

## Shady Online User Behavior in Marketing: The Interrelations of Management Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Online digital systems are driving the growth of economies, but they have also given rise to problematic online user behavior. Online shady practices are a threat to social cohesion, yet they persist and evade legal detection. To promote a healthy and inclusive digital environment, there is a need for further research to understand the interplay between culture, legislation, and online user behavior. This study aims to examine the interrelations between socio-cultural settings, cyber policies, and online user behavior. It explores the effectiveness of current policy measures and posits possible ways for promoting a healthy and inclusive digital environment. The study employs a narrative review of literature to understand the interplay between culture, legislation, and online user behavior. The findings highlight the influence of cultural settings on online user behavior and the interconnectedness of legislation, culture, and online interactions. The emphasis on the need for context-specific approaches and inclusive policymaking methodologies to foster a healthy and inclusive digital environment were the knowledge gaps identified that warrant further research. Understanding the interplay between cultural settings, legislation, and online user behavior provides valuable insights for practitioners and researchers to look more into a culturally sensitive safe digital space.

### INTRODUCTION

Social media and e-commerce have played a significant role in driving the growth of emerging economies through online interactions, both social and economic (Noor Azina & Muhammad Mehedi, 2020). The widespread availability of internet access and the growth of social media and e-commerce have had a significant impact on emerging economies, facilitating online interactions and generating vast amounts of data (World Bank, 2018). However, along with the benefits, these developments have also led to challenges, particularly in relation to the behaviors and practices exhibited by certain internet users within online communities. Shady practices such as "rubble rousing," cancel culture, disinformation, and

deceptive online behaviors undermine social cohesion and democratic values. These practices often intertwine with disinformation, fake news, hoaxes, trolling, doxing, spoofing, hacktivism, and the use of pseudo untraceable online identities that mimic real individuals (Lubin & Townley, 2020) ; Paterson, (2019); Lim, 2017). Despite their potential to undermine social-political cohesiveness and democratic well-being, these problematic practices continue to persist and evade legal detection (Lubin & Townley, 2020), Paterson, 2018). While some measures have been implemented to address these issues, there is a need for further research to understand the interplay between culture, legislation, and online user behavior in order to promote a healthy and inclusive digital environment.

An illustrative example of the impact of such practices can be observed in Indonesia's social media landscape, where rubble rousing was prevalent and fuelled divisive opinions, religious intolerance, sectarianism, and racism for political gain. These dynamics eventually culminated in a series of mass demonstrations between 2016 and 2017 (Paterson, 2018; Lim, 2017). Similarly, in the United States, the amplification of opposing viewpoints on crucial issues through online platforms led to Islamophobic, intolerant, and racist demonstrations and counter-demonstrations in Texas, with some participants openly carrying firearms and engaging in verbal confrontations (Lubin & Townley, 2020). Investigations into similar incidents revealed extensive devious social media activities that circulated divisive content, through fake personas as responsible for posting content that pushed both sides of contentious issues on social media platforms like Twitter (Lubin & Townley, 2020). Such events further fuelled discourse on online social media, driven by chatbots, trolls, and buzzers, and characterized by the dissemination of divisive content centered around intolerance, radical nationalism, and racism, which are a threat to democratic principles and freedoms.

The cancel culture phenomenon, which involves exerting social pressure on individuals or groups accused of offensive actions or statements, with the aim of isolating them culturally (Norris, 2021)), is a prevalent practice on social media platforms and often involves deceptive online behaviors, including hacktivism, trolling, fake identities, and spoofing, to advance online activist agendas. Following a defamation case against one Prita who in an email to relatives and friends complained about the services of a particular hospital, Indonesian netizens called-out at the court case through a Facebook profile made for the purpose fundraising for legal expenses for Prita who won the case (Lim, 2017). It remains uncertain whether these social media callouts influenced the justice system or impacted the court's verdict. These instances demonstrate how online user behaviors and practices can spill over into the real world, yielding potentially threatening consequences to social order. It is worth noting that much of the online content circulated originates from questionable sources and is strategically injected into genuine public discourse to sow discord within communities.

Studies into problematic online user behavior and its interrelation with culture, the law and policy have recently become more numerous across the various disciplines. Practitioners and academics from disciplines including law (Klonick, 2020, Lubin & Townley, 2020), psychology (Kozyreva et al., 2020), social science (Rauschnabel et al., 2019; Ren et al., 2012), communication and media (Flew et al., 2019) and business (Guo et al., 2020; Chen & Shen, 2015) have conducted studies on the topic, which demonstrates how multidisciplinary it is.

Despite many of these shady practices and behaviors violating national and international laws, perpetrators often evade legal consequences. This partly due to the nature

of these practices that in most instances elude the law because they lack a clear-cut label that categorizes them as illegal. To address such issues, numerous organizations and governments have implemented policy measures aimed at countering such shady online behaviors. However, some of these measures have faced scrutiny due to concerns about their potential to compromise the very freedoms they aim to protect. Several countries, including Indonesia, have enacted cyber laws that align with the laws of other nations to form an international legal framework for engagement in cyberspace (Kittichaisaree, 2017). Major corporations such as Google, Facebook, and Twitter, which facilitate billions of connections through their platforms, have also introduced policy measures to regulate user behavior. The overarching goal of these policies is to ensure "decency" in online interactions, although the interpretation of what constitutes decent behavior varies depending on cultural and contextual settings (Bohanon, 2016).

In Indonesia, the main legal instrument governing cyber activities is the Law Number 11 of 2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE), which was later revised as Law Number 19 of 2016. The implementation of this law often involves cooperation with the Criminal Code for prosecuting criminal cases (Paterson, 2019; Nugraha & Putri, 2016). Additionally, Indonesian authorities have undertaken efforts to enhance digital literacy among the population, enabling them to identify potential problematic online behavior and content. The Ministry of Information collaborates with various agencies, civil society organizations, and volunteers to monitor the internet for suspicious activities. Furthermore, weekly briefings are held to keep the public informed about trending harmful online activities (Paterson, 2018). Social media organizations like Google, Facebook, and Twitter have also taken steps to curb deceptive practices, including revising their user policies, deactivating non-compliant accounts and groups, verifying user identities, and collaborating with local news outlets to fact-check posted news items.

This study aims at examining interrelations linked to socio-cultural and economic settings and on online user behavior within emerging economies, and how cyber laws and policies shape online user behaviors and practices in virtual communities. The study will also explore the interrelationships between culture, legislation, and online user behavior to understand the challenges and opportunities associated with online interactions. The study will further look into the effectiveness of current policy measures and posit possible ways for promoting a healthy and inclusive digital environment.

We conduct a narrative review of literature on online user behavior, cyber laws and policies, and explore the socio-cultural settings of online users to better understand the interrelations that interweave culture, legislation, policy, and online user behavior and virtual communities. Understanding these interrelationships is crucial in the current era of rapid expansion of internet networks and communication platforms that facilitate global collaboration across cultures, policies, and legislation (Wu et al., 2012). To achieve this, we employ a narrative literature review approach that we incorporate cross-analytical examination techniques and explore cultural and policy considerations associated with online interactions using etic research approaches. The etic research approach focuses on cross-cultural differences, aiming to identify relevant characteristics, similarities, and variations in the interplay between culture, cyber legislation, and online user behavior (Guo et al., 2020; Monteagut, 2017). The use of etic research techniques helps uncover variations that may not be apparent within a single social setting, highlighting knowledge gaps and conceptual issues

that warrant further investigation in future research. The comparison aspect of etic research is essential for effectively deducing findings, as it involves comparing multiple aspects to understand human behavior and development better (Green & White, 1976). This suits well with this study's objective of understanding online user behavior and its relationship to culture and law.

Given the limited availability of literature on the interrelationships between cyber policy, law, culture, and online user behavior and communities, this study fills a crucial gap by paving the way for further exploration in the field. It identifies shortcomings in existing research and emphasizes the importance of employing etic research approaches to study online user behavior and communities across cultures and in multicultural settings (Guo et al., 2020; Ur and Wang, 2013). For the purposes of this study, the term "online community" encompasses various forms of online groups, including but not limited to interest-oriented groups, practical activities-oriented groups, online collaborations, and other types of online interactions (Hsiao & Chiou, 2017); Brodie et al., 2013; (Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). It is important to note that motivations and orientations virtual communities may differ significantly among individuals and communities. By considering a broad array of online community types, this study expands the understanding of how policy, culture, and legislation interrelate with online user behavior and virtual communities.

## **Literature Review**

### *Online User Behaviour and Interaction*

Actions, practices, and attitudes exhibited by individuals while engaging in online activities within virtual communities make up online user behavior and interaction (Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). User behavior in online settings can vary greatly among cultures. Etic research approaches as used in empirical research by (Guo et al., 2020), and as in theoretical studies by (Gallagher & Savage, 2013), can aid in better understanding of these cultural differences. Cultural variations can influence how people are motivated and engage in online communities (Vitkauskaite, 2016), what information they contribute to the community (Ren et al., 2007), the knowledge that is shared, how cultures perceive user policies in online settings (Wu et al., 2012), and the extent and nature of cultural exchange (Wang & Chen, 2012). By understanding the distinctions in cultures, the fundamental challenges in online user behavior can be better comprehended (Seraj, 2012). This understanding is critical for anyone working in the field as insights from etic perspectives can guide appropriate courses of action for academia, policymakers, and corporations (Rui & Stefanone, 2013).

Etic research approaches when applied to the study of online user behavior, including deceptive actions, can also be valuable in gathering intelligence, identifying problematic practices and behavior, managing society and drafting legislation and policy as demonstrated in a theoretical study by (Malinen, 2015). In another theoretical study, Wu et al. (2012) explored the interplay between culture, policies, and legislation in the context of internet networks and communication platforms, emphasizing the need for global collaboration and understanding across cultures. In a similar study, Bohanon, (2016) examined the interpretation of "decency" in online interactions, highlighting the variations depending on cultural and contextual settings. With many people from diverse cultural backgrounds increasingly interacting online, bound together by common interests, cultural awareness is

becoming a focal point for organizations aiming to access more people across cultural boundaries (Ren et al., 2012).

#### *Cyber law, Legislation, and policy*

Legal regulations and frameworks implemented by governments and organizations to govern and control activities in cyberspace constitute cyber law, legislation, and policy (Kittichaisaree, 2017). The majority of policy and regulatory instruments controlling online interactions have been put in place by national governments and intergovernmental efforts, but the bulk of them emanate from organizations that operate online platforms. The Indonesian government enacted Law Number 11 of the year 2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) the country's cyber law and main regulatory framework for cyber activities (Nugraha & Putri, 2016). The law was later revised as Law Number 19 of the year 2016, it is usually implemented in conjunction with the local criminal law (KUHP). In a policy analysis study, Paterson (2018) points out that despite Indonesia's lack of laws protecting online user data, the country curbs shady practices by online users in its cyberspace by working with social media companies like Google and local actors to combat fake news by verifying news items, compelled Facebook and Twitter to take more action to combat disinformation. These measures mostly aim at preventing cybercrime and other online activities deemed criminal, devious, deceptive, and indecent or generally undesirable depending on the online platform and the location of the user. In the same study Paterson further notes that the information ministry holds weekly briefings aimed at sensitising the masses on how to identify and avoid problematic cyber activity, in addition to working with other agencies civil society and volunteers to monitor the internet for shady activities.

In an empirical study, (Gallagher & Savage, 2013) noted that Facebook for instance unveiled a document that could pass for a template for oversight of social media interaction, calling for the establishment of an independent entity to oversee social media. Moreover, in the same study, the leaders of New Zealand and France committed to combating online terrorism related activities which was endorsed by more than a dozen countries and eight big tech companies and key players in the global technological field (Gallagher & Savage, 2013).

In a law review, Lubin & Townley, (2020) examined the amplification of opposing viewpoints on online platforms, focusing on the United States and the role of social media activities in fuelling demonstrations and counterdemonstrations with divisive content. Furthermore, Lubin & Townley, (2020) concluded that the only feasible solution to devious practices like rubble rousing and disinformation involves public awareness efforts as exemplified by the Finnish government that developed a policy to help sensitize public officials and the masses about these issues, similar stances were adopted by other countries that include Israel, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Ukraine.

#### *Online Community and Culture*

The liberal use of the term "community" is due to the contrast of social groups defined by geography, affiliation and or bound together by shared interests or aims, even if they do not share a geographical location. (Lara-Hernandez & Chin, 2022; McGinn, 2017). Foster, (2013), bases on psychologist Sarason's theory of community to refer to online communities as people who share similar interests or share a common goal, with their interactions overseen by policies framed into regulations, procedures, routines, norms, and laws who use digital

systems to conduct social interaction in a manner that enables fellowship. This assertion puts law, policy and cultural norms as definitive of online communities.

(Shakya et al., 2017) examined the evolution of online communities, and pointed out that each has its own set of goals and motivations for its members indicating the community's influence on members' behavior. Moreover, they further note that some online communities are hybrid-style communities whose activities and members' behaviors are replicated in the real physical world.

In an empirical study, (Zou et al., 2016) found that individualistic characteristics of virtual communities, as need-based affiliation, separate them from conventional communities with innate regulatory frameworks that nurture a basic system. This finding reinforces regulation as an intrinsic element of online communities. Barrett, (2015) investigation found that online community members profess solidarity and kindness, but dread the prospect of true intimacy, which could metaphorically imply that virtual community offers solidarity that is free from commitment. This finding suggests that members' actions are their prerogative, which rests the decision making with individuals. The online community notion is criticised by (Preoțiu-Pietro & Cohn, 2013) who assert that it is an adulterated form of attempts to model some areas of community constructs. This puts light on the fluidity of any community elements inherent in online communities.

Talking about networking, the community comes into consideration, as network studies link with empirical approaches to social structure (Shakya et al., 2017). There is scarce literature on how policy and cultural influences shape the beliefs and behaviors of social actors who engage in building trust online. The Internet allows for socialization with less or no regard to location, assisting in the transformation of community bonds into networked groups with fluid boundaries (Johnson et al., 2015). Practitioners argue that individualized networking seeks to maximize interests, and that online communities are just fluid conglomerations of these kind of individualized, manifestations (Foster, 2013). This individualist approach to the argument, deprives the notion of community of its collectively feel, thus philosophically, society morphs into the perspective and augmentation of the individual (Foster, 2013). Much study has been conducted along the line of thought focusing on the internet's contribution to a growing public virtual space for public discourse (Brodie et al., 2013). There are assertions conceptually, society through the lens of individualism and rationalism as opposed to the embedded mutual dependency inherent in the common definition of community (Foster, 2013).

Observers have noted that the politically oriented online discussion has been ironically permeated by rhetorical expressions of community and charged-up individualism (Adwimurti et al., 2022). The prevailing scholarly trend appears to abandon the idea of community as an 'imaginary' concept full of assumptions and leaning towards libertarian individualism that pervades social interactions and overbearing in the social system (Yuan, 2013). Researchers urge for fresh and culture-free conceptualizations of online community as a means of paradigm shifting development in the study of online social interactions (Lockard, 2013), which is inextricably linked to the West's vast sociocultural framework. The rational-choice focus on the person and his or her self-interest is fundamental to this environment (Lockard, 2013). Some practitioners are calling for conceptualizing online community without culture in an emergent paradigm shift in online social interactions research, a notion that is inextricably linked to a broader Western sociocultural setting, which leans more to the individualistic social

order (Gruzd et al., 2016).

The study examines existing literature on cyber policy, law and culture and their interrelation with shady behavior of online users. To achieve this, the following questions were formulated to guide this study.

- Do cultural settings shape online user behaviors and practices?
- Does legislation, policy and culture have a role in shaping online user interactions?
- How do culture, legislation, and online user behavior interrelate to influence online interactions?
- What are the effectiveness and limitations of current policy measures in promoting a healthy and inclusive digital environment, and what recommendations can be proposed to address these limitations?

By addressing the above questions, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of the complex dynamics between culture, legislation, and online user behavior, and provide insights for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to promote a more positive and inclusive online environment.

A lot of studies have been conducted that focus mainly on cybercrime, cyber law and policy online user behavior and online communities, but few exist that are dedicated to studying how these aspects are interrelated. More to that, this study shades light on dubious online practices that have evaded detection and classification as illegal activities and thus continue to pose a threat to social harmony. The findings of this study could be instrumental in better understanding of online user behavior and could be useful reference material in efforts of tackling dubious online practices that existing laws and policies may not have been able to address effectively.

## **METHOD**

### *Literature search and scope*

In conducting this literature view, we aimed to find and review scholarly works on online communities and how culture, policy, and legislation influence them. Relevant publications were sought using online academic databases. Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, SpringerLink, and Science Direct were among them. Only peer reviewed English language publications published between 2012 and the end of 2022 were sought. Keywords and or search phrases used either as a phrase or single word to identify the works from the databases included online community, virtual community, social networking, online culture, cyber law, cyber policy, online user policy. These terms were searched for during October, February and July of 2021/2022. References of the articles that were initially identified in the search were also searched for any other works to be included.

### *Selection of Literature Included in the Review*

To ensure effective selection and identification of relevant material for reviewing in this study involved using some specific guidelines. Up to 38 works were included in this literature review, they had to meet the following criteria in order to be considered:

- The works are about examining some features of online users and communities and perspectives from two or more different cultural settings, whether via the use of online user data or by the investigation of attitudes on some aspect of online users.

- The works look at data or perspectives on internet user behavior in especially in online communities and social media.
- The study involves looking at areas of cyber law, policy, and regulation that influence online user behavior, whether by using online user data or by the investigation of opinions on some aspect of online user interactions. Generally, governments and or other entities are viewed as policymaking units.
- The factors listed above are applicable to any study subject or idea.

*Analysis Process*

Works selected from the search were studied, and important content was then placed into matrices of concepts (Snyder, 2019) for comparison, categorization, and information extraction. The matrix included thematic elements of concepts that were used to seek out similar and different arguments across the studies, such as approaches employed, cultural concepts, policy issues noted, online communities studied, and online user behavioral patterns noted. The studied publications are shown in Table 1. Thematic elements developed from this matrix and its analysis of the selected literature formed the basis for the discussion of this study.

Table 1. Recapped results from the matrices of concepts of the literature reviewed

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Works</b>	<b>Approaches Employed</b>	<b>Thematic elements</b>
Wu et al. (2012)	The effect of online privacy policy on consumer privacy concern and trust.	Model development and testing	Cultural impact on privacy
Brown & Poellet, (2012)	The customary international law of cyberspace.	Law review	International law, Customary law
Seraj, M. (2012)	We Create, We Connect, We Respect, Therefore We Are: Intellectual, Social, and Cultural Value in Online Communities.	Netnography and online ethnography	Community participation, cultural value, intellectual value
Wang and Chen (2012)	Forming relationship commitments to online communities: The role of social motivations.	Hypothesis testing	motivations and commitment in Online communities
Ren et al. (2012)	Building member attachment in online communities: Applying theories of group identity and interpersonal bonds	Social science theory-inspired features	Relationships in online groups
Stuart et al. (2012)	Social transparency in networked information exchange: a theoretical framework.	Model development for social analysis	Social transparency, computer-supported collaboration
Bertot et al., (2012)	The impact of polices on government social media usage: Issues, challenges, and recommendations.	Policy review	Policy and regulatory framework, social media use
(Hüsch, 2024)	International law in cyberspace	Law review	International law

Anderson et al. (2013)	Steering user behavior with badges.	Model development and testing	Influencing online user behavior, content moderation
Park (2013).	Digital literacy and privacy behavior online.	Hierarchical regression models to analyze samples	Online behavior, privacy, digital literacy
(Gallagher & Savage, 2013)	Cross-cultural analysis in online community research: A literature review.	Comparative cross-cultural analysis	Methodological issues in cross-cultural research
Edwards et al., (2013).	Digital social research, social media and the sociological imagination: Surrogacy, augmentation and re-orientation.	Model development for social analysis	Digital social research, Social process, digital social observatory
(Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil et al., 2013)	No country for old members: User lifecycle and linguistic change in online communities.	Conceptual framework development	Participation and behavioral change in online communities
Rui and Stefanone (2013)	Strategic self-presentation online: A cross-cultural study.	Cross-cultural study	Online behavior
Ur and Wang (2013)	A cross-cultural framework for protecting user privacy in online social media.	Analytical framework development and testing	Online cross-cultural privacy, online privacy policy
Braman, (2013)	The geopolitical vs. the network political: Internet designers and governance.	Internet design and geopolitical analysis	Internet governance, design, privacy, new citizenship
Zheng et al. (2013)	The impacts of information quality and system quality on users' continuance intention in information-exchange virtual communities: An empirical investigation.	Research framework development	Online user behavior, system quality
Shepherd and Landry (2013)	Technology design and power: Freedom and control in communication networks.	Research and policy review	Interplay between Internet law, policy, control, freedom
Sun, Rau and Ma (2014)	Understanding lurkers in online communities: A literature review.	Model development	Motivation for online group participation
Grabner-Kräuter & Bitter, (2015).	Trust in online social networks: A multifaceted perspective.	Concepts on trust and social capital	Role of trust in online communities
Malinen, (2015)	Understanding user participation in online communities: A systematic literature review of empirical studies.	Theoretical and conceptual review	Active participation, online communities
(Chen & Shen, 2015)	Consumers' decisions in social commerce context: An empirical investigation.	Research model development and testing	Social sharing, community

			commitment, influenced behavior
Vitkauskaitė (2016)	Cross-cultural issues in social networking sites: Review of research.	Cross-cultural analysis	cross-cultural issues in social networking
Centivany (2016)	Values, Ethics and Participatory Policymaking in Online Communities.	Participatory policymaking review	Participatory policymaking Interrelationship in platform design, practice, and policymaking
Yardley et al., (2016)	Understanding and promoting effective engagement with digital behavior change interventions.	Model development and testing	Online behavior change, online participation
Rebaza (2017)	Mining user behavior in location-based social networks.	Theoretical development	User behavior analysis
Barth and De Jong (2017)	The privacy paradox— Investigating discrepancies between expressed privacy concerns and actual online behaviour—A systematic literature review.	Review of theories	User behavior, privacy, personal data protection
Klonick, (2018)	The new governors: The people, rules, and processes governing online speech.	Law and policy review	Online speech content moderation
Mansell (2017)	Bits of power: Struggling for control of information and communication networks.	Policy review, ethnographic analysis	Policy, institutionalism, network neutrality, citizenship
(Shelepov & Kolmar, 2024)	Regulation of and by platforms.	Law and policy review	Internet regulation
Mahmoudi et al., (2018)	New time-based model to identify the influential users in online social networks.	Considerations of user engagement over time	Influential users as shapers of behavioral change in online communities
Kim & Hastak, (2018)	Social network analysis: Characteristics of online social networks after a disaster.	Social network analysis	Social networks in emergency situations
Wellman and Gulia (2018).	Net-surfers don't ride alone: Virtual communities as communities.	Cross-cultural study	Social ties online
Seering et al. (2019)	Moderator engagement and community development in the age of algorithms.	Model development and testing	Content moderation, online community behavior
(Kalia et al., 2019)	Using social networking sites: A qualitative cross-cultural comparison.	Dimensional modeling in cultures and behavior	Cultural influence on online behavior

Rehman et al., (2023)	Identification and role of opinion leaders in information diffusion for online discussion network.	Quantification of user engagement and time	Group opinion leaders influencing other group members
(Lubin & Townley, 2020)	The International Law of Rabble Rousing.	Legal review	International law, Cyber law

## Findings

In laying out the results, we give explanations on the connection of the key elements and make comparisons in the reviewed studies with focus on the aspects of policy, cultures, and online communities. Initially we bring out more broad topics and progress to explore results of relevance and offer a categorization of the literature based on the analysis. We reviewed 42 works in total that we found satisfactory from the earlier noted selection criteria. Table 1 presents a summed-up arrangement of the reviewed studies highlighting the author(s) and year of publication, the approaches employed in the study, and the thematic considerations relevant to this review. For purposes of noting any conceptual progressions over time, the works were arranged in chronological order (years only) considering the earlier published first. Most of the thematic elements in many of the studies reviewed revealed interplays and relationships between culture, policy, law and online user behavior. As a result, the reviewing was guided by the three thematic elements of policy, culture, and online user behavior, which also served as the basis for the discussion of this study and central to the questions this research seeks to address. The results of the review are explained in the sections that follow.

Cultural settings significantly influence online user behavior, shaping the practices and attitudes exhibited by individuals. Different cultural issues were examined through thematic and conceptual areas as previously mentioned. Most of the reviewed studies (n = 18) had mainly cultural themes interrelating with other aspects such as social ties, privacy, trust, commitment, and participation. Culture, legislation, and online user behavior are interconnected, and their interplay influences online interactions. The results indicated that in analyzing cultural issues in online communities, cross-cultural research approaches were used in 23 of the works reviewed either as a main concept or as a subtle point of reference. This demonstration of this approach reaffirms the key role of examining issues across diverse cultures given that the internet cuts across many cultures and the possibility of having members from diverse cultures in online communities is very high.

Laws and policies play a crucial role in shaping online behaviors and practices within virtual communities, but their effectiveness may vary across different cultural contexts. The other reviewed studies (n = 14) used internet policy-oriented themes that were interlinked with aspects such as policymaking, law, regulatory frameworks, control, governance, privacy, and content moderation. From the results, issues of policy and law were referred to in 19 of the studies reviewed. This is because in a basic sense, every online platform will always have policies, rules, and regulations to ensure guidance of the online activities, therefore it may be difficult to have any online forums going without some policies in place.

Current policy measures have limitations in promoting a healthy and inclusive digital environment, and there is a need for context-specific approaches that consider cultural nuances. It was found that the 5 studies that mainly featured policy pointed out that the governance and control aspect is a threat to online freedom.

Culture, legislation, and online user behavior are interconnected, and their interplay influences online interactions and the challenges faced within virtual communities. The rest of the literature reviewed (n = 10) had a blend of the themes mainly linking with internet user behavior and interrelating with policy and regulation, content moderation, cultural influences, participation, trust, and commitment. In the results, the topic of the online behavior aspect appeared repeatedly in many of the works reviewed. Both community or group behavior and individual behavior were interrelated with many other aspects such as commitment, content moderation, participation, privacy etc. The behavioral element was one of the most cross-cutting aspect discussed in the literature reviewed, and it is also a core aspect in the structure of this study.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Cultural settings influence online user behavior, shaping the practices and attitudes exhibited by individuals. Seraj (2012) also agrees and points out that social-cultural factors that affect how members perceive social externalities and social norms of an online community are vital to their participatory behavior patterns in online interactions. Etic research approaches as employed by Guo et al., (2020) were instrumental in examining cross-cultural analysis explaining interrelations between aspects revealing that rules, regulations and norms are intrinsic to culture, which shapes online user behavior. More to that, Seraj (2012) points out that community members' commitment to a community directly relies on social norms, social interaction ties, and interpersonal trust in online communities. This is similar to the position held by Seering et al., (2019) and Rehman et al., (2023) that a community moderator's role to invoke frequency in member participation in online community activities impacts their behavior. Anderson et al., (2013) concurs that members of online communities tend to have recommended behavior which may create a norm, this brings new members to the community and inspire them to participate frequently this kind of peer pressure also contributes to behavior in online communities. Much as cultural aspects are central in influencing online user behaviour, this review found that various other factors interrelate with cultural factors to influence and impact online user behavior and interactions. There are some externalities and subjective norms that are antecedental to online behavior, social interactions and ties. Wang and Chen (2012) concur with this point of view by noting that technological factors are crucial in influencing online user behavior. Technological perspectives, such as ease-of-use, enhance interactions and behavior in online communities. However, Foster, (2013) study slightly differs with this position by asserting that conceptually, society manifests through the lens of individualism and rationalism as opposed to the embedded mutual dependency inherent in the common definition of community. Since cultural norms are definitive of community, Foster here suggests that online communities despite their innate rules and norms may have little to no influence on the actions of their members. This can be construed that it is an individual online user's choice to act and behave in a particular way, not necessarily influenced by the cultural settings of their community.

Legislation, Culture, and online user behavior are interconnected, and their interplay influences online interactions and the challenges faced within virtual communities. Broadhurst & Chang, (2013) pointed out that policy 'resides' at the very top of internet regulation governance and control as it influences platform design and inline group/community formation. They further noted that many cyber laws are derived from

national and international policies for example all Asian and Pacific countries signatories to the 2001 Council of Europe (CoE) Budapest Convention on Cybercrime that created legal foundation for enforcing cybercrime through aligning with local legislation and policies in individual countries. This links local cyber policy to international policy. Centivany, (2016) noted that approaches to internet policy provide complementary avenues for dealing with the moral and ethical components of user interaction with online systems. Morals and ethics are aspects present in both culture and law, which also link with behavior. In the same light, (Hariyadi et al., 2023) noted that policymaking procedures, especially during times of controversy, have been found to give key hints about the interplay of values and ethics in the development of current online systems. (Hariyadi et al., 2023) continues that the mechanisms of policymaking can be used to unravel and reverse search how online systems development evolved, which reveals how they impact user choices and online behaviour. An online community without a user policy, control, governance and moderation is comparable to a country without a legal system (Klonick, 2018). It is difficult to sustain a culture if its participants do not understand its philosophy and limitations. As a result, it is vital for an online community culture to explicitly define its regulations and cultural norms for reference and self-government purposes (Seraj, 2012). The trust that this fosters in social interactions enhances the likelihood that members will remain loyal to and of commendable conduct in their communities and attain value from them. This includes influencing members' online behavior and interactions.

Laws and policies play a crucial role in shaping online user behaviors and practices in virtual communities, but their effectiveness may vary across different cultural contexts. In an empirical study, Wu et al. (2012) found that policy and social interaction have a significant impact on whether values warrant sensitivity and attention or how those concerns translate into action and practice. Approaches to internet policy provide complementary avenues for dealing with the moral and ethical components of our common user interaction with online systems. In the same light, noted that policymaking procedures, especially during times of controversy, have been shown to give key hints about the interplay of values and ethics in the development of current online systems. More to that, Centivany, (2016) put it that the mechanisms of policymaking can be used to unravel and reverse search how online systems development evolved, which reveals how they impact user choices and behaviour online. This also explains the rationale behind online user behaviour. Online group moderators' actions have a lot with impacting online behavior (Park et al., 2014).

Current policy measures have limitations in promoting a healthy and inclusive digital environment, and there is a need for context-specific approaches that consider cultural nuances. Moreover, interventions to institute tighter measures have been interpreted as infringement of freedom of expression, a compromise of personal data, and an infringement on privacy. The studies of (Land, 2013), Zheng (2013), Soldatov (2017), Meserve & Pemstein, (2020) have revealed that many countries around the world censor the internet, block or restrict access to certain platforms and or the internet because of political, moral, religious or ethical reasons, such blockings are often part of the law of the land. On a similar note, (Akgül & Kırıldoğ, 2015), (Land, 2013) and Zheng (2013) note that Countries like China, North Korea and Iran are known for blocking certain websites and platforms mainly for political reasons, and Saudi Arabia, Turkey Indonesia, Somalia and many others block access to adult content websites for moral and religious reasons. In many instances governments in India, Ethiopia

and Uganda completely shut down internet connections for certain periods or in particular regions of their territory for political reasons and 'national security' reasons (Soldatov, 2017; Meserve & Pemstein, 2020, & Pemstein, 2020). These kinds of actions are also accompanied by prosecutions and or persecutions of users for what they interact online even if they are located in different countries. The law in such countries is used to control online users' behaviours as users have to carefully choose who they interact with and how or what they interact about, these choices may not be of the users free will but conditioned (Barth & de Jong, 2017). Iosifidis, (2021) asserted that the issue of others deciding how users should behave is a rather controversial notion in this current state of the world where inclusiveness is held in high regard. However, controversial issues set off thoughts and means of interplaying the complexities in policy, morals, values, ethical issues, and digital technological design elements, and how they influence internet users, online communities and external critics (Centivany, 2016). Controversial issues make a possible starting point for the adaptation of inclusive policymaking methodologies, with the goal of contributing to a better understanding of the complex interrelations between cultural issues and policy (Centivany, 2016). Corbett and Walker (2013) examined the role of inclusiveness and the impact of participatory policymaking approaches discovered that inclusive participatory initiatives serve as information providers for the policymaking process that enables policymakers reach informed decisions. This is reaffirmed by (Mansell, 2017) who put it that the opinions of online communities have unconditional influence in deciding the administration of an online platform, participatory policymaking will have come full circle as this will represent the integration of the community's values into online platform design.

Platform builders believe that freedom of expression is a fundamental value on their platform, so a user has a choice to engage or avoid objectionable content, which is a relatively small price to pay for providing a free and open online platform for social interaction. In such a situation, users have a choice of what content or other users to interact with. However, the same choices are not open to users in some countries who cannot even access some platforms or an internet connection because of their countries' laws and policies.

The studies of (Lubin & Townley, 2020), Paterson (2018) and (Lim, 2017) have demonstrated that dubious online behavior persists and practiced in realms where cyber legislation and rules exist implying that local and international legislation or platform policies and rules do little to compel online users to behave in a particular way. This is in line with Foster's (2013) assertion that individualism and rationalism always have a heavy hand in online user behavior. Foster here suggests that online communities despite their innate rules and norms may have little to no influence on the actions of their members.

### **Limitations in the Reviewed literature and Recommendations**

There were some methodological considerations worth noting when studying cultural influences. Certain issues in the analysis of cultural aspects in online user behavior and communities, including aspects like the research samples, country selection, number of cultures examined, participant types, and data interpretation cannot be taken as sufficiently representative of all the parameters necessary for better analysis of the topic at hand. The review found that in many studies, countries were chosen as the standard unit of culture, which may not accurately represent the overall online user population. This methodological limitation could hinder the accurate assessment of changes in perceived online user behavior

resulting from these studies. For example, investigating cultural and economic elements in France and Kenya would reveal numerous distinctions, encompassing social, economic, ethnic, tribal, belief, and geographic factors.

The review also identified patterns in the data used, with a high number of studies relying on data sets and online user metrics compiled by online platforms. Government data or data from independent bodies not affiliated with online platforms or policymakers were rarely utilized. While these online user metrics are publicly available, it would be interesting to compare the results with data independent from platforms or policy makers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of user engagement and behavior online. Future studies should consider incorporating online user metrics provided independently by non-online policymaking authorities.

Some studies selected communities based on their level of online community engagement, often favoring larger and more active communities over smaller groups. While larger communities can be ideal research data sources, smaller and more isolated groups can provide valuable insights into user engagement, behavior, and interaction. Further studies should give more consideration to analyzing small online groups. The number of online communities selected can also influence the research outcomes regarding online user behavior.

Furthermore, many studies in the literature relied on employees as study participants, which may result in a limited representation of socio-cultural diversity. Comparing subgroups from different cultural communities can lead to mismatches in variables. Future investigations should consider a diverse range of participants to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural influences on online behavior in online communities.

Future research should focus on countries that share similar sociocultural, economic, and geographical aspects to facilitate a more realistic analysis of the factors influencing online behavior. It is recommended that future studies include more than two communities to avoid overemphasizing or underemphasizing differences. Analyzing three or more communities allows for a more comprehensive examination of cultural influences on online behavior and facilitates better predictability and inferential analysis.

## **CONCLUSION**

This review highlights the contribution of cultural settings, legislation, and social interactions in shaping online user behavior and interactions. Cultural factors, such as social norms and values, play a vital role in determining participatory behavior patterns and community members' commitment to online communities. The study also emphasizes the importance of policy and social interaction in influencing values, sensitivity, and attention given to certain concerns, as well as translating those concerns into action and practice.

However, it is important to recognize the limitations of current policy measures in promoting a healthy and inclusive digital environment. Context-specific approaches are needed, taking into account cultural nuances and avoiding infringement on freedom of expression and privacy. The interplay between morals, values, ethics, and digital technological design elements further complicates the understanding of online user behavior and its impact on online communities. Controversial issues serve as starting points for the adaptation of inclusive policymaking methodologies, aiming to better understand the complex interrelations between cultural issues and policy.

The studies reviewed indicate that legislation and platform policies alone may not be sufficient to compel online users to behave in a particular way. Individualism and rationalism heavily influence online user behavior, suggesting that online communities' rules and norms may have limited influence on their members' actions. This implies that online users have a certain degree of choice and agency in their behavior, regardless of the cultural settings of their communities.

Future research should consider methodological considerations, such as capturing the diversity within cultures and exploring countries with similar sociocultural, economic, and geographical aspects. Diverse participant demographics, including smaller online groups, should also be considered to gain insights into specific cultural traits that contribute to behavior within online communities.

Understanding the interplay between cultural settings, legislation, and social interactions provides valuable insights into online user behavior and interactions. By considering cultural nuances, adopting inclusive policymaking methodologies, and recognizing the limitations of current approaches, researchers and practitioners can work towards fostering a healthy, inclusive, and culturally sensitive digital environment.

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