



# Digital Nationalism: Understanding the Power of Digital Technology in the Rise of Nationalism, National Identity, and National Narratives

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## Abstract

This article explains how the nation's rise paved the way for nationalism's development and how digital technologies significantly contributed to the global rise of nationalism. Globalization and the industrial revolution play an important role in digital development worldwide, shaping people's ideas about adopting new technology to connect with others. People can form or mobilize a team within a group or nation through social media, websites, applications, and other technology tools. Because of digital advancement, people can now use it to share their experiences, ideas, culture, and beliefs with others everywhere. Furthermore, this paper emphasizes the power of digital transformation, which significantly contributes to the promotion of 1) Digital nationalism; 2) Digital identity; 3) National narratives.

## Subject Areas

Sociology

## Keywords

Nation, Nationalism, Cambodia Nationalism, Digital Nationalism, Digital Identity, National Narrative, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Social Media, Imagined Community, Network Nationalism, Online Nationalism, Cyber Nationalism

## 1. Introduction

Throughout history, nationalism has arisen from book publications, radio, magazines, or movies that can spread and attract people around the world. That was just the traditional way of representing the spread of nationalism. Instead, due to

the modernization and development of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and digital advancements around the world like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, blogs, websites, and other social media, it has had an impact on nation-building and nationalism. The power of digital technology, or social media, allows people to gather and form a community, presenting themselves as one group. People can mobilize based on what they belong to and share the same identity as a nation, state, or community. Meanwhile, the spread of information through social media can have both benefits and drawbacks for people's mobilization. Disseminating false information on social media can lead to chaos and problems in the country because of some nationalist movements. For example, in Cambodia's Cambodia-Laos-Vietnam Development Triangle Area (CLV-DTA), some people receive false information and mobilize to protect against this initiative. This case will explain more in the part of digital nationalism.

Digital media play a key role in promoting nationalism. Fuchs [1] identified five types of communication that are linked to the propagation of nationalism, as suggested by Marisol Sandoval. It establishes a connection between these social structures and the five categories of communication such as symbolic, narrative, performative, interactive, and algorithmic communication. On the other hand, the term "entities" refers to specific systems involved in the communication process, including human individuals, social systems, and non-human entities. All of these elements contribute to the dynamics of human social interactions, including communication and social structure creation. Undoubtedly, the growing focus on the role of communication technology in nations and nationalism is a welcome shift from earlier discussions that primarily saw digital media as catalysts for global connections and cosmopolitan identity. The development of the internet domain name system, namely the website address system, provides a clear illustration of the enduring presence of ordinary nationalism in the digital realm, as well as the increasing incorporation of national identity into the digital infrastructure [2].

According to the Department for Science, Innovation, and Technology [3] emphasized that a digital identity can represent a people identify and information, including their name, gender, age, address, and other important information, together with biometric data such as fingerprints and facial scans. In contrast to physical documents (passports), a digital identity allows a person to verify who they are through interaction and transactions [4] without showing the papers or documents. A digital identity can be defined as the essential interpreter of the data that comprises it. The use of the identifier, such as accessing a corporate network, browsing an e-commerce website, or logging into a bank account, determines its linked to the digital identity. Digital identity identifiers may include: biometrics (fingerprint, retinal scan, or facial scan), birthdates, browsing activity, email addresses, government-issued identifiers (social security numbers, driver's license numbers, and passport numbers), IP addresses, purchase history, search history, usernames, and passwords [5]. Digital technology's advancements have made it possible to access a wide range of storytellers through narrative formats. The

media technologies offer hypertexts and multimedia resources that are linked to the narration in conjunction with the new concepts and improve participation in creating a new culture. In the era of digital streaming media, audio-visual content is used more than at any other time ever before [6]. It was notable that documentaries have a very long history of providing an essential role in cultural heritage documentation and preservation. Some researchers agreed that every part of the film is a documentary [7], and all the documents are from cultural of documentaries [8], which influence and direct cultural responses. More importantly, i-doc, which is a new type of link that combines both old documentaries and digital technology, for example, social networks, social media and platforms, audio-visual platforms, new media, etc., can be classified as one of the vital influential tools to elaborate truth and the contemporary viewing of culture and people [9]. This has to focus on the relationship between cultural heritage stories and their audiences, in conjunction with the important increase in involvement through interactive storytelling.

## 2. What Is Nationalism?

Before delving into the concept of nationalism, it is important to understand its primary criteria, which is nation. From a historical point of view, the term “nation” is significantly more ancient than “nationalism”. Greenfeld [10] asserted that the contemporary term “nation” finds its roots in the Latin word “*natio*”. It represents an individual who is born with and carries derogatory connotations. Ancient Rome frequently used the term “*natio*” to refer to a collective of individuals from a specific geographic area who were Roman citizens. During the Middle Ages, university students from geographically or linguistically comparable places experienced a sense of national consciousness due to a shared sense of common ancestry. According to Seton-Watson [11], a nation can be defined as a collective identity produced by a substantial portion of individuals in a society who either perceive themselves as a nation or exhibit behaviors characteristic of a nation. The phrase “consider themselves” might be interpreted as “imagine themselves”.

Noticeably, nationalism has a very long history of indigenous peoples’ resistance to colonization and has only lately started to have some success in terms of reclaiming territories and reversing assimilation programs. To further illustrate, Oksanen utilizes Keating’s [12] notion of plurinationalism to examine the reconfiguration of relationships between settler nations and indigenous populations, resulting in the emergence of several nationalisms within a single nation-state [13]. Descriptions of the country’s alleged failings have fallen into an association with widely held opinions among significant portions of the electorate, revealing cultural divisions that are likely to influence election results, policy choices, and the mobilization of social movements [14]. The creation of nations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries has been greatly influenced by the examples of England, France, and Spain, and, to a lesser extent, Holland and Sweden, and it is normally associated with their own military and economic power in the time of establishing nations in Western Europe. A nation connects geographically related

populations that must have their own homeland. So, they can share a common culture and historical myths and memories together with reciprocal legal rights and duties under a common legal system, and those nations have a common separation of labor and systems of production with mobility throughout the territory for members [15]. The national identity can be categorized by Smith [15] are 1) A historical territory or homeland; 2) Common myths and memories of past events; 3) A common, mass public culture; 4) Common legal rights and obligations for all people; 5) A common economy with territorial mobility for members.

Simply put, a nation can be characterized as “*a named human population that shares a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy, and common legal rights and responsibilities for all its members*” [16] [17]. According to Smith [18], a nation’s identity is made up of various components such as socio-economic class, religion, ethnicity, and the flexible character of nationalism. Additionally, it encompasses ideologies such as liberalism, fascism, and communism. A nation’s identity is essentially multi-dimensional, making it impossible to reduce to a single element. This holds true even for specific nationalist groups, and artificial methods cannot readily or quickly instill it in individuals. The meaning of national identity can be clearly distinguished from any conception of the state. A diverse set of interconnected variables, including ethnic, cultural, geographical, economic, and legal-political components, determine the identity of a nation and its citizens. Community members, united by shared memories, mythologies, and traditions, form these linkages. Their own separate states may or may not reflect these connections, but they remain distinct from the state’s purely legal and bureaucratic aspects. Two main elements classify a nation: 1) Civic and territorial; 2) Ethnic and genealogical. The varied components of national identity serve as a flexible and enduring force in contemporary life and politics, effectively merging powerful ideas and movements while maintaining their inherent essence.

Thus, Smith [18] argued that nationalism has various definitions: 1) Nationalism is the purposeful development and strengthening of a collective sense of identity linked to a certain nation, characterized by a process of formation or growth. It gradually develops when individuals exchange shared historical events, cultural customs, and a feeling of belonging; 2) A sentiment or consciousness of belonging to the nation: it is fundamentally characterized by a sense of devotion and emotional connection to one’s own nation. It extends beyond simple citizenship and encompasses a profound emotional attachment to common ideals, traditions, and symbols; 3) A language and symbolism of the nation: language has a key role in the development and promotion of nationalism. It frequently acts as a collective influence, strengthening a sense of self. In addition, symbols such as flags, anthems, and historical landmarks create feelings of national pride and unity; 4) Nationalism is a collective effort that combines emotional connection with significant societal and governmental influence. Nationalist groups advocate for their nation’s concerns and welfare, sometimes at the expense of others. These actions

have the potential to bring about substantial societal and governmental transformation; 5) Nationalism encompasses a collection of ideologies and values specific to the nation. This ideology places enormous emphasis on the significance of the nation-state, prioritizing its culture, sovereignty, and overall welfare. Nationalist ideologies exhibit variability; however, they typically extol the distinctiveness and importance of their respective nation. Antonsich [19] explored the significance of everyday nationalism in times of heightened nationalism, especially in populist politics. He argued that studying everyday nationalism can counter the singular, monocultural, and mono-ethnic nature of populist nationalism. Examining everyday nationalism underscores the intricate and multifaceted nature of nations, thereby providing a voice to racialized minorities who might face exclusion from the national “we”. Nationalism, in its traditional sense, refers to the specific qualities or identity that define a nation. It involves determining who is part of the nation and who is not, as well as identifying national interests. Furthermore, it encompasses the diverse ways in which individuals utilize the nation’s structure and characteristics. This nationalism is not consistently apparent; instead, it fluctuates and becomes noticeable primarily during exceptional instances of collective jubilation, combat, and war, or during significant periods of transformation and upheaval such as regime changes, elections, natural disasters, or economic downturns [20]. Nationalist language and symbolism encompass more than just a philosophy or movement. They often establish a connection between that ideology and the collective emotions of larger portions of the chosen people, particularly through the use of slogans, ideas, symbols, and ceremonies. “*Nationalism as an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity, and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’*” [21] [22].” Moreover, the typology of nationalism has a connection with the ethnic and territorial aspects of nationalism, as well as the situation of communities and movements seeking themselves before and after independence [23] [24]: 1) Territorial nationalisms: a) Pre-independence movements characterized by a civic and territorial recognition of the country will prioritize the removal of foreign rulers and the establishment of a new state-nation in place of the former colonial region. People commonly refer to these movements as anti-colonial nationalism; b) Post-independence movements, determined by the nation’s civic and territorial recognition, tend to unify and encompass ethnically diverse populations into a new political entity. Their aim was to establish a new nation within the former colonial ruler’s boundaries. These movements are referred to as integration nationalism. 2) Ethnic nationalisms: a) Pre-independence movements that are primarily based on ethnic and genealogical notions of the nation aim to separate from a larger political entity. They either seek to establish a new political ethno-nation in a designated homeland or gather together in such a homeland. This refers to movements such as secession and diaspora nationalism; b) Post-independence movements, directed by an ethnic and genealogical acknowledgement of the nation, try to expand by including ethnic “kinsmen”

further on than the current borders of the ethno-nation and its boundaries, or by establishing a larger ethnonational state through the unification of culturally and ethnically similar ethnonational states. These movements are known as irredentist and “pan” nationalism.

In essence, a nation is in the process of creating a symbol of nationalism. Nationalism is a concept, system, and argument about nations’ characteristics, benefits, rights, and responsibilities. Individuals experience national consciousness and nationalism when they strongly identify with their country and prioritize their emotional commitment and devotion to it over any other attachments and affiliations [25]. Nonetheless, it was only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that nationalism started to manifest as an acknowledged emotion. Comparing the American and French Revolutions: These incidents represented significant displays of nationalism. The concept of national political autonomy gained prominence. People used imperialism and colonization as excuses to seize power and exercise their authority. For instance, nationalism linked rebellions in Poland, Hungary, and other countries. As a result, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a widespread emergence of nationalistic movements in Asia and Africa. The global development of digital technology has led to a resurgence of nationalism. According to this explanation, a memorial of the historical way is required; nationalism is the foremost foundation of the process of nation-state creation [26] (Erdem, 2010). However, nationalism in Asia can be linked with Pan-Asianism, an ideology that seeks to promote unity and cooperation among countries. It arose as a reaction to Western imperialism and colonialism, advocating the belief that Asian values and cultures are of higher quality than European ones. Japan played an essential role in the advancement of Pan-Asianism. After winning the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Japan established itself as a prominent advocate for Asian interests. Additionally, it gained more support and influence during World War II by creating the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere”, a coalition of Asian countries led by Japan. Following World War II, Pan-Asianism developed, giving rise to a range of movements and philosophies originating from East, South, and Southeast Asia. The attention turned towards fostering economic collaboration and promoting regional integration. Currently, Pan-Asianism places significant emphasis on fostering economic integration. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an initiative aimed at enhancing economic connections in Asia [27].

According to Alter [25], modern nationalism can be seen as both an ideology and a political movement that considers the nation and the nation-state to have extremely important values. People also see it as a tool for uniting and arranging individuals toward a common, primarily political goal. Benedict Anderson explained the process by which the integration of political and economic motivations, together with a collective ethnic, cultural, and religious sense of belonging, mobilized individuals into a cohesive body referred to as an “imagined community” or “nation”. Nationalism has these effects by rallying individuals around a

single symbol, fostering a sense of pride, inclusion, and loyalty to the perceived collective benefits of the nation. In the past, nationalism relied on traditional forms of media and physical rallies to disseminate ideas and motivate individuals. Throughout history, the spreading of nationalism was facilitated by various forms of media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and film, which reached a wide audience and supported the creation of collective media events—promoting or attempting to enforce particular views of the nation’s identity or goals for the state [28]. There are some main categories of nationalism highlighted by Fuchs [1]: a) Political activity and ideology serve the purpose of creating and securing a nation-state, which is a boundary for people. Nationalism has a structural dimension (the nation-state) and an ideological dimension (national consciousness, national belonging). The spatial dimension refers to the allocation of a certain setting as a dwelling place. Nationalism intrinsically links nations, typically associating them with existing or desired nation-states; b) Ideology in which nationalism draws a line between “Us” and “Them”, characterizing them as either a race or a cultural community, a shared nation-state, or a common national economy. Generally, nationalism states that a certain territory has the authority to establish and manage a unified society at the national level, which includes an economic system, a nation-state, and a shared cultural identity. Nationalism must establish national ideals and identity. Nationalism asserts the existence of a particular uniformity within society and, as a result, fails to acknowledge society’s intricate nature; c) The dialectic of nationalism and xenophobia/racism is deeply rooted in the link between nationalism on the one hand and xenophobia/racism on the other; d) Political fetishism, wherein nationalism serves as a symbol of the nation, thereby promoting group organization. Nationalism frequently targets specific groups and incites hostility against foreigners; e) Division that divides nationalism between dominated classes fosters enmity between them, causing them to disregard their shared adversary; f) Distraction aims to establish national unification by diverting attention from class structures, fueling animosity towards outsiders, and fostering divisions between social classes; g) Hegemony occurs when oppressed and exploited groups or individuals embrace nationalism. They typically promote others’ dominance or exploitation and frequently agree to their own dominance or exploitation.

Other authors said that there are two types of nationalism. The first explanation, which is often talked about in public or political discussions, focuses on the obvious and often extreme forms of nationalism, like separatist movements, xenophobia, right-wing extremism, and institutionalized exclusion based on nationality. This conventional idea is also prevalent in numerous seminal studies on nationalism [15] [29]. It is widely used in most of the literature on digital nationalism that has been quoted to date (excluding, it should be noted, any work published in this journal). The second perspective examines nationalism through the lens of everyday life, ordinary practices, and unquestioned assumptions. It defines nationalism as an ideology or a specific worldview and behavior pattern that assumes

the inherent division of humanity into nations and the natural division of the world into distinct national homelands [30]-[33]. The term “nationalism” typically refers to two main aspects: first of all, the sentiment held by individuals towards their national identity, and secondly, the actions undertaken by individuals to attain or maintain self-determination for their nation. The initial segment of the definition prompts inquiries regarding the notion of a “nation” (or a “national identity”), which is frequently defined in relation to shared ancestry, ethnicity, or cultural connections. It particularly raises the question of whether an individual’s affiliation with a nation should be considered involuntary or voluntary [26].

Moreover, Marx explained the diverse forms of nationalism that persist in contemporary times. The scapegoating of foreign workers is a practice that blames them for the social problems caused by capitalism. Additionally, it promotes the notion that foreigners are socially, culturally, or biologically inferior. The media plays a role in spreading nationalism, and the working class often accepts the ideologies of the capitalist class. This serves to divert attention and hatred away from class struggles and towards foreigners [34]. Both ideologically oriented research traditions hold the belief that nationalism determines the goals of action. Elite actors who advocate nationalism as a political ideology aim to attain political independence for a national community. People who hold strong feelings of national superiority desire to exert control over other nations and enforce strict boundaries to exclude undesirable individuals [35]. Political psychologists view nationalism as a collection of inherent components that are persistent among individual actors. And, nationalism can be defined as “a perception of national superiority and an orientation toward national dominance”—that is, chauvinism [36] chauvinism. Prior to this, the majority of studies on nationalism focused mostly on significant periods of social change, such as the emergence of the modern nation-state and the more recent attempts by nationalist movements to redefine established state borders [14]. Rosa Luxemburge [37] asserted that nationalism serves as a “misty veil” that “conceals in all kinds of cases a definite historical content”. She also emphasized that nationalism is a “metaphysical cliché”, which contradicts the notion that nations have the right to self-determination. Furthermore, she claims that the nation-state and nationalism serve as instruments of imperialism and exploitation. Nation-states currently serve as the means by which the bourgeoisie exercises class control, just as non-national states did in the past. Leddy-Owen [38] claimed that comprehending the importance of nationalism is crucial for understanding political agency and identifications. He argued that the concept of statehood should play a more prominent role in our examination of nationalism, considering the widespread presence of the nation-state paradigm and the use of the term’s nation and nationalism in our understanding of political identity. The growing emphasis on the role of communication technology in nations and nationalism is unquestionably popular and represents a break from past ideas that mostly known digital media as a means for global connections and cosmopolitan identity [2]. Of course, a number of governments have benefited from

using digital tools or technology to control their countries. For example, the “Great Firewall” of China encompasses several filtering and surveillance mechanisms, such as Deep Packet Inspection (DPI) to monitor user inputs and keywords and artificial intelligence to identify social movements and patterns of mobilization [39]. The events of Brexit in the United Kingdom, the election of Donald Trump in the United States, and the electoral victories of strongly nationalist and anti-immigrant leaders in other countries have prompted numerous analysts to declare the emergence of a new era characterized by populism, “new” nationalism, and neo-authoritarianism. These developments have raised significant concerns regarding the future of liberal democracy [40]-[42].

In Southeast Asia, nationalism came from colonization and imperialism. For example, Cambodian nationalism has evolved from French colonial rule to the present, initially constructed as an ideology to justify colonialism’s “civilizing mission” [43]. Political, educated, and religious elites in Cambodia adopted the concept, leveraging printing and broadcasting technologies to build modern Cambodian nationhood and nationalism. Cambodian nationalism became primarily based on race when political elites with communist revolutionary tendencies began their struggles for power. Pol Pot, known for his Khmer ethno-nationalism, aimed to build a utopian Cambodia reliance on the authentic Khmer race with the system so-called “Democratic Kampuchea” (DK). The democratic Kampuchea regime ruled for less than four years before its ousting in 1979. When Communist revolutionary elites sought power, Cambodian nationalism became a race issue. The Khmer Rouge categorized urban residents as “new people” and rural ones as “base people”, treating them as unrepresentative of the authentic Khmer race. Execution, overwork, starvation, and disease caused over 1.5 million deaths under this ruling. Around, 650,000 of these were “new people” [44]. After the Paris Peace Agreements in 1991, Cambodian nationalism became a significant political tool in electoral and party politics. The opposition parties portrayed the ruling Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) as serving foreign interests and failing to defend border territories. They used race, border territories, and Vietnamese immigrants to challenge the CPP’s legitimacy. Instead, the CPP countered by promoting its achievements in liberating the people, building peace, and developing infrastructure. Prime Minister Hun Sen’s political legitimacy is based on his government’s role in liberating the country, saving the people from the Khmer Rouge regime, and preventing (DK) from re-establishing itself after Pol Pot’s regime fell in 1979. On the other hand, in 2008, Cambodia and Thailand engaged in a dispute over ancient Khmer temples, leading to clashes and a military stand-off. The Cambodian state invested heavily in nationalist projects to boost state elites’ legitimacy and mobilize mass support for the government’s campaign against Thailand [45].

### 3. Theoretical Frameworks Consideration

Benedict Anderson’s [46] concepts of “imagined community” claimed that social media and digital platforms provide new possibilities for envisioning and building

national identity. Online platforms have the ability to cultivate and enhance national narratives, symbols, and shared experiences, which in turn strengthen the sense of national identity and belonging. Both governmental entities and ordinary people can promote digital nationalism, according to this viewpoint. People who perceive themselves as belonging to an established community contribute to the development of nation theory. The combination of capitalism and print media throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries played a crucial role in fostering a form of nationalism that effectively brought together individuals from diverse social groups, motivating them to collectively strive and make sacrifices for a particular and confined goal. According to Anderson argument, in this modern era, states have the ability to use social media platforms to regulate the flow of information, advance specific national storylines, and gather support. In addition, ordinary people have the ability to utilize internet platforms to demonstrate their loyalty to their country, participate in activities that promote a sense of nation, or even question the government's portrayal of national identity. This theory is capable of explaining the collective experiences of a nation, even in cases where the majority of its citizens will never have personal encounters with each other. The internet facilitates this process by establishing virtual platforms where individuals who share a national identity may interact, exchange information, engage in discourse, and commemorate shared characteristics. Despite the traditional focus of print media on books and magazines in the past, social media platforms and internet forums can fulfill a similar function in the digital age. They promote a collective perception of a nationwide dialogue occurring in unity. Online platforms have the ability to intensify this wave of popularity through the exchange of similar experiences, common ideas, and digital movements. Additionally, Florian Schneider [47] highlighted that technology has the capability to connect individuals from any location. The theory of "Networked Nationalism" can be explained by examining the mechanisms of online interactions and the spreading of shared narratives inside digital networks. In addition, social media platforms, search engines, and online forums serve as instruments for promoting nationalistic sentiment and rallying citizens around a perceived national agenda. Networked nationalism emphasizes the role of online interactions in shaping our digital identity. Through involvement in nationalistic virtual groups, active participation in national stories, and even digital advocacy, we can foster a more robust sense of national identity within our online realm. Furthermore, networked nationalism elucidated how digital technologies serve as platforms for the development and promotion of these narratives. Online discourse, content dissemination, and even government information regulation all have the potential to influence the prevailing national narratives promoted on the internet. For instance, In the context of Chinese nationalism, China's internet landscape is unique. ICT advancements are driving the transition from the industrial era to the "Digital Age". On the other hand, in China, the advancement of ICT technologies is very complicated and encompasses apparently conflicting policy decisions. China has classified ICT as one of

the key industries and is actively promoting innovation in the field of “Internet Plus”. The government’s stance on Huawei and 5G technologies highlights the significance of ICT technology in China’s national plan. This offers a chance to scrutinize and dissect the phenomenon of Chinese digital nationalism.

#### 4. Digital Nationalism

It is noticeable that nationalism was the power element for the wave of independent movements in Southeast Asia like Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam, East Asia like Chinese Mainland, South Korea, and Taiwan Region [48]. In Europe, for instance, in 1821, the Greeks declared independence from Ottoman rule, and in 1830, Belgium gained independence from the Dutch through the revolution, along with Italian, German, and Irish nationalism [49]. Social media platforms allow people to show their national belonging, share loyal content, and participate in negotiations in conjunction with their national identity. The digital channel improves nationalist communities by fostering connections and strengthening a sense of belonging among those who share similar beliefs or interests. Alter [25] noted that modern nationalism serves as both an ideology and a political movement, valuing the nation and the nation-state highly. People also see it as a tool for uniting and arranging individuals toward a common, primarily political goal. Benedict Anderson also describes how the integration of political and economic interests, along with a shared ethnic, cultural, and religious identity, united individuals into a cohesive entity known as an “imagined community” or “nation”. Nationalism embodied these influences and rallied individuals around a singular symbol, fostering a feeling of honor, acceptance, and dedication to the imagined shared benefits of the nation. Lately, scholarship on digital media has raised questions about the ability of online space to bring about a “participatory culture” [50] where formerly marginalized voices have the capacity to create alternative social and political communities [51]-[53]. Facebook, specifically, has been recognized for its involvement in recent political movements, enabling new “netizens” to actively engage in democratic politics [54]. Digital nationalism is also defined as the utilization of digital media and communication technology to boost nationalistic emotions, identity, and pride. Digital platforms using the internet can create, modify, distribute, and access all forms of media sent through electronic devices or screens. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in technology, resulting in a growing number of people utilizing the internet and actively engaging in various digital platforms worldwide [55]. The concept of digital media has the ability to overcome geographical limitations and connect nations, enhancing communication and expanding media reach. This has played a significant role in the emergence of new forms of nationalism, affecting various individuals and online communities [2]. The effect of digital media on new nationalism has had both positive and negative effects. More importantly, it has fostered a sense of civic nationalism and group attachment. Yet, it has also given rise to a dangerous form of aggressive nationalism, often observed among protest movements [56].

Presently, scholarly research is increasingly examining the influence of media and communications on the frequency and appeal of right-wing populist and nationalist rhetoric. Researchers believe that digital media, specifically social networking platforms, have contributed to the division of public conversation by creating algorithm-based “filter bubbles” [57] [58] and “echo chambers” [59] [60]. Digital nationalism, influenced by geopolitical contexts, political structures, and social media, can take various forms in South Asia and Southeast Asia, affecting the nature of nationalism and influencing offline events for both big powers and smaller countries. Information and communications technologies such as Google, Facebook, and Weibo are transforming nationalism by enabling wider participation in discourse and providing new channels for political expression, identity creation, and community building, even in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes [61]. ICT is also connected to original culturally unique approaches to managing societies together with policies of internet management [47] [62]. Digital technologies function as platforms for social interactions and media, leveraging their unique capabilities and principles. They offer both advantages and constraints for the creation, dissemination, and acceptance of nationalism. This literature study specifically examines the concept of “digital nationalism”, which is also known as “online nationalism” or “cyber nationalism”. Governmental and non-governmental entities create various forms of nationalism, known as digital nationalism, and disseminate them through the internet, including websites, blogs, and social media platforms. Its purpose is to promote specific interpretations of the nation, gather backing for specific nationalist goals, and foster a feeling of affiliation with a particular nation [63]. Fundamentally, the transformation of the internet domain name system, such as website addresses, provides an illustrative example of the continuing presence of banal nationalism in the digital realm, as well as the slow process of incorporating national identity into the digital infrastructure. The first wave of top-level domain names, beginning in the United States, categorized domains based on their purpose (e.g., .gov for government, .com for commercial, and .edu for educational). However, as the internet gained worldwide popularity, individual countries began establishing their own national or “country-level” domains (e.g., .uk for the United Kingdom, .cn for China, and .cl for Chile). Every time we browse the online environment, the constant and thoughtless promotion of these national top-level domains serves as a prime illustration of banal nationalism [2]. Scholars have extensively studied and gained substantial attention to the relationship between nationalism and digital technology in Western countries and China, particularly with the recent growth in interest in digital nationalism [47] [64]-[66]. Digital technology has been seen to have a crucial impact on the cultural politics of Iran, in conjunction with the expansion of online platforms [67]. Through the technology transformation, a number of people can make connections or communicate with others. Simply put, they can mobilize, form a group, or form a community to represent their team or country and share their experiences, ideas, and beliefs. In Cambodia, there is the National

Internet Gateway (NIG), owned by the government, that was basically planned in early 2022, yet it has been postponed [68]. The percentage of internet users in the population has significantly risen from 0.53% in 2009 to 52.6% in 2021, representing a total of 8.86 million people [69]. By 2021, Cambodia has five major telecommunications companies that offer both land-based and mobile internet services, namely Viettel, Smart Axiata, CamGSM, Xinwei Telecom, and Southeast Asia Telecom [70]. Corporations in autocratic countries like China, Singapore, and Vietnam, with ties to the government, can monitor internet users, block content, or “throttle” the internet through ISPs and government officials [71]. This mechanism will also pave the way for combating the spread of fake news or information on social media, which is beneficial because it can potentially impact the country.

Another event recently occurred in relation to the Cambodia-Laos-Vietnam Development Triangle Area (CLV-DTA) case [72]. The Phnom Penh Post highlighted that the establishment of the initiative in 1999 aimed to promote economic growth, improve infrastructure, enhance healthcare and education, ensure security, and foster socio-economic development [73]. The initiative was agreed upon by the three leaders during the 9<sup>th</sup> Cambodia-Laos-Viet Nam Summit on Development Triangle Area, which took place on November 22-23, 2016 and was led by Samdech Akka. Moha Sena The individuals mentioned are Padei Techo Hun Sen, the former Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia (now serving as the Senate President), H.E. Thongloun Sisoulith, the Prime Minister of Lao PDR, and H.E. Nguyen Xuan Phuc, the Prime Minister of Viet Nam [74]. The region of collaboration encompasses the provinces of Ratanakkiri, Stung Treng, Kratie, and Mondulkiri in Cambodia, and Attapeu, Salavan, Sekong, and Champasak in Laos, as well as Kon Tum, Gia Lai, Dak Lak, Dak Nong, and Binh Phuoc in Vietnam [73]. The heads of state of the three nations have reached an agreement to enhance cooperation between CLV-DTA and other frameworks for collaboration in the Mekong sub-region, specifically the Mekong-Japan Cooperation. This project offers numerous advantages to the three countries. However, recently, there has been a significant amount of concern and debate on social media regarding the possible territorial loss by Vietnam on Cambodia through the CLV-DTA [72]. Simultaneously, some Cambodian people mobilized in Japan, South Korea, and Australia to oppose this undertaking. This demonstrates that in the age of modern technology, false or misleading information can quickly propagate, leading to the expansion of nationalism sentiments and the emergence of public chaos. The rumors surrounding the CLV-DTA illustrate the misuse of digital platforms to spread false information through Facebook and other websites. Furthermore, experts have advocated for enhanced public instruction and openness concerning the CLV-DTA in order to prevent the dissemination of false information and guarantee that the public comprehends the true objective of the effort [74]. Therefore, it is crucial to establish a robust and effective procedure for managing and controlling social media to prevent the spread of false information or incorrect mobilization against the ruler or government, particularly in the era of digital

transformation. Today, Giant Technology Companies play a very important role in providing digital platforms and internet connections for the world. People can communicate and interact with each other in an easy way [2]. National digital ecosystems demonstrate significant variation in their level of integration with other national ecosystems and their dependence on the transnational digital infrastructure offered by the “Big Five” digital corporations, all of which are headquartered in the United States (namely, Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft). Countries that have created digital platforms that are as powerful as the “Big Five” have established more autonomous and self-reliant national digital ecosystems. It includes successful counterparts to all major Western platforms, including the search engine Baidu and social networking platforms Weibo, WeChat, and Tencent QQ, as well as e-commerce sites like Alibaba, Taobao, and JD.

## 5. Digital Identity

Generally, national identities can serve personal and internal purposes for individuals within communities. One prominent aspect is the process of socializing individuals into their roles as members of a nation and as citizens. Authorities aim to cultivate a sense of national loyalty and a unified culture through an obligatory, identical, publicly funded education system. This is a common objective pursued by many governments with great enthusiasm, driven by nationalist ideals of cultural genuineness and unity [75]. Plus, a nation is also named due to the provision of a social affiliation for both individuals and classes. By offering repertoires of shared values, symbols, and traditions in conjunction with the use of symbols such as flags, coinage, anthems, uniforms, monuments, and ceremonies, members are reminded of their shared ancestry and cultural similarity, which makes them feel empowered and uplifted by their shared sense of identification and belonging. A perception of national identity provides an effective approach for creating and identifying people’s identities within society by evaluating the collective element and unique culture. Our ability to understand is facilitated by a collective and distinctive culture of “who we are” [16].

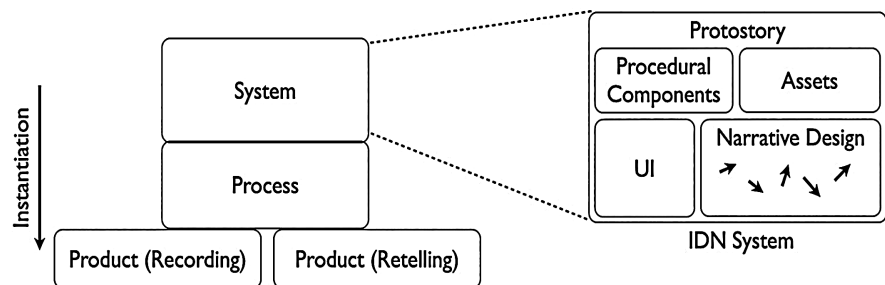
The concept of ethnicity and nationality is a political construct that enhances the ethnic notion. An imagined community is a shared image in people’s minds, even if they do not physically know each other from the same nation. Benedict Anderson’s widely accepted interpretation of a nation reinforces the dichotomy between “us” and “them”, as humans perceive their own community or nationality as distinct from other nations [46]. The “we”/“them” dichotomy, crucial for individual identification as part of a nation or excluded, must be reinforced on digital platforms, as there are no physical borders or oceans that separate nations like we find in spatial territories [76]. Language and inter-actional characteristics, especially on social media, are crucial in relating ourselves to others and identifying as “Other” [77]. The formation and individuality of a nationalist identity are molded through discourse, in which language plays a pivotal role [78] [79]. The general population is progressively recognizing themselves as a distinct collective

within a certain nation. The structure of the internet domain name system, the biased algorithms built into digital platforms, and the growth of national digital ecosystems are the three main things that keep national identity alive and normal forms of nationalism alive: the structure of the internet domain name system, the biased algorithms built into digital platforms, and the growth of national digital ecosystems. Among these options, the first one is generally recognized in current research and has been extensively studied in several contexts, including Sweden, the United States, Kazakhstan, and Türkiye [80]-[83]. The development of the internet domain name system, namely the system of website addresses, serves as a clear illustration of the enduring presence of ordinary nationalism in the digital realm and the steady process of incorporating national elements into the digital infrastructure. Digital platforms offer opportunities for individuals and groups to examine prevailing narratives of nationalism and advocate for alternative conceptions of national identity. Nation-states use digital technologies to advance their national interests and identities on a global scale, known as cyber-nationalism. It encompasses activities such as online propaganda campaigns, cyberattacks, and the deliberate manipulation of information with the aim of influencing public opinion. Online communities and echo chambers are the topics of discussion. Social media algorithms often create echo chambers, exposing individuals primarily to information and perspectives that align with their personal beliefs. This phenomenon can strengthen feelings of nationalism and result in the emergence of online communities focused on shared pride in the country [61].

## 6. Digital National Narratives

To establish the national narrative, digital play is key to storytelling. Nations use digital platforms to create and share tales about their history, culture, and accomplishments, or governments utilize official websites to disseminate carefully crafted narratives that influence residents' perceptions of their country. Moreover, educational content spread through digital technologies enables the dissemination of educational materials that reinforce the prevailing national narratives in educational institutions such as schools and universities. Schneider [47] refers to "a single, monolithic national narrative". This ensures the celebration of distinct nationalist concepts. Chinese nationalism specifically focuses on Japan, Western countries, and immigration from African nations as its "outgroups". Digital media's inherent tendency to promote narrow-minded perspectives, potentially leading to the development of a nationalistic mindset based on artificial divisions between "us" and "them", raises caution. The availability of paid advertisements or targeted messages on social media allows individuals with financial resources to effectively utilize nationalist rhetoric in order to sway people's voting preferences. The realization is that social media, online communities, and digital communication platforms significantly influence nationalist sentiments by enabling individuals to express their national identity, pride, and loyalty. They also facilitate the spread of nationalist messages, symbols, and narratives.

Throughout the course of human history, narrative has served as a means to symbolize, convey, deliberate, and transmit our understanding of the world. The narrative also has a significant impact on reality formation [84] and the formation of individual personality [85]. While digital storytelling plays a crucial role in mobilizing people in cultural heritage contexts, it can broaden the number of audiences by linking storytellers with international audiences via the internet. Interactive Digital Storytelling (IDN) is vital and offers users the opportunity to participate, make decisions, and shape historical empathy. Interactive digital narratives (IDN) offer distinct advantages in conveying complexity when compared to traditional, fixed media. This is mostly due to the unique capabilities of the internet, as outlined by Janet Murray, which include procedural, participatory, spatial, and encyclopedic affordances [86]. By digital means, it can illustrate the national narrative through images, multimedia displays, and web-based games that are used to attract audiences.



Source: Koenitz 2023 [88].

**Figure 1.** The level of System, Process, and Product (SPP) model and protostory elements.

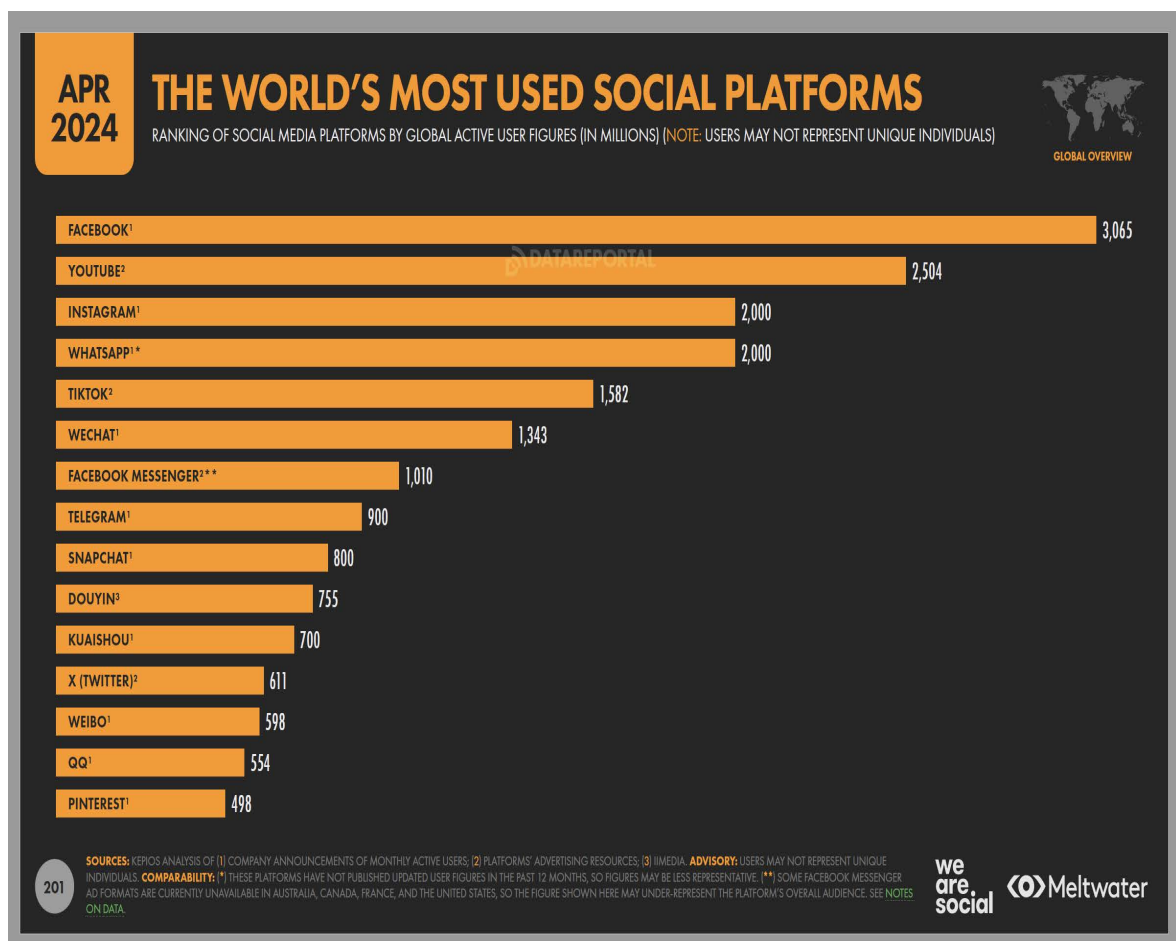
Vanoverschelde [87] emphasizes Koenitz's [88] System, Process, and Product (SPP) model (See **Figure 1**) to design narratives that incorporate tangible assets, user interfaces, and procedural components. Fixed assets include visual elements like images and 3D models, while procedural components consist of rules and algorithms [89] [90]. The narrative design can incorporate complexity by implementing initial conditions for a Complex Adaptive System (CAS), which emerged from a collaborative effort across disciplines and can have backstories in cultural heritage or political system rules [87].

Cultural heritage plays a crucial role in facilitating the transformation of individuals and maintaining societal stability. Unity is undeniable. Digital storytelling as a type of digital narrative may include a number of different ways and tools, for example, interactive stories, multimedia presentations, web-based games, etc., that address today's story in order to draw and seize the audience in many areas in a revolutionary way [91]. Innovative personalized web-based authoring tools and mobile applications are employed in that field [92] [93]. Digital technology, together with precious software applications designed to store and generate collections of cultural items, particularly in the format of audio-visual storytelling, seeks to vividly preserve customs, representations, artifacts, and testimonies

across generations, thereby enhancing community bonds. Meanwhile, through the interactive nature of an i-doc, it aims to provide immersive multimedia experiences. The swift pace of current life, technological and economic growth, and globalization have an impact on the cultural distinctiveness of the world, as illustrated through customs and events [94]. The motivation for participating in this project arises not only from the narrative techniques that develop the characters inside the tale plot, but also from the acknowledged authenticity that the interactive documentary may provide. Furthermore, the interchange approach offers younger individuals, such as those belonging to Generation Z, access to a fragmented narrative that aligns with their limited attention period [6] [95]-[97] can be considered an essential tool for telling the story in a captivating way. Many young people are accustomed to taking information in pieces and lack patience when viewing lengthy videos, videos [98]. Today, i-doc plays a key role in sharing and providing data because it is stored in a system or cloud service provider that everyone can access or get information from anywhere around the world.

Technology's potential, such as new media, has highlighted and generated novel forms of observation. The shift from passive audiences to active media users has resulted in the emergence of fragmented and autonomous niches, as individuals seek out content that aligns with their own interests [99]. Audiences adopt the phrase "media user" to refer to an individual, as opposed to the more inclusive term "audience", which encompasses a collective group [100]. Currently, interactive documentaries employ cutting-edge digital technology to depict real-life stories in either a linear or non-linear fashion [98]. So, the project's outcome is the result of a collective effort involving the creator, medium, and user, all of whom contribute to its success. The categorization of interactivity in each interactive documentary (i-doc) varies based on the capabilities of the platform, the design of the template, or the decisions made by the developer. However, a crucial component of any interactive documentary (i-doc) is the active participation of viewers, necessitating them to assume an active role in order to engage with and immerse themselves in the story [101]. For instance, Lampsakos.com introduced the i-doc "New Life" in 2013. Subsequently, they released a full-length narrative version on the same subject. Both interactive and traditional linear versions effectively convey ethnography and replicate intangible components, namely events of history, social values, traditions, ceremonies, and living impressions. As a result, they are closely linked to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, which poses unique challenges [102] [103]. The purpose of documenting is to provide an account of the ongoing existence of the "New Life" that was founded in a different location, while safeguarding and preserving the identity of the community that relocated, thereby reviving the recollection of the past. Since 1990, when Tim Berners-Lee first introduced the creation of a web browser, there has been a growing interest in identifying website users and their behavior [104]. Furthermore, the utilization of online estimation originated in the 1990s with the introduction of the initial instruments [105]. Web evaluation tools might differ in various

aspects. 1) They may be classified based on their data gathering method, which can be either page tagging or transaction-web server log file analysis; 2) They can be categorized based on the presence of their functionalities. A cloud service provider (CSP) or a local system installation can provide these tools as Software as a Service (SaaS). Additional approaches to explore involve employing web analytics tools to monitor website traffic on various platforms (such as mobile or non-mobile devices), accounting for any time delay in data gathering, and investigating the possibility of supplementary services [106]; 3) Onsite online evaluation tools analyze the actual number of visitors, engagement, interactions, and total activities of a website. Furthermore, external technologies can offer an assessment of the potential website viewership, the extent of its visibility (share of voice), and the level of online buzz [107].

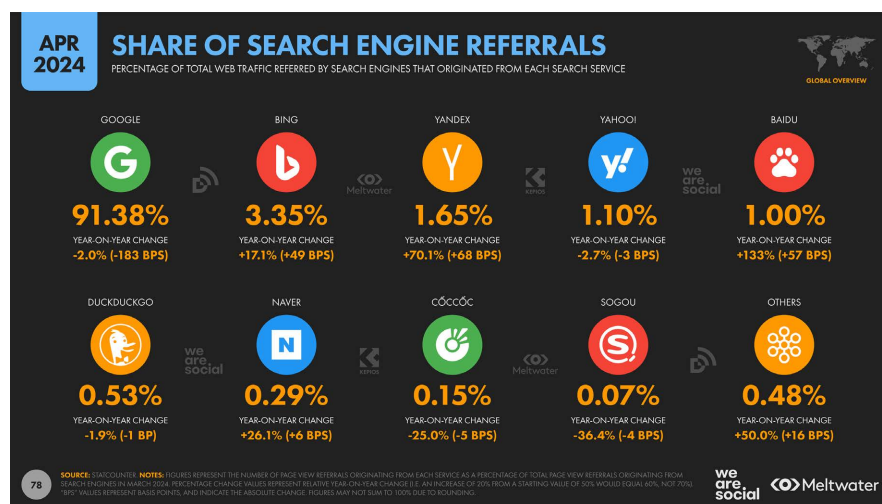


Source: Meltwater & We Are Social 2024 [108].

**Figure 2.** The world's most used social platforms.

Meltwater and We Are Social [108] have provided data on the world's most popular social media platforms (See **Figure 2**). According to their findings, Facebook is the most widely used app with approximately 3065 million users, followed by YouTube with over 2504 million users. Instagram and WhatsApp have a

similar user base, with roughly two million members each. TikTok has around 1.582 million users, while Pinterest has the lowest number of users at about 498 million. As of April 2024, Facebook has surpassed all other applications as the most popular platform for people worldwide to access and distribute stories.



Source: Meltwater & We Are Social 2024 [108].

**Figure 3.** Share of search engine referrals.

According to Meltwater and We Are Social [108], Google is the most widely used search engine, accounting for approximately 91.38% of the most-used search engine. Bing follows with around 3.35%, Yandex with 1.65%, and Yahoo! with about 1.10% (See **Figure 3**). People can use the search engine to acquire additional knowledge and education, or they can access archives containing historical narratives. In addition, they conduct further research on documents that involve history, political systems, and other relevant subjects. Additionally, they possess the capacity to store a substantial number of documents, narrative stories, and events from all over the world.

## 7. Conclusion

Nationalism has spread around the world through political and ethnic movements to gain independence from rulers or imperialism. Before nationalism emerged, the concept of a nation existed; the term “nation” is significantly older than nationalism. The dissemination of information via TV, newspapers, magazines, books, TV, films, and radio played a significant role in the rise of traditional nationalism. Industrial and digital transformation, however, have an impact on digital nationalism, digital identity, and national narrative. Notably, digital technology, particularly the use of social media algorithms, has transformed nationalism via Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, TikTok, etc., together with the provision of internet platforms by giant technology companies such as Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft, which have developed the traditional nationalism to digital nationalism movement around the world. These algorithms

empower users to create online spaces where they primarily encounter content that reinforces their pre-existing beliefs, particularly those associated with nationalism. But sometimes, political parties can use social media platforms to specifically target voters with nationalist rhetoric, or social movements can use encrypted messaging applications to effectively organize protests. Therefore, it is crucial to control the spread of fake news to prevent the misguided mobilization of people with networked nationalism, which could potentially lead to chaos or violence in a country. Today, the internet facilitates the connection of individuals residing in different countries, allowing them to interact and bond over a common national identity. It demonstrates the power and influence of digital technology in promoting nationalism and identity, as well as highlighting the global narrative of nationalism through social media, applications, websites, and i-docs. It also illustrates how online networks, through Interactive Digital Narratives (IDN) and storytelling, can shape national narratives, fostering a sense of digital nationalism, national identity, and the nation's story.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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