Fuchs, 2014; Fuchs & Sandoval, 2014). However, it is worth raising the following questions. Does the influence of

capitalism and culture industry fully apply in relation to social media? Are social media users only passive consumers? Does agency of individual users at stake? How does heuristic experience help to deconstruct the monopolizing influence of culture industry in the context of social media?

From a heuristic point of view, it is worth considering the following overarching reasons as to why capitalism and culture industry do not apply in the context of social media. Firstly, the culture industry theory overemphasized the negative impact of social media. Secondly, unlike the traditional media where contents were produced and disseminated from the center, the demarcation between producer and consumer is blurring in the case of social media (Adem, 2019; Arora, 2020). That is, audiences are not necessarily passive consumers for they have the room to produce contents, react to the produced contents, debate and contest the contents published (Fuchs, 2015; Rodriguez, 2011). Finally and most importantly social media do not necessarily compromise agency of the users (Warburton & Hatzipanagos, 2013), but rather created user-centered business facilities by overturning the top down traditional communication model (Rathore et al., 2016).

### **Social Media as a Mobilizing Tool of the Oppressed**

As slightly discussed earlier social media is intruding every aspect of our life. From online shopping and e-banking to socialization, political activism to news consumption, “self-promotion” or impression management and many more, people depend much on social media (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2019; Wang et al., 2015). The ubiquity of the internet with the proliferating social networking apps is widely leveraging its sphere of influence over social media users (Mitri et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2015). Unlike the static and centralized traditional media, social media is customer-centered with public membership internet-based media accessible 24/7 on various electronic devices wherever there is internet connection (Marlowe et al., 2017; Rathore et al., 2016). From Critical Theory and Neo-Marxist point of view these functions could be considered as mechanisms of attention distraction (Marcuse, 2006; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2019).

However, I argue that culture industry theory underestimates the positive aspect of media technology particularly social media by overemphasizing its negative effects. To establish my argument, I utilize PRANC—an acronym theoretical framework—that stands for the concepts of **P**ortability, **R**etrievability, **A**ffordability, **N**etworkability, and **C**ustomizability respectively. I will discuss and theorize social media by deploying the PRANC framework' under the next section in detail. The framework will help to demarcate the distinction between the traditional media and social media. The conceptual framework will also enable us to recognize that social media plays a significant role to raise awareness, hold debates and discussions over sociopolitical concerns, enhances social and political activism, mobilize oppressed groups for change etc. (Franklin & Sharupi, 2020; Moussa, 2013; Nummi et al., 2019).

Social media is designed to function differently from traditional media. It is innovated with inbuilt functions where users or producers and consumers alike create their own contents which encourages active engagement of content *prosumption* (Beer & Burrows, 2010; Mitri et al., 2022; Rathore et al., 2016). This trend of social media's user-centered approach transcends the traditional media's centralized producer-consumer dichotomy, respecting users' agency to decide which content to consume, engage with the content they consume, and providing them with equal opportunities as content producers, rather than being victims of passively consuming contents others produce (Andrews & Ritzer, 2018; Ritzer, 2015, 2014).

In other words, social media users are no longer passive consumers of contents as they have the agency to decide which content to consume, react to, like or dislike, or share addition to creating contents of their own (Beer & Burrows, 2010; Scheg, 2018). Due to its engaging facility, social media enables the oppressed and marginalized social groups to expose oppressive systems in their struggle for emancipation (Lisa Anderson, 2011; Forsén & Tronvoll, 2021; Moussa, 2013; Ortiz et al., 2019). Social media is useful to engage in and mobilize social movements, strengthen socio-political activism, and facilitate struggle against dictatorship and repression in different parts of the world (Franklin & Sharupi, 2020; Poell, 2019).

The Black Lives Matter, the Arab Spring, occupy movements, the 2014-2018 Oromo peaceful protest, and other social movements in encountered by nations across the globe over the past few years whether they achieved expected goal or not were all mobilized and organized through social media (Harb, 2011; Moussa, 2013; Nummi et al., 2019). Undeniably, social media assumes an irreplaceable function in empowering marginalized social groups, notwithstanding its inherent limitations. For example, the pervasive and deeply rooted racism entrenched within the government security system against Black individuals in the United States would have remained veiled if not for the intervention of social media. The world would have remained oblivious to the tragic assassination of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, and a unified global condemnation of this abhorrent act would not have materialized had it not been for the pivotal role played by social media (Beckett & Hankins, 2021; Johnson, 2023; Peele et al., 2022). While the above case is a singular instance, it made a powerful impact in highlighting the power of social media to expose incidents of police brutality only through the sharing of a short video by a teenager named Darnella Frazier (Anderson et al., 2022).

As argued time and again, it needs to establish that social media era generation is beyond passive consumers and its usage is by far better than the traditional mainstream media specially in letting the voices of the voiceless heard as in the previous case. It is also very important to clarify that I am not making a totalizing argument regarding social media nor denying the negative aspects of social media specially in relation to *mis/disinformation* (Aimeur et al., 2023; Carmi et al., 2020). However, my argument rather grounds on the difference between the traditional media and social media specifically based on Neo-Marxist arguments to shed light on the overlooked positive aspects of social media. Next, I will turn to discussing the theoretical framework to further elaborate the concepts

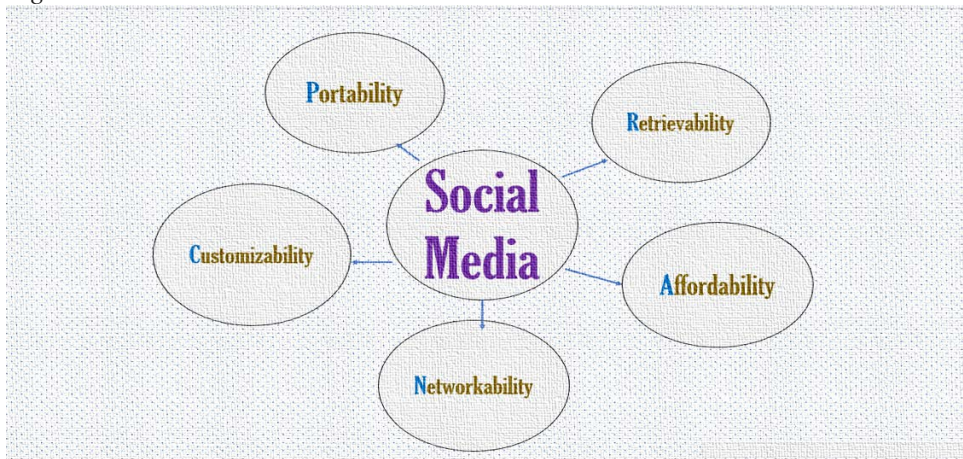
encapsulated in PRANC to recognize the potential advantage of social media to emancipate humanity through mobilizing them in the fight against any form of dominance or oppression (Karimi, 2017).

### PRANC as a Theoretical Lens

The distinction between traditional media and social media specially from the vantage point of capitalism and culture industry can effectively be captured through the lens of PRANC. The acronym PRANC that encompasses the key concepts of *Portability*, *Retrievability*, *Affordability*, *Networkability*, and *Customizability* serve as invaluable tools to re-examine and deconstruct the underlying assumptions that theories of capitalism and culture industry extrapolate to the context of social media. It is undeniable that the influence of capitalism and the culture industry has dominantly been felt in the media industry. And the applicability of Marxist and Neo-Marxist theories remains pertinent and enduring, even in the context of social media (Fuchs & Sandoval, 2014). However, by employing the PRANC lens we can recognize and appreciate social media as a medium for the marginalized and oppressed whose voices could have remain silent otherwise (Karimi, 2017; Kasana, 2014; Ortiz et al., 2019; Tayebi, 2013; Turková et al., 2021).

As previously elucidated, it is imperative to acknowledge that social media users are not passive consumers devoid of agency, but rather active creators of contents that profoundly influence the social, political, and cultural fabric of society (Mitri et al., 2022; Ortiz et al., 2019). To facilitate a comprehensive understanding of this dynamic, a conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1, serving as a visual representation that guides subsequent discussions.

Figure 1. PRANC as Social Media Theoretical Framework



The concept of *portability*, in the context of this work, is related to portable devices including smartphones and tablets which enable social media users to remain connected and networked through the internet anytime anywhere (Cohen, 2016; Madianou, 2014; Rainie, 2020; Schrock, 2015). *Portability* as a concept can be traced back to the works of scholars like Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan, who explored the transformation of media from one form to another throughout



history, such as the transition from stone to papyrus (Innis, 1950; McLuhan, 1967). In contemporary times, social media users could carry their portable devices with them, in contrast to traditional media, which is characterized by stationary controlled from center where the mass audience have no agency on the content produced and consumed alike (Stratton et al., 2020).

Nowadays the advancement of communication technologies, through portable devices, enable users to engage with various platforms and networks, facilitating socialization, advocacy, content creation and sharing, commenting, and many more (Bhanye et al., 2023; Helm & Jones, 2016). Individuals can connect with others, advocate for causes of marginalized groups in the fight against any form of domination and oppression (Schrock, 2015; Uzuegbunam, 2015). The integration of portable communication devices with social media apps and their convenience empower users to engage with these platforms on-the-go and influence the dissemination and consumption of media content (Storsul & Stuedahl, 2009).

The *portability* of social media devices also has transformed the way individuals interact with information and engage in social activities. Users are no longer under the strict influence of nor dependent on traditional media channels (de Streel et al., 2021). They can seamlessly integrate social media into their daily lives, enabling continuous connectivity and participation in online communities (Helm & Jones, 2016). This *portability* has significant implications for the construction of social identities, the formation of social networks, and the dissemination of information, as individuals can actively shape and contribute to the digital landscape (Da Silva et al., 2014). Hereby, I argue that the concept of *portability* within PRANC highlights the transformative nature of social media, offering users newfound agency and flexibility in their engagement with digital platforms thereby liberating them from the influence of capitalsim and culture industry (Barns, 2020). On the other hand, the concept of *retrievability* pertains to the accessibility, recallability and availability of social media contents that distinguishes the traditional media's *once-passed forever gone* contents from recallable social media contents (Levy-Dreyfus & Corsi, 2020). Unlike traditional media, which often had limited or no possibility of retrieval, social media platforms offer users the ability to easily reference and access a wide range of contents after they are posted or broadcasted (Madianou, 2015).

*Retrievalability* of social media contents are facilitated by the continuous connectivity and pervasive nature of social media platforms, which operate 24/7, subject to the availability of internet connections (Rainie, 2020). Through the utilization of algorithmic functions and search engines, users can efficiently locate and retrieve specific social media content. This level of accessibility ensures that social media content remains readily available for reference, analysis, and engagement (de Streel et al., 2021).

The concept of *retrievability* has significant implications for the way individuals interact with and consume media content. Unlike traditional media, which often relied on predetermined schedules and limited access, social media platforms provide users with instant access to a vast array of content, allowing for greater flexibility and choice in information retrieval (Pavlova & Berkers, 2020). Furthermore, the ability to retrieve user reactions enhances the engagement and

participatory nature of social media, as users can actively respond to and interact with the content they encounter (Takhshid, 2020).

Furthermore, *retrievability* emphasizes the accessibility and availability of social media posts and contents, enabling users to reference and have their access anytime (de Streel et al., 2021; Walters, 2012). The continuous connectivity of social media platforms, coupled with algorithmic functions and search engines, ensures 24/7 accessibility of contents, transforming the way individuals engage with and consume media products. This encourages participation of social media users allowing them to recall contents (Taprial & Kanwar, 2017).

Another integral concept within PRANC is *affordability*, which pertains to the increasing accessibility and availability of communication technology infrastructure, allowing users to access internet connections including via their mobile data (Chinoza, 2019; Lu et al., 2016). This heightened accessibility empowers users to connect with one another through social media platforms, facilitating discussions, information sharing, and negotiations on social, cultural, and political issues (Acquisti & Gross, 2009; Chawla & Chodak, 2018).

It is important to note that, in this context, *affordability* is not solely understood from a global internet penetration perspective. Instead, it is assessed based on the trade-off between the benefits users derive from being connected and the potential losses they may experience when disconnected. For instance, the influential role of social media activism in mobilizing social revolutions and challenging authoritarian regimes in developing countries serves as a compelling illustration of affordability's impact (Arora, 2020; Madianou, 2014; Moussa, 2013).

*Affordability*, in relation to social media, has democratized access to information, enabling previously marginalized voices to be heard and empowering individuals to engage in socio-political discussions. The *affordability* of mobile internet connections has significantly reduced barriers to entry, allowing a broader range of individuals to participate in online conversations and contribute to societal discourse (Can & Alatas, 2017). This has led to the emergence of grassroots movements and the amplification of marginalized perspectives, ultimately challenging existing power structures (Arora, 2020; Aytac & Stokes, 2019a; Balci & Gölcü, 2013; Moussa, 2013; Postill, 2014).

Furthermore, the *affordability* of social media has facilitated the exchange of ideas, cultural experiences, and knowledge, transcended geographical boundaries and fostering global interconnectedness. Users from diverse backgrounds can engage in meaningful interactions, promoting cross-cultural understanding and collaboration. This affordability aspect of PRANC underscores the transformative potential of social media in empowering individuals, fostering social change, and promoting inclusive dialogue.

It is essential to recognize that *affordability* extends beyond financial considerations. While economic *affordability* is a crucial aspect, the concept also encompasses the social and political implications of being connected or disconnected (Batinca & Treleven, 2015). Understanding affordability within this broader framework allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the impact of social media on individuals, societies, and political systems.

*Affordability* facilitates increasing accessibility and availability of communication technologies, particularly mobile internet connections. This concept emphasizes the affordability of social media platforms, enabling users to engage in discussions, share information, and negotiate social, cultural, and political issues at an affordable cost. By democratizing access to information and facilitating global connectivity, affordability has played a pivotal role in empowering marginalized voices and fostering social change. The role of affordability in social media activism, particularly in mobilizing social revolutions, serves as a compelling example of its transformative potential.

The concept of *networkability* in the context of this study encompasses the various functions of social media platforms that facilitate networking and socialization among users within specific social groups, based on shared social, cultural, or political interests (Au, 2022). *Networkability* emphasizes the capacity of these platforms to connect users, fostering discussions and interactions that have the potential to spur collective action on social issues (Dolata, 2020; Richardson, 2005).

Furthermore, *networkability* reflects the functional capabilities of specific social media platforms enabling users to share content across different networks (Au, 2022). These platforms provide a space for hundreds of millions of individuals to disseminate content that represents their concerns and experiences. For instance, Darnella Frazier's social media post of a video exposing the brutality of the Minnesota police in the 2020 incident involving the tragic death of George Floyd serves as a powerful illustration of the impact of networked media.

The concept of *networkability* encompasses both the networking potential within social groups and the cross-platform sharing of content. Through the networking capabilities of social media platforms, users can connect with others who share similar interests, beliefs, or objectives (Kaufmann & Jeandesboz, 2017). This fosters the formation of online communities and facilitates the exchange of ideas, information, and support. These networks can serve as catalysts for collective action, enabling individuals to mobilize around social causes and effect meaningful change.

Users can disseminate their perspectives, experiences, and concerns to a vast audience, sparking conversations, raising awareness, and potentially influencing public opinion and discourse. The concept of *networkability* highlights the transformative power of social media in facilitating connections, fostering collective action, and amplifying individual voices (Au, 2022). The ability to network and share content within and across social groups has revolutionized the way individuals engage with society and advocate for change. Through networked media, users can transcend geographical boundaries, bridge social divides, and collectively address pressing social, cultural, or political issues.

*Networkability* within PRANC enable users to network and socialize within specific social groups, as well as the capacity to share content across different platforms (Hazra & Priyo, 2021). It emphasizes the networking potential of social media, which facilitates collective action on social matters and fosters the formation of online communities. The cross-platform sharing of content enhances the reach and impact of user-generated content, allowing for wider engagement

and influence. Networkability underscores the transformative role of social media in connecting individuals, empowering collective voices, and driving social change. Lastly, the concept of *customizability* within the PRANC framework pertains to the usability of social media platforms, offering customizable features that allow users to modify their profiles, reset settings, readjust locations, and even rename themselves in order to safeguard their real identity and protect themselves from potential harm (Yang et al., 2019). Additionally, users have the option to delete sensitive content that they no longer wish to be associated with. These customizable functions empower individuals to exercise control over their online presence and mitigate potential risks (Bode, 2016).

The ability to customize one's profile and settings as well as posts on social media platforms provides users with a sense of agency and autonomy, allowing them to shape their online identity and manage their digital footprint (Yang et al., 2019). By concealing or altering their real identity, users can mitigate the potential repercussions of expressing their views or engaging in sensitive discussions. This feature is particularly relevant in contexts where individuals may face repressive measures or fear backlash for their online activities.

Moreover, the user-friendly nature of social media platforms ensures that these customizable functions require minimal technological know-how. This accessibility lowers the barrier of entry and allows individuals from diverse backgrounds and skill levels to navigate and utilize social media platforms effectively. This democratizing aspect of social media usability sets it apart from the traditional media, which often requires specialized knowledge or resources to exert control over one's personal information or content.

The customizable features of social media not only promote individual autonomy but also contribute to a fairer and less oppressive digital environment. By granting users the ability to reset, readjust, and delete sensitive content, social media platforms empower individuals to manage their online presence and exercise control over their personal information. This level of control helps mitigate the potential risks associated with online engagement, fostering a more inclusive and secure online space (Meier & Peters, 2023).

To sum up, *customizability* within PRANC encompasses the customizable functions offered by social media platforms, enabling users to modify their profiles, reset settings, readjust privacy settings, and even conceal their real identity. These features provide users with a sense of agency and control over their online presence, allowing them to protect themselves from repressive measures and delete sensitive content (Hazra & Priyo, 2021). The user-friendly nature of these customizable functions ensures accessibility for individuals with varying levels of technological proficiency.

## Conclusion

In this article, I presented PRANC as framework to theorize shed light on the positive impact of social media on marginalized and oppressed communities. Drawing upon the assumptions of capitalism and culture industry in the context of

mass media, this article aims to unveil the transformative nature of social media through the lens of the proposed framework. The article argues that social media possesses distinct characteristics that empower its users, enabling them to pursue their own interests and benefit their communities. This stands in contrast to the traditional mass media, which is characterized by manipulation and centralized control, leaving no room for the majority audience to exercise agency in determining both the production and consumption of information.

Although it is vital to acknowledge the presence of arguments suggesting that the influence of capitalism and culture industry theories persists even in the era of social media, the theoretical lens I presented clearly distinguishes between traditional mass media and social media. The theoretical lens highlights that social media is no longer dominated and controlled solely by a privileged few who accumulate wealth at the expense of the majority, but can be utilized to mobilize the oppressed and marginalized to have their voice heard and have their own say. The framework highlights that when social media is utilized responsibly and with a purpose for social good, it has the potential to create a significant impact in the lives of those who have been victimized, as well as in addressing social, economic, or political challenges. In essence, while social media is not without drawbacks and must be critically examined within the context of capitalist forces, it is essential to recognize its potential for positive impact. By harnessing the power of social media for social good, individuals and groups can contribute to addressing societal problems and making a meaningful difference in the lives of others. As this article is theoretical in nature and is based on heuristic understanding supported by existing literature where no primary data was collected, further studies that are based on primary data would bring forth more insight.

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