“ A Study of Changing Trends in Indian Political Campaigning Through Use of Social Media with Reference to Youth Voters ”

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Undertaking

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It is certified that the work entitled **"A Study of Changing Trends in Indian Political Campaigning Through Use of Social Media with Reference to Youth Voters"** is an original research work done by Ms. Rituma Chaturvedi. Under my supervision for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Journalism and Mass Communication to be awarded by Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune. To the best of my knowledge, this thesis:-

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Abstract

India is undergoing a metamorphosis concerning communication because technology-mediated communication is being advanced. Social media is today considered perhaps the most important aspect of personal and professional interaction development among the youth, or what comes to be referred to in modern parlance as the 'Digital Native': 'Digital Shift.'

As of 2024, more than 5 billion people are expected to have access to the internet, thus putting India among the high internet users, with 50% of them also internet users, and the stated 462 million people social media users. This demographic has made social media a necessary part of political communications, particularly for youths aged 13-34. Social media and elections go together today, especially the social media accounts of most politicians during campaign time.

The research is intended to study the effect of social media on the voter behavior change of Indian youth in a political campaign. Indeed, this research is interdisciplinary since its objective is to study the latest trends in political communication through social media, with an aim to understand how these platforms can help political parties realize effective campaigns for reaching out to young voters. The research objective includes studying the evolution and changing trends in Indian political campaigning through the use of social media by political parties, the use of posts, engagement levels of such younger voters, and effectiveness in governing the political views of such voters.

The importance of this study is that the role of social media in shaping political discourse is brought to light and is relevant for the youth in India. By demonstrating the significance of such platforms to the political awareness and participation of the youth, this study highlights their importance in the significant demographic concerns of Indian politics. It also covers the prospects of using different strategies in marketing through social media due to these consequences.

Keywords

Social Media, Digital Age, Artificial Intelligence, Micro Targeting, Political Marketing, Data Analytics, User Generated Content, Deepfake, Political Communication.

Chapter No. 1

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

India has a vibrant, diverse culture and a glorious history, and contemporary India is witnessing a transformative period, especially in terms of communication. A revolution in communication has emerged predominantly in technology-mediated communication, which has replaced ancient methods of communication and given rise to various technology-driven communication platforms.

The importance of technology, which is comparatively newer than traditional methods of communication, has altered the dynamics of communication.
In the past, individuals leaned towards face-to-face interactions and interpersonal interactions, along with various approaches, such as social and community gatherings. Nevertheless, the nature of communication messages, styles, and mediums has significantly evolved with the onset of technology and the introduction of Social Media platforms. In this digital age, communication is increasingly controlled by individuals and perpetually on the move.
The speed, ease, removal of geographical barriers, global connectivity, and affordability of communication have ushered us into a new era, and here, the prime drivers are the 'Youth,' who are early adopters.

The emergence of Communication Equipment like 5G Internet-enabled devices, for example, smartphones, tablets, laptops, and other communication devices in a wide range and variations, is in the possession of several people, primarily youth.

India's tech-savvy youth is leading the **‘Digital Shift’** movement. These **'Digital Natives'** are actively engaging themselves on ‘Social Media’. Prensky (2001) used the word 'digital native' to describe people with access

to the internet, computers, and mobile devices, including cell phones. Such people would be born somewhere between 1980 and 2010.

Digitally active youth are often comfortable with the use of the computer and the internet alongside various mobile devices. This attitude stems from the fact that technology was a terrific part of their life when they were growing up. “Digital natives are people who have grown up under the ubiquitous influence of the internet, and other modern information technologies,” Prensky (2001).

People born after 1980, including millennials, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha, fall under this very description. Such people are effortless with the use of the computer and social media. The converse of this is ‘digital immigrants’, which refers to anyone born in the age of technology. (Prensky, 2001).

According to the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (2012), the 'Digital Shift' denotes the pervasive digitization of infrastructure and information that reshapes production and consumption systems. (European Commission Joint Research Centre, 2012)

The 'Youth,' by adapting new communication tools and tech-mediated platforms, is communicating, connecting, and steering the new communication trends, adapting new-age internet lingo, and hence shaping the opinions of online groups and communities.

These ‘Social Media’ platforms have gained immense popularity among users and have positioned themselves as essential tools for maintaining connections with friends and family, in addition to facilitating and fostering professional networking opportunities. A few of the popular ‘Social Media’ platforms are Instagram (originated in Oct.2010) for photo sharing, Facebook (2006) for personal connections, TikTok (2017)- Now Banned in India for video reels, WhatsApp (2009,2012) for instant messaging app facilitating multimedia message exchange, YouTube (2005) for video content sharing, “X (formerly Twitter, launched in 2006, and renamed in 2023)” to share your views in short statements in the form of tweets.

Users extensively utilize and engage with the varied types of ‘Social Media’ platforms to share and distribute information, encompassing both personal and business content, entertain themselves, establish connections, network with others, and influence their business audience and peers. They also set and follow the trends, increase the information base, enhance knowledge, and shape opinions by providing different perspectives garnered by ’User-generated content (UGC). It refers to varied forms of content, which are text, images, or videos, that are created and shared by non-professional individuals rather than brands or organizations. UGC is central to digital platforms, fostering community engagement and authenticity (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

These new methods and forms of communication are making a paradigm shift in the realm of communication.

Nonetheless, in the Indian context, there is a notable interplay and coexistence of traditional communication methods, mass-mediated communication, and technology-driven communication despite the rise of modern techniques, highlighting the diversity of communication practices, which is crucial to decode and understand.

The nature of political communication in India has generally been based on traditional media in the form of television, radio, and print newspapers, where politicians can deliver messages in a more controlled manner to a large audience. This one-way information transfer has, however, been virtually destroyed by the advent of social media, which allows for the involvement of the public in a real-time conversation and active questioning of political narratives (Kumar & Hooda, 2022; Morwal, 2025; Jan, 2024).

The aforementioned introductory exploration sets the springboard to a deep descent into studying the ever-evolving ‘Social Media’ platforms, their usage, functionality, and effects in different realms, especially in the socio-political context, with special reference to the ‘Youth of India’.

1.2 Background of the Study

Today, the use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) is common throughout the world, including among teenagers and youth, and it has huge implications for social communication and sharing information (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). These mediums—commonly known as 'Social Media'—have dominated the popular imagination over the past decade and are now universally adopted across all sections of society in terms of age, income, caste, creed, and education (Aichner et al., 2021). One of the most distinctive features of social media is its capacity to facilitate the formation of personal and collective identities, and to facilitate interaction, collaboration, and community building across geographical and cultural spaces (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

On fast-growing mobile devices and advanced internet access, the spread and the incorporation of these SNSs into the everyday lives is tremendous; social media is becoming a key channel for real time –24 hours a day– communication. Content—images, news, videos, memes, podcasts, etc.—can be cross-posted traversing time zones and geographies that underscore the diversity and significance of these platforms (Aichner et al., 2021).

The idea of Social Networking Sites dates back to the late 1990s when Six Degrees emerged. Com was established early as a platform that permitted users to construct a profile page and contact retained users (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Early platforms were mostly subscription or closed profile-based, but the later sites were open, community-based. Physical listings of information about students or members of a community came before these digital networks, and platforms such as Facebook that allow for anything beyond vague revelations evolved from them. Therefore, the history and development of social media can be considered from static information repositories to dynamic, user-generated communication systems.

The most popular social media networking websites in India in 2024 include:

1. WhatsApp (over 500 million users)
2. YouTube (over 450 million users)
3. Facebook (around 378 million users)

4. Instagram (362 million users)
5. ShareChat (180 million users, homegrown regional platform)
6. Telegram (about 180 million users)
7. Snapchat
8. Twitter/X
9. LinkedIn
10. Josh (regional short-video platform with 150 million users)

These networks lead the Indian social media space in the number of active users, engagement, and demographic coverage. WhatsApp was the most widely used messaging app in 2024, with people spending an average of nearly 15 hours per month on the app – a testament to its importance in our personal and professional lives for communicating with others. On YouTube, the Indian market clocked 265 million unique users, with 1200 channels crossing 1 million subscribers from 2018 to 2019, and claiming the position as the country's leading platform for video consumption and business engagement. Facebook and Instagram continued to drive social networking and influencer marketing, with users spending more than 20 hours per month using the platforms for news, entertainment, and community building.

Their widespread penetration and the continued increase and diversity can be argued to contribute to their emerging embeddedness in the digital environment in India (DataReportal, 2024; Meltwater, 2024; GrabOn, 2025; Haulpack, 2025).

1.3 The Digital Landscape of India

Internet and Digital 'Social Media' Users Base of India) or India's Digital Population

The official Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) report confirms that India had 936.16 million internet subscribers as of December 2023 (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India [TRAI], 2024).

The Age of Internet Users in India

The Indian Youth, and, especially the age bracket of 13-34 years,65% of the total internet users dominated the Internet from the year 2013-2019, and it is estimated that by the end of 2025, the age group of 35 years and older will make up 66 percent of the internet usage pattern of India.

Facebook Users in India

India has the largest user base of Facebook in the world.

India has the largest Facebook user base worldwide, with 378.05 million active users as of May 2024. In February 2024, Facebook users in India numbered approximately 566.75 million, representing 39% of the country's total population. The majority of these users were men (68.4%), and the largest age group was 25 to 34 years old, comprising 207.3 million users (Statista, 2024).

Instagram users in India

The data on Instagram users in India can be cited as follows:

In May 2024, India had approximately 392,465,000 Instagram users, representing 27% of the total population. The majority were men (66.9%), and the largest user group was aged 18 to 24, accounting for 172,600,000 users (Statista, 2024).

LinkedIn users in India

In May 2024, India had approximately 131,400,000 LinkedIn users, accounting for about 9% of the population, with the largest age group being 25 to 34 years old, comprising 65,000,000 users. (Statista, 2024).

X users (Formerly Twitter) in India

India had approximately 26.08 million active X users in May 2024, making it one of the countries with the largest user bases worldwide (Statista, 2024).

1.4 Introduction to Communication

Communication is a fundamental aspect of human interaction that encompasses the processes through which individuals convey messages, share information, and create meaning.

Communication is the process of meaningful interaction among human beings. It facilitates the sharing of information through various means, including verbal, non-verbal, visual, and written ways. The core aspect of communication lies in the ability to convey information in the form of messages effectively, ensuring that the intended meaning is understood by the receiver.

Effective Communication relies on a well-orchestrated interplay between several components. It starts with a sender - the initiator, who has a message to convey. This message, which can be information, an idea, or even an emotion, is then crafted and delivered through a chosen channel. This channel could be spoken words, written text, or even a digital platform. The intended recipient of the message is the receiver. To ensure the message is understood correctly, the loop of communication needs feedback. This Contextual understanding and correct interpretation are essential for effective communication, as they ensure that the receiver interprets the message in the intended manner, leading to successful communication. This refers to the environment, cultural background, and even the current relationship between the sender and receiver, all of which can influence how the message is perceived.

Finally, any disruptions and misunderstandings that distort the messages are considered noise. Clear communication is hindered by varied factors like background sounds and cultural barriers hindering clear Communication.

While verbal communication utilizes spoken or written language to transmit information, nonverbal communication relies on visual signs such as body language, hand gestures, and expressions. These two forms of communication complement each other and play crucial roles in human interaction.

Interpersonal communication is the direct Communication between two or more individuals; it is often characterized by a personal connection. In contrast, the Process of Intrapersonal communication is self-communication or the art of communicating with oneself. It is the internal dialogues, reflections, and self-assessments that occur within an individual's mind.

Group communication refers to exchanging ideas and information among a limited number of individuals working together towards a common goal.

The dissemination of information to a broad audience through multiple media platforms, like print, television, radio, and the internet, is referred to as mass communication.

Definitions of 'Communication'

The definition of Communication is "A process through which information is exchanged between people through a system of signs, symbols, or behavior" (Merriam-Webster, 2024).

It also encompasses the act of conveying information, personal rapport, and the systems used for transmitting information, such as telephones or computers.

According to G.G. Brown, "Communication is transfer of information from one person to another, whether or not it elicits confidence. But the information transferred must be understandable to the receiver" (Brown, as cited in Communication: Process, Types, Barriers, 2018).

These definitions collectively illustrate that communication is a multifaceted process involving the exchange of information, ways of conveying messages, and the stress upon understanding in interpersonal interactions.

'Mass Communication' has evolved significantly with the advent of digital forms of media, creating new opportunities and challenges for how information is shared and consumed. As 'Social Media' continues shaping public discourse, understanding its role within the broader framework of mass communication is essential for navigating the complexities of information in the digital age. The

interplay between traditional mass communication and ‘Social Media’ will likely continue to influence societal norms, political landscapes, and individual behaviors in profound ways.

1.5 Introduction to Political Communication

Communication is often described as the driving or animating force behind a country’s development and social progress (Das & Dhar, n.d.; UNESCO, 1964/2011). It connects people across the Country's wide span to exchange information, ideas, and cultures to fashion a similar identity and shared goals.

It plays a crucial role in building a channel between the government, policymakers, and citizens in underdeveloped and developing nations, especially in democracies.

A powerful communication strategy is vital for disseminating information, mobilizing citizens, and cultivating dialogue. These are essential for fostering national unity and strengthening a vibrant democracy.

Political communication is a sub-area of study of Political science and communication. This subject studies the flow of information, the spread of information, its influences on politics, news media, governments, and policymakers, and its interplay and impact on citizens.

Political communication involves the study of the production, dissemination, processing, and impact of information through mass media and interpersonal communication within a political context (McNair, 2011).

This field of study concentrates on the examination of mass media, the analysis of communication disseminated by politicians in the form of speeches, participants influencing the political process, and formal and informal forms of communication in any form on any communication channel between members of the public.

Information plays a crucial role in the advancement of today's society, particularly in developing countries such as India. It is disseminated through mass media channels to serve various purposes.

'Political Propaganda' is prime among them. The 'Mass Media ' Channels hold indirect control of political messages. They function differently depending on the socioeconomic and political environment of the country.

Political propaganda is a mode of communication aimed at influencing the attitude of a community toward some cause or position, with mass media tools increasingly influencing and shaping democratic practices, including political socialization (Dorman, N, 2012). The operation and impact of such channels differ across countries according to society's socioeconomic and political background (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2014; Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

In a democratic society, the media serves as an effective communication link between authorities and citizens. Consequently, mass media tools, along with 'Social Media', aid in fostering a positive image and managing perceptions about people and parties.

Political communication is the connection between politics, citizens, and communication modes between these groups, which might result from methods of persuasion, pathos, or ethos.

In political communication, the role of the media is to be studied objectively, as it acts as a bridge between the government and the people.

Political Communication aims all its efforts at garnering the interest of voters, which in the Indian landscape is slightly complex due to its dynamic nature and complex caste-based intricacies.

While all political parties project a secular appeal, political communication occasionally includes targeted messages aimed at different sub-segments of society based on caste groups.

In Indian democratic discourse, the opposition parties also use political communication tools to present alternative visions and to present a criticism of the existing governments before the voters.

The definition of political communication varies among experts, and each is based on the different premises outlined below.

1. Definition of Political Communication Emphasizing Messages and Influence:

This definition underscores the message creation and its impact.

According to *The Routledge Handbook of Political Communication*, "Political communication is the process of creating and transmitting messages intended to influence political knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. This can involve politicians, media outlets, interest groups, and even ordinary citizens" (Kaid, 2004).

Explanation: The definition stated above is the assimilation of different perspectives and sources of political communication; it is the closest thoughts in adherence to the thoughts expressed in the book edited by Vincent Schiavone et al., 2020 'The Routledge Handbook of Political Communication.'

According to ScienceDirect (n.d.), the definition of Political communication is:

"Political communication is an interactive process involving the transmission of information among politicians, the news media, and the public. It focuses on the strategic use of language, media, and persuasion to influence political discourse and decision-making processes within society" (Gonçalves, n.d.).

Explanation: The key takeaway from this definition is that political communication is interactive in nature and involves participants in political leadership. It is a mass medium and has different components that influence the political discourse.

***According to uBibliorum,* the definition of Political communication is:**

"Political communication is a professional practice and academic discipline involving communication processes like propaganda, electoral marketing, and political campaigning. It emphasizes persuasive and strategic interactions between political actors, the media, and citizens to influence opinions and behaviors".(Gonçalves, n.d.).

Explanation: This definition introduces key new terms like electoral and political marketing and the role of strategic communication design in shaping public opinion.

According to Denton and Woodward (1998), 'Political Communication' is defined as "Political communication is the methods and objectives of message senders aimed at influencing the political landscape" (Denton & Woodward, 1998)

The central focus of their definition is on the "Strategic Transmission of Persuasive Political Messages.".

Political Communication has played a pivotal role in the government's decision-making process and electoral process. Since the emergence of the Internet in the late 1990s, significant advancements have occurred. The Internet has fundamentally transformed the entire communication process, leading to noticeable impacts in the realm of political development and processes.

Political communication has a critical role in shaping different types of political systems that are able to function smoothly in large democracies primarily and different political systems.

The study of ‘Political Communication’ is significant because of the functions it serves in varied political systems. It plays a pivotal role in the attainment of the primary goals in the political scenario.

Developing an insight into the core functions dispensed by political communication is vital in order to decode and analyze the interplay of political developments and political processes.

Political communication has a dual role to play, in which the primary aspects are :

1. Establishing and Sustaining Political Institutions

2. Fulfilling the Requirements of Political Institutions

Delving into Systemic Influences in Political Discourse

In an extensive political system, political communication has a prime role to play in stating and maintaining the prevalence of political institutions. This establishes a channel between the political institutions and the public to transmit the aims, principles, and values.

The political institutions need to convey and justify their actions to the public and the citizens of the respective chosen territory through their sustained communication efforts focused on conveying their objectives and actions.

Fulfillment of the Requirements of Political Institutions

Political communication is a tool of political institutions to serve their areas of interest and pragmatic needs. These are mainly generating funds, creating a favorable image during a crisis, and mobilizing and garnering support from the public.

In his theory of an expanding media system, Lerner (1958) posits that an expanding media system fosters positive attitudes favorable to social change and, supported by other mechanisms, promotes holistic development. Lerner argues that different mechanisms, like empathy and psychic mobility, equip the audience to receive and process media messages, inculcating the ability to adapt to changes and lead to modernization. He also assumed that increasing media

participation variably leads to more active participation in varied sectors like politics, economics, and education (Lerner, 1958).

He also emphasized the importance of 'Urbanization' and 'Media Exposure ' and assumed that the higher the media exposure, the higher the economic and Political Participation. (Lerner, 1958)

Development of Political Communication in India and ‘Voter Persuasion Paradigm’

During the 1950s and 1960s, the 'Voter Persuasion' paradigm emerged in Indian political communication, emphasizing the significant influence of mass media on individual behavior. Political researchers at that time became fascinated with decoding the role of communication in political growth, turning research attention to the way in which communication strategy and media exposure swing political results and public opinion formation.

There was a big turn in political communication research during this period, as the research on mass media and its role in political ideologies and changing societal dimensions in the country took a major turn.

During this time, the focus of the studies was to understand how communication strategies sway political outcomes and how 'Public Opinion formation' takes place. The newly piqued interest in this was attentively tied to the 'Effects of Mass Media' on shaping political behaviors and ideologies. (Mishra, 2003).

The era witnessed the shift from the traditional methods of campaigning toward more strategic, media-oriented campaigning. Again with increasing urgency, researchers began to have a look at the ways in which political messages were produced, spread, and processed by the citizenry, attending particularly to the constitution of ‘public opinion’, and the impacts of mass media on political attitudes and behaviors. The voter persuasion model emphasized the value of media in driving voter turnout, influencing election outcomes, and consolidating political identities in a country that was a new democracy with great diversity (Gautam & Hussain, 2019).

In addition, political parties soon adapted budding mass media, such as radio, television, print, and digital formats, into their campaigns, expanding the reach of political communication. The advent of this new landscape of political communication has been important in capturing a more expansive and politically astute electorate, particularly given the ascendence of new media tools in the past few decades (Arulchelvan, 2014; MGCU, 2024).

Recent empirical works reinforce the applicability of the voter persuasion paradigm in the context of India's pluralistic electoral setting. For instance, in Uttar Pradesh, a non-partisan development-centered and voter accountability campaign was found to have a dramatic and large effect on voting behavior, through reduction in caste-based electoral bias (Banerjee, Green, Green, &-Pande, 2009). This illustrates how strategically crafted communication can intervene in ingrained voting heuristics in order to enable more informed electoral decisions.

In addition, voter persuasion these days is becoming more and more a data-driven business: techniques that use data and behavioral insights, demographic sorting, and psychometrics to find and reach swing voters (Kuriakose, 2023). Election campaigns are thus directed towards a diverse mass media (comprised of printed, electronic, and social media), allowing customized discourse that appeals to selected voter groups as well as stimulating emotional investment (Kothari, 2022).

This advanced form of communication reflects the evolution of the Voter Persuasion paradigm with the progression of technology and the current political climate.

A few Key aspects of 'Political Communication Strategies are as follows:-

a. Events for Mass Mobilization and Political Rallies- To disseminate information about ideologies and garner support from the people, 'Political Rallies' were organized by eminent leaders of that time, such as Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, a great orator, was for mass mobilization.

b. Extensive Use of Print Media - Newspapers were immensely popular during that time and were very extensively used as a political communication tool by the political parties. National and regional newspapers act as instruments to disseminate information, set narratives to counter the opposite views of the opposition, and reach out to an educated segment of the population.

c. Radio was synonymous with All India Radio -AIR, and was an effective medium with a wide reach to remote areas with low literacy rates. AIR was an effective medium to broadcast /air, and announce the policies, important information, and the speeches of leaders. It was harnessed as a robust tool of electorate engagement and voter persuasion.

d. Use of Symbols and Slogans: In political communication, the use of symbols and slogans was also immensely popular to create a favorable image among voters and popularize the ideologies of political parties and their leaders.

For example. The party symbol of Congress' I ' -is a Hand became immensely popular, and the slogan of 'Jai Jawan and Jai Kisan' by Lal Bahadur Shastri resonated with the public.

e. Grassroots Campaigning and One-to-One Interactions—Door-to-door canvassing was heavily used to connect directly with the voters on a personal level and build a relationship with them.

Political Communication also addresses socio-economic issues, with commitments to the holistic development of society. Projections of the five-year development plans and other development programme details were also shared with the intent to persuade voters. Political leaders, for ages, have used the mass media to connect with the voters. In the contemporary age, ''Social Media'' has been immensely popular. 'Social Media' is distinct from other mass media tools due to its distinct features of speed, personalized connection, reach of the medium, and economical cost.

This research is significant as it is a comprehensive analysis of the use of various ' Social Media Marketing ' strategies by contemporary Indian political parties

and political communication strategists. It also focuses on how the 'Youth' responds to and processes messages transmitted through the medium.

It observes the sentiment of the '‘Social Media’ ' mediated messages and marketing efforts of the political parties and leaders, and their amplification. It also studies the impact of ‘Social Media’ on the voting behavior of the youth and user engagement through the medium.

Political communication strategists and ‘Social Media’ marketing teams, who use ‘Social Media’ for outreach, can utilize it.

1.6 Introduction to ‘Social Media’

“Social Media” is pervasive in today’s digital communication landscape. It has developed to be a part and parcel of everyday life today to such an extent that the ways in which people communicate and exchange information have been radically transformed. Social media has dramatically changed the way people communicate, connect, and engage with each other and the world (Kietzmann et al., 2011). These tools are internet-mediated tools of virtual social networks, allowing users to set up profiles, share information, and publish to and communicate with personal and professional contacts. It's used for creating awareness, marketing, advertising, social networking, business networking, community building, information exchange, and entertainment.

The implications of social media are far-reaching, influencing culture, community relations, individual psychology, business, and politics. Its uses span awareness creation, marketing, advertising, social and business networking, community building, information exchange, and entertainment. The content generated and shared by individuals on social media platforms is widely referred to as 'User Generated Content' (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The popularity of social media in today’s world, particularly among young people, is enormous, with extensive and intensive usage all over the world. Social media provides many advantages as a viral medium for communication

and relationship building, but it has its limitations and problems. (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

Social media refers to a range of internet-based platforms meant to help the production, sharing, and exchange of user content… they have transformed the communication landscape globally (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). These platforms are more than just socio-technical constructs that facilitate the connection of people; they are also producers of identities, centers of communities, and bases of political effects through algorithmically mediated content and network effects (Kietzmann et al., 2011). The Uses and Gratifications theory helps to understand the reasons why people use technology, for instance, for interpersonal communication or simply to seek information (Ruggiero, 2000).

In the political arena, social media provide key spaces throughout the Web for setting the agenda, framing other public discussions, and engaging citizens in democratic processes (Chadwick, 2017). These networks allow political actors to bypass the gatekeeping role of media and establish much-needed direct contact with a political constituency in terms of appeal or mobilization through their real-time nature and interactivity. (Loader et al., 2014). But these positives have been accompanied by negatives: The spread of misinformation, ever-greater levels of polarization, privacy concerns, and algorithmic and ranking biases that affect content visibility (Tufekci, 2018; van Dijck et al., 2018).

Beyond this, the convergence of new technologies, AI in particular, with regulatory practices, GDPR in particular, is set to have a significant impact on the landscape of social media ecosystems, and therefore necessitate a critical analysis of these in socio-political terms (Napoli, 2019; Gillespie, 2018). As social media continues to develop, understanding its influence on individual and collective behaviors is a timely and critical area of multidisciplinary research."

A comprehensive view of 'Social Media' in this section will delve into the advantages and limitations of the medium, its applicability, functions, theoretical framework, 'Social Media' and its interrelationship with the youth and political communication.

‘Social Media’ has advantages that have made it a viral channel for communication and building connections.

1.6.1 Some of the prime advantages of ‘Social Media’ are as follows:

a. Hyperconnectivity: ‘Social Media’ has changed how people with different backgrounds across the world communicate and exchange meaningful information to foster relations.

b. Seamless real-time communication: ‘Social Media’ platforms enable people to communicate with friends and family anytime, anywhere, instantly.

c. Information Distribution and Sharing: ‘Social Media’ channels are the easiest and quickest source of information dissemination. Here, the users acquire the latest information, news, and trends in different formats.

d. Business Promotion and Opportunities: ‘Social Media’ channels like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and others provide a platform for business opportunities like business-to-business networking and sharing business insights and trends. And most notably, ‘Social Media’ platforms are for 'Direct Customer Engagement' and ' Marketing and Promotion. '

e. Creative Vent for Expression: ‘Social Media’ platforms are the most cost-effective medium to showcase talent and creativity in the form of user-generated content to the global audience.

f. Online Support Groups and Communities: On Social Media, people with similar interests and concerns form support groups. This unifies people across the globe to have 'Unity' and form 'Online Communities'.

g. Networking Opportunities: ‘Social Media’ users extensively use these channels to network on B2B platforms like LinkedIn to foster business relations and explore career opportunities.

h. Advocating and Amplifying Causes: ‘Social Media’, with a global reach, creates awareness of 'Global Issues' and empowers the voices of common people and activists.

i. Platform for Upskilling: ‘Social Media’ offers ample learning content and insights for users to upskill and facilitates them with self-paced learning.

j. Awareness: ‘Social Media’ creates awareness and keeps users informed about the latest global news, insights, and trends.

1.6.2 Limitations of ‘Social Media’

1. Data Exposure and Privacy Concerns: The personal Information shared on ‘Social Media’ channels is probable to privacy risks, exposes personal data, and leaves digital footprints.

2. Cyberbullying: ‘Social Media’ is misused as a platform for threatening, bullying people, and posting negative, hatred-filled comments.

3. Disinformation Deluge: There is a mammoth of false, misleading information posted on ‘Social Media’ channels by users, and there difficulty differentiating between the false and real information.

4. Tech Addiction: ‘Social Media’ is highly addictive, and hence, it disrupts routine life and leads to a lack of productivity.

5. Social Evaluation: ‘Social Media’ leads to social status comparisons, which negatively impact people and lower their self-esteem and mental well-being.

6. Mental well-being challenges: Excessive use of Social Media platforms leads to mental disturbances like anxiety, depression, and isolation.

7. Weakening of Personal One-to-One Connections: Excessive engagement in ‘Social Media’ fosters only virtual connections, and people start lacking essential personal social skills.

8. Information Overload- Retrieving meaningful information from the mammoth of information on 'Social Media' is complex. And you miss the meaningful information.

9. Online Scams: Online fraudsters and scammers attempt to exploit Social Media platforms to scam users by presenting false value propositions.

10. Privacy Issues: The personal information shared on 'Social Media' platforms leaves users' digital footprints, and the information is accessible to all, which could be misused.

'Social Media' has broad applicability, and 'Social Media' platforms are immensely popular among people for the benefits they offer. They have their advantages and disadvantages, and the onus is on using the platform judiciously, harnessing its potential to the optimum, and maintaining a balanced online presence.

'Social Media' has become a pervasive aspect of contemporary life. It has profoundly impacted the ways people interact, communicate, and the perception of the world. 'Social Media' are the internet-enabled digital platforms that equip users to use this for networking, information gathering and sharing, and consuming user-generated content and information transmitted through various entities. The impact of this extends to the business, societal patterns, culture, politics, and individuals.

'Social Media' is growing exponentially, and its evolution is likely to be affected by the advent of new technologies and advancements. Technologies like artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and augmented reality are bridging the gap between virtual and real-life experiences and creating new opportunities and challenges in all realms.

The prime concerns like privacy, ethical standards, and misinformation require ethical practices by individuals and a regulatory framework to avoid the misuse of Social Media channels by power players.

1.6.3 Interrelationship between ‘Social Media’ and “Political Communication”.

In recent times, '‘Social Media’' has become an integral part of 'Political Communications', especially during 'Election Campaigns'. Since the advent of internet-mediated communication, communication styles have changed from text messages to chat rooms to instant messaging. It is the most prominent phenomenon in internet-mediated communication technology.

In the last few years, since the early 2000s, ‘Social Media’ has been used intensively for political campaigning, and its influence is growing exponentially. It is a crucial part of prominent elections and political campaigns worldwide. Political parties, candidates, and power players utilize Social Media to disseminate information, for branding, mobilizing voters by propagating campaign messages, and to criticize opponents.

1.6.4 Global Perspective- ‘Social Media’ use in political campaigns in recent history is as follows:-

a. The initiation of inducing ‘Social Media’ and the internet in political campaigns started in the 2000s when a few campaigns and politicians started using their websites and emails to reach out to voters.

b. The elections between presidential candidates Barack Obama and John McCain in the U.S (2008) were a breakthrough. Barack Obama mainly used Social Media networks to connect and persuade his audience and voters. He hired a Chicago-based agency and made technology-mediated communication a major part of the campaign strategy.

He launched his website, www.my.barackobama.com (My BO), which allowed users to create profiles and connect and interact with each other.

He engaged directly with voters through regular podcasts. His ‘Social Media’ profile on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and MySpace engaged directly with the audiences and political supporters. His appeal was to garner support for his

candidature and generate donations. (Pew Research Center, 2009; Stanford Graduate School of Business, 2004)

In terms of the numbers, externally, Obama's campaign was able to garner 5 million supporters on 15 different social networks, ranging from Facebook to MySpace. By November 2008, Obama had approximately 2.5 million (some sources say as much as 3.2 million 1 Chris Lefkow, "Obama Has Huge Lead Over McCain—in Cyberspace," (Agence France Presse, October 5, 2008.)

As per the reports, the 'Social Media' campaign of Obama attained five million supporters on almost fifteen varied 'Social Media' platforms. As per AFP, " In cyberspace, Obama has a huge lead over opponent candidate McCain. (Agence France-Presse, 2008)

In the 2012 U.S. presidential election, both candidates, Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, used Social Media heavily for their election campaigns.

Later, 'Social Media' adoption became widespread, and in the next U.S elections held in 2016 between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, witnessed more intensive use of 'Social Media'.

The use of 'Social Media' has steeply grown and is ever-evolving with political campaigns that use 'Data Insights' to reach the targeted voter segment through 'Microtargeting.'

1.7 'Social Media' Usage Among Indian Youth and Its Interrelationship with Media and Youth

The interrelationship between 'Social Media' and youth in India is complex and multifaceted, reflecting both the positive and negative impacts of digital platforms on young individuals. Here is a synthesis of the insights derived from the search results:

'Social Media' usage in India is intensive and extensive, especially among youth. A major portion of Indian youth are active on 'Social Media', with platforms like Facebook and Instagram having millions of users aged 18-24. Reports indicate that young individuals spend approximately 2.4 hours daily on

‘Social Media’, with many engaging for up to five hours or more each day. (Indian Express, 2022; India Today, 2023; Times of India, 2023)

As per the research, social media has substituted many traditional ways university students use to communicate, most especially in terms of speed and access to communication. Students are heavy users of WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram for communication, entertainment, and to some extent, academic purposes. The majority of undergraduates dedicate 2 to 5 hours per day to social media, being online at least several times per day whenever there are a few free minutes and when on campus” (Chandrasena et al., 2022).

Youth utilize ‘Social Media’ for various reasons, including socialization, education, entertainment, and information gathering. The platforms provide opportunities for connecting with peers, sharing experiences, and accessing educational resources.

The Positive Impact of social media usage is that it can enhance creativity and confidence among youth by providing a platform to express themselves and share their ideas with a broader audience. It connects young people with diverse perspectives and fosters a sense of community.

Young adults in India were actively using social media during the COVID-19 pandemic to check up on hospital bed availability and food support amidst COVID-19, resembling resilience and social responsiveness. While sites provided access to community support and activism through instant sharing of credible information and mobilizing bottom-up support, which was crucial during the pandemic to contain immediate public health needs(Singh et al., 2024; Homegrown, 2021).

Besides some of the Negative Impacts of ‘Social Media’, such as increased peer pressure and the need for conformity with groups, the excessive use of ‘Social Media’ has been linked to various mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and body image concerns. Many young people experience feelings of inferiority and engage in unhealthy comparisons, particularly on visually-driven platforms like Instagram.

A significant percentage of youth report feeling pressured to maintain a curated online persona, which can exacerbate issues related to self-esteem and body dysmorphia. (Khalaf et al., 2023; Pew Research Center, 2025)

Overuse of Social Media can lead to addiction, which negatively impacts attention spans, academic performance, and overall well-being. Reports indicate that many youths lack awareness of privacy and safety measures, exposing them to cyber threats and misinformation. (Pellegrino et al., 2022; India Today, 2024)

The rapid adoption of 'Social Media' has outpaced the cultural adjustments necessary to mitigate its negative effects. This cultural lag results in a disconnect between technological advancements and societal norms, leading to challenges in social interaction and mental health management among youth. (Vijayalkshmi, 2025).

The relationship between 'Social Media', political communication, and youth in India is dynamic and evolving. 'Social Media' platforms have transformed how political messages are communicated and consumed, empowering young people to engage actively in the political process. As political parties increasingly recognize the importance of 'Social Media' in reaching and mobilizing youth, understanding this interrelationship will be crucial for effective political campaigning and fostering a more engaged electorate.

The interrelationship between 'Social Media', political communication, and youth in India is increasingly significant, reflecting how digital platforms shape political engagement and discourse among young people. Here's an overview based on the context of 'Social Media' campaigns and their implications for political communication.

'Social Media' as a Tool for Political Communication and Youth Engagement

'Social Media' platforms allow political parties and candidates to engage directly with the youth, bypassing traditional media channels. This direct

communication fosters a sense of connection and immediacy, enabling politicians to share their messages, policies, and campaign updates in real-time.

‘Social Media’ serves as a primary source of information for many young people. It provides a platform for political parties to disseminate their viewpoints, manifestos, and campaign strategies, influencing public perception and voter behavior.

‘Social Media’ has become a powerful tool for mobilizing youth for political causes. Campaigns can quickly gain traction, encouraging young people to participate in rallies, protests, or online movements. For instance, the youth played a crucial role in various social movements facilitated by ‘Social Media’, such as the anti-corruption protests and, more recently, the farmers' protests.

Youth Engagement with Political Content

Young people are not just passive consumers of political content; they actively create and share their own narratives. This user-generated content can amplify political messages and create a grassroots movement around specific issues, such as climate change, gender equality, and social justice.

Influencers and ‘Social Media’ personalities have a significant impact on youth political engagement. Their endorsements or critiques of political parties can sway public opinion and encourage young followers to engage with political content.

While ‘Social Media’ can enhance political engagement, it can also lead to polarization. Young users may find themselves in echo chambers, where they are primarily exposed to viewpoints that reinforce their beliefs, potentially leading to increased political division.

Implications for Political Campaigns on ‘Social Media’

Political parties can utilize data analytics to tailor their Social Media campaigns to specific demographics. Understanding the preferences and motivations of

young voters allows for more effective messaging that resonates with their values and concerns.

Engaging young voters through interactive content, such as polls, quizzes, and live question-and-answer sessions, can enhance participation and investment in the political process. This approach encourages dialogue and feedback, making young voters feel heard and valued.

'Social Media' provides a platform for political parties to address crises or controversies quickly. Effective communication during such times can mitigate damage and maintain public trust, particularly among younger audiences who expect transparency and responsiveness.

These political communication campaigns may also affect the level of political knowledge of young voters and may generate interest among them in candidates and issues. The significance of political campaigns can extend beyond the election times; instead, it will influence future responsible political behavior and participation in public policy discussions.

1.8 'Social Media' and Political Campaigning in India

'Social Media' is considered multi-dimensional and has multiple hyperlinks, which have equipped political communication and 'Social Media' marketing people to use innovative ways to communicate and disseminate information among other people on the internet. It has evolved in varied ways of communication that are different from the traditional ways of communication. The popular 'Social Media' channels and tools Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and many others in contemporary times are weighed as highly disruptive technology-mediated political communication platforms, which are at par with conservative ways of persuasion and marketing, and serve more value in terms of 'Micro-Targeting'.

The ever-increasing popularity and usefulness of Social Media platforms have empowered political players and people to connect directly. And this predicts that this will transform how the 'Democracy' functions.

In India, the presence of ‘Social Media’ is widespread, and the use of media patterns is transcending. However, political engagement through the internet or online is still restricted to urban areas, to people already active on the internet, and to the availability of the internet. Political news transmitted through newspapers and television news is still a quite popular resource for political information for the people and for the political parties.

In contemporary Indian political campaigning contexts, ‘Social Media’ has metamorphosed methods and structures by transforming the communication and interaction methods between political actors and voters or the people.

In this century, the convergence of communication is taking place, and henceforth, the methods of communication are changing and transforming society as a whole.

The new accessible worldwide system of interconnected network ' Internet' is publicly accessible, which has empowered the common people across the globe to use an economical real-time communication facility offering seamless information and entertainment content through new innovative forms of communication that never existed before. ‘Social Media’ raises awareness, becomes a platform for sharing opinions, and gives a voice to youth, women, and marginalized groups.

This internet-mediated new form of communication facilitates two-way communication in comparison to traditional mass media channels. The 'New Media' is an open and accessible medium that opens the floodgates of information.

‘Social Media’ has increasingly become a vital platform for 'Political Activism' in various forms. ‘Social Media’ platforms such as 'Twitter', 'YouTube', and Facebook ' have provided citizens/voters with innovative and interactive ways of engagement and participation in political issues. Political participation for prospective voters is to receive information about the political parties, candidates, their policies, and ideology. Here, elections and election promotion campaigns are pivotal.

Online debates, podcasts by influencers, advertisements, reactions, sentiments of the public, support, debates, and discussions take place on the internet, which facilitates the political actors to connect and analyze them in real-time and also disseminate and multiply manifold, and aim for a wider reach.

1.8.1 India’s Electoral Landscape

India's electoral landscape is evolving rapidly, increasing electoral participation and contestation. India is considered the largest democracy in the world, with a large number of voters.

According to the report by the Press Information Bureau (PIB, 2024), India is the largest electorate in the world with 96.88 crores citizens registered to vote for the General Elections in India 2024. There was a steep, significant 8% increase in voter registrations among women and youth(PIB, 2024).

As per the Special Summary Revision (SSR) 2024, the registrations of female voters have surpassed male voters, and more than 2 Crore young electors aged between 18-29 were added. (Chief Electoral Officer, Delhi, 2023).

According to the Election Commission of India (2024), over 96.88 crore electors have been registered for the upcoming general elections.

Quantitative Comparison of Countrywide Final Roll -Year 2024

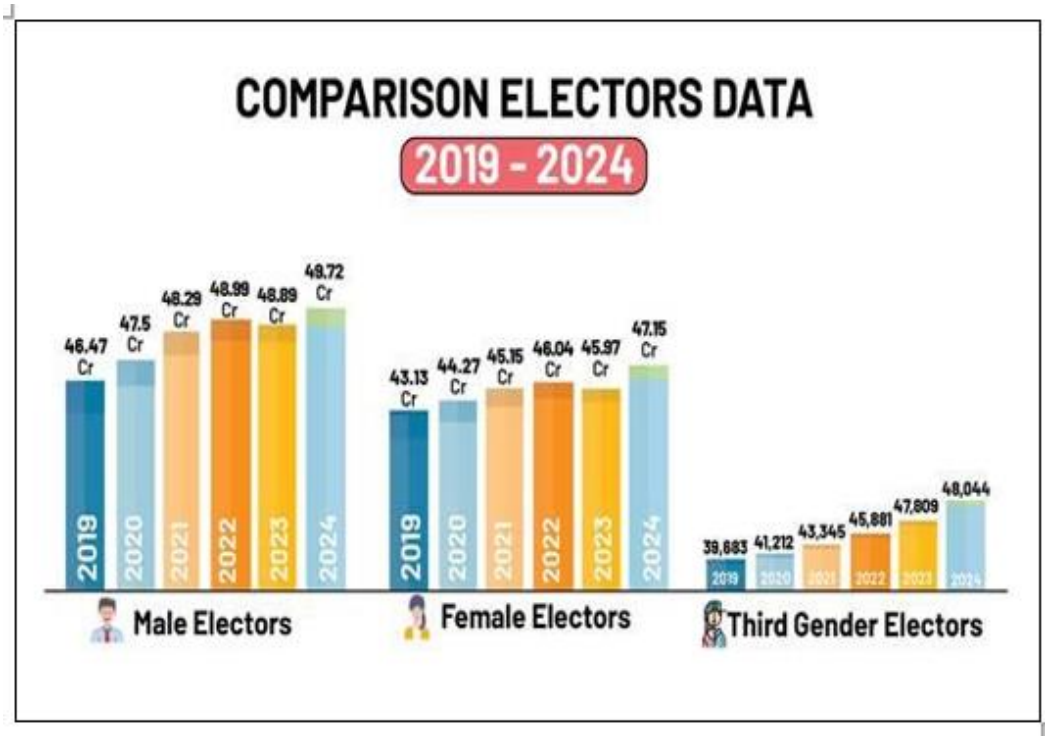
Figure 1.1

Quantitative comparison of country wide final roll with data of draft roll is given below:

Parameter	Draft Electoral Roll	Final Electoral Roll (as on 08.02.2024)
Total registered electors	95,73,52,077	96,88,21,926
Male Electors	49,26,32,344	49,72,31,994
Female Electors	46,46,80,073	47,15,41,888
Third Gender Electors	39,659	48,044
PwD Electors	82,32,167	88,35,449
Electors under 18-19 age group	1,16,48,090	1,84,81,610
Electors under 20-29 age group	17,81,14,233	19,74,37,160
80+ Electors	2,07,84,776	1,85,92,918
Centenarian (100+) Electors	6,02,798	2,38,791
Electors/Population ratio	65.99	66.76
Gender Ratio	943	948

Source: Press Information Bureau, Election Commission of India. (2024, February 9) Release ID: 2005189

Figure 1.2 -Comparison of Electors Data -Year 2024



Source: Press Information Bureau, Election Commission of India. (2024, February 9) Release ID: 2005189

1.8.2 Role of 'Social Media' and Changing Trends in Indian General Elections - 2009

The general elections in India conducted in 2009 made a revolutionary mark in 'Social Media' politics. However, while political communication had relied on traditional media a lot, social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter started to change the way political parties reached out to the voters.

'Social Media' emerged as a vital platform for political engagement, particularly among younger voters. Research indicated that around half of the first-time voters were able to access political content through these social networks, which raised their levels of awareness and participation.

Slowly but progressively, the BJP came to dominate the 'Social Media' platforms so much that its tactics drew from practices of foreign elections, such as that of President Barack Obama. This was done to resonate with the young urban population, as their results seemed to reflect other successes other than in elections in 2009.

The very underlying premise of these assumptions still remains true, but challenges need to be tackled, particularly the rural internet access issue. Many political parties failed to efficiently tap into these populations that represented the larger share of the voters.

The 2009 elections also witnessed the dawn of the new age strategies. For example, manifestos were crowd-sourced through Social Media, enhancing the political participation of the people.

The trends seen during this election cycle in 2009 helped pave the way for the next elections, where 'Social Media' was an integral part of both campaigning and engaging with the voters during the elections, which brought about a huge level of mobilization in the elections of 2014 and 2019.

1.8.3 Role of ‘Social Media’ and Changing Trends in Indian General Elections - 2014

According to a report by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) Lokniti survey (2017), one-sixth of the people were present on WhatsApp and were part of a group either run by a political party or a leader. Signifying the volume of politically driven content, a survey conducted by CSDS Lokniti and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS, 2019) found that out of every three Indian citizens present on ‘Social Media’, a significant number consume politically driven messages on a regular basis.

The General Parliamentary elections held in the year 2014 also have many firsts to their credit. It is deemed as the ' First ‘Social Media’ Election' in the Indian political campaigning context. This set in motion a '‘Social Media Revolution' in the Indian political campaigning context. Prior to these elections, in the 2009 general elections, only very few politicians had their presence on Social Media. Notably, a Congress I-Member of Parliament (M.P.) and ex-United Nations (U.N.) Under-Secretary-General Dr. Shashi Tharoor had a profile on Twitter, now the ' X' platform.

In the 2014 elections, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) achieved great success in swaying public opinion and votes by mobilizing them through the use of Social Media platforms. This also compelled the competitive contending parties to revamp their image among the voters by engaging in social Media. India's digital space is now flooded with politically motivated messages.

In the 2014 Lok Sabha election, the number of registered voters was 834,082,814, and the voter turnout was 66.44%, which increased by 8.23 percentage points.

In the 2014 Indian Lok Sabha elections, notable innovative campaigns were undertaken by the nation's prominent national parties. Here are some noteworthy campaigns are as follows:

1. "Chai Pe Charcha"

This campaign involved BJP's prime ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi, engaging with citizens over tea to discuss various issues and policies. This concentrated effort was designed to foster a personal connection with voters and was widely promoted through Social Media platforms, allowing participants to join discussions online and offline.

2. 3D Hologram Rallies

The BJP utilized advanced technology by organizing holographic rallies, during which N. Modi addressed multiple locations simultaneously. This innovative approach allowed the party to reach a broader audience and create a buzz around its campaign.

3. Citizens for Accountable Governance (CAG)

This initiative was spearheaded by the country's leading political strategist, Prashant Kishor, and aimed at mobilizing support for Modi by focusing on governance issues. The campaign used data analytics to target specific voter demographics and was integral in shaping the BJP's outreach strategy.

4. 'Social Media' Campaigns

The BJP's extensive use of 'Social Media' was a defining feature of their campaign. They invested heavily in digital advertising, with estimates around ₹5 billion, to promote their messages and engage with voters. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter were used to spread their narrative and counter opposition claims.

5. "Ab Ki Baar, Modi Sarkar"

This slogan became a rallying cry for the BJP, encapsulating their promise of change and good governance. It was widely used in advertisements, speeches, and 'Social Media' posts, effectively resonating with voters seeking a shift from the previous government.

6. Congress's "Aam Aadmi ka Haq"

In contrast, the Indian National Congress focused on the rights of the common man, emphasizing issues like health and anti-corruption in their campaign. Their manifesto included promises aimed at addressing these concerns, although they struggled to gain traction against the BJP's more dynamic campaign strategies.

These are the campaigns that laid the foundation for digital advertising and the use of Social Media advertising in political campaigns in India. Collectively, these campaigns highlighted the evolving landscape of political communication in India and showcased and transformed how technology and innovative strategies can significantly influence electoral outcomes.

As per the Election Commission (2014), a total of INR 714.28 crores ($115 million) was spent on the 2014 elections by the BJP alone. This amount is about INR 200 crores ($32 million) more than Congress's expenditure during the 2014 polls (Election Commission, 2014).

1.8.4 Role of 'Social Media' and Changing Trends in Indian General Elections - 2019

The Indian general election held in 2019 saw an unprecedented use of 'Social Media' for political campaigning and communication by various parties and candidates, continuing the trend that emerged in 2014.

The scenario in India follows global trends. The increasing use of 'Social Media' for routine political communication to connect with supporters and prospective voters is intensively undertaken by Indian politicians. It has encouraged them to bypass traditional media channels.

In the 2014 elections, Narendra Modi and the BJP were early adopters, using Social Media extensively in the general elections and during Modi's first term. The success and edge attained by them in the elections made other parties take notice of 'Social Media's game-changing potential.

The major competing Congress party, under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi, revamped its media strategy in 2017 and focused on imbibing digitally driven political campaigning. The new marketing strategy focused on ‘Social Media’, analytics, and crowdsourcing to compete with the BJP for attention online.

The common tactics used by political parties on social media were for agenda-building, policy publicity, and interactive campaigns to shape public opinion.

‘Social Media’ equipped political parties to directly engage with citizens, and it included those who were traditionally excluded from politics due to geography and demographic limitations.

The BJP's sophisticated IT cell, complemented by online-offline campaign strategies and robust grassroots support, contributed to its massive 2019 victory.

Some ethical concerns also emerged as the extensive use of ‘Social Media’ led to polarized political discourse, with parties accusing each other of spreading fake news.

WhatsApp became a significant campaigning tool, with parties managing hundreds of thousands of WhatsApp groups for outreach. However, its end-to-end encryption made it challenging to monitor. Fake news and inflammatory content circulated on Social Media, especially WhatsApp. There were 150,000 ‘Social Media’ workers utilizing WhatsApp groups to influence public opinion.

The potential for abuse of ‘Social Media’ was immense, with incendiary content capable of fanning violence. The 2019 election was the biggest test of Social Media's role in elections yet.

The 2019 polls highlighted the need to address the ethical implications and security risks of Social Media's growing influence on elections. While it allowed for greater citizen engagement, it also led to polarization, fake news, and challenges in monitoring inflammatory content.

The Bhartiya Janata Party's (BJP) Information Technology (IT) Cell played a crucial role in the party's success during the 2019 Indian general elections.

The BJP IT Cell, led by Amit Malviya, had a well-defined organizational structure with national, state, district, and local teams. This hierarchical setup allowed for efficient communication and coordination of campaign efforts across various regions.

The IT Cell utilized around 150,000 ‘Social Media’ workers who were instrumental in disseminating party messages and engaging with voters through a vast network of WhatsApp groups. This grassroots approach enabled the party to reach a broad audience effectively.

They also employed data analytics to tailor messages according to the demographics and preferences of different voter segments. By analyzing voter data, the BJP created targeted content that resonated with specific communities, enhancing voter engagement.

WhatsApp, as a primary communication tool, allowed the BJP to create thousands of groups, facilitating direct interaction with voters. This strategy was particularly effective in urban and rural areas, where local issues could be addressed directly. WhatsApp emerged as a central platform for political discourse, with over 400 million users in India, making it the largest user base for the messaging app globally.

The BJP's campaign heavily relied on Social Media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to build a solid online presence. The party effectively used these platforms to share information, promote achievements, and counter opposition narratives.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's brand and active Social Media engagement helped humanize the party and connect with younger voters. His ability to communicate directly with citizens bypassed traditional media, allowing for a more personal touch in political communication.

The Innovative Campaign Techniques they implemented were creative and innovative campaign techniques, including memes, videos, and interactive

content, to engage younger audiences. This approach not only entertained but also informed voters about the party's policies and initiatives.

Campaigns like NaMo TV provided a platform for broadcasting party messages and promoting government initiatives, further solidifying the BJP's media presence.

They were also adept at managing crises and countering negative narratives. The ability to respond swiftly to misinformation and negative press helped maintain a positive image for the party and its leaders.

The IT Cell played a significant role in mobilizing the party's voter base, encouraging participation in rallies, and promoting voter turnout. By creating a sense of urgency and community among supporters, the BJP effectively galvanized its base.

Besides the rise of digital campaigning, in-person rallies remained a vital component of the electoral strategy for both major parties. Modi and Gandhi each conducted numerous rallies across the country, highlighting the importance of face-to-face interactions in Indian politics. These rallies not only served as platforms for speeches but also generated content that was shared widely on Social Media, enhancing the parties' visibility and engagement with voters.

1.8.5 Role of 'Social Media' and Changing Trends in Indian General Elections - 2024

The 2024 Lok Sabha elections in India have seen a significant evolution in political campaigning, heavily influenced by the role of Social Media. Almost all national political parties employed innovative strategies to engage voters and mold public opinion in their favor.

Political parties utilized platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to connect with millions of users.

With over 400 million active ‘Social Media’ users in India, these platforms are crucial for reaching younger voters and effectively disseminating campaign messages.

In the recently held General elections of 2024, the notable Campaign Strategies were :

BJP's Focused on Modi's Leadership: The BJP's campaign heavily emphasizes Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, using slogans like "Modi ki Guarantees" to highlight promises made to the electorate. The party has conducted extensive rallies and events, with Modi participating in over 200 rallies during the campaign.

The Indian National Congress organized "Nyaya Patra." The Congress party has centered its campaign around the "Nyaya Patra," which outlines five critical promises aimed at addressing issues faced by youth, farmers, and women. This approach seeks to resonate with voters concerned about economic distress and social justice.

Bharat Jodo Yatra was an offline event.

Various Types of Political Digital Advertisements -2024 General Elections.

a. Banner and Skyscraper Advertisement Format on News website

b. Ads on websites, Ads on OTT Platforms
Ads in a Meme form mimic

c. Interactive Clickable Ads
AI Supported Ads

Figure 1.3 Compendium of Digital Format of Advertisements

a. Banner and Skyscraper Advertisement on a News Website



Source:https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/hindi/bollywood/news-

Dated:(2024, April 18).

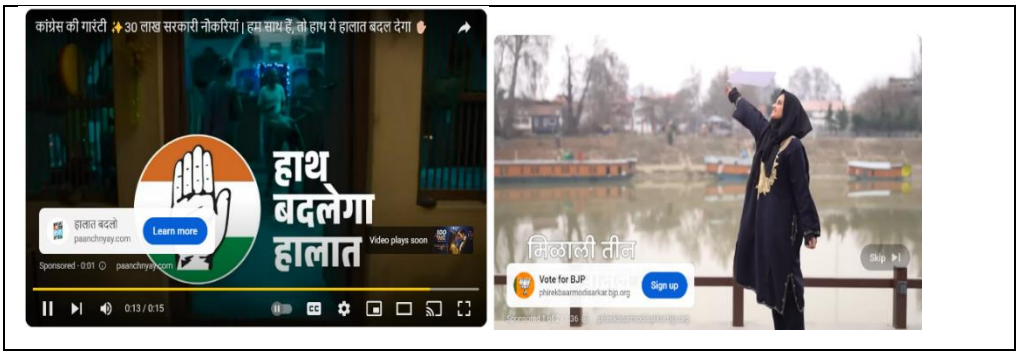
b. Advertisement on a Website



Source: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/technology /news

Dated:(2024, April 10).

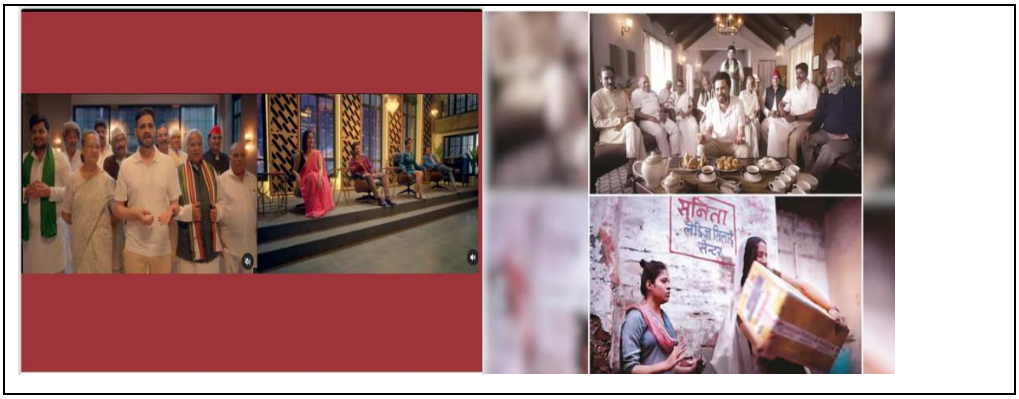
c. Advertisement on OTT Platforms



Source: MX player and You tube Ad

d. Advertisements in a Meme form Mimics

BJP launches its latest campaign, inspired by 'Shark Tank India', to take a dig at the opposition alliance



Source: https://www.afaqs.com/news/advertising/bjps-latest-campaign-mimics-shark-tank-india-to-target-opposition-alliance

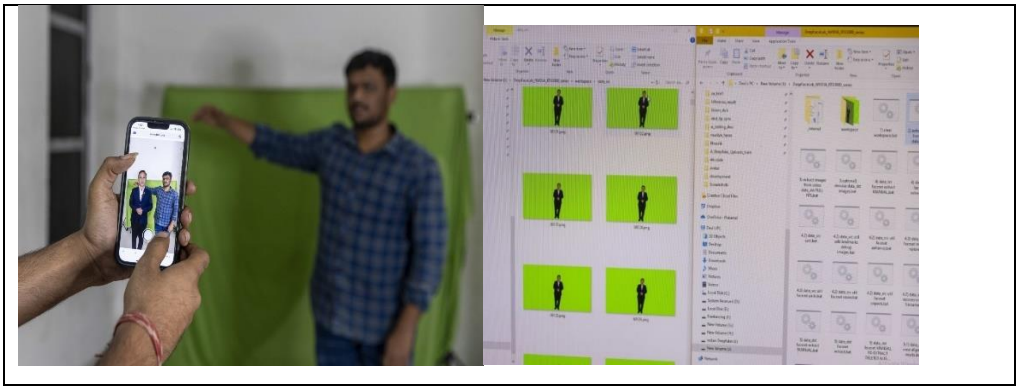
e. Interactive Clickable online advertisements



Source: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment /news

Dated:(2024, March 23).

f. AI-Supported Ads



AI-Supported Campaign Making in Process

Figure 1.4 AI-Generated Campaigns



A video for Prem Singh Tamang's campaign uses AI to display him as a larger-than-life figure.

Source for image and figure 1.4: -Behind the scenes being shot at Polymath Solutions.

A crowdfunding campaign by INC, known as *Donate for Desh,* was organized before the general elections. The campaign's digital version was launched on December 18, 2023, at a dedicated website (https://donateinc.net). It claimed to be inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's Tilak Swaraj Fund (1920–21).

Multiple digital advertisements and campaigns were also released in different formats across the nation in the 2024 election to mobilize voters from different political parties.

Besides 'Social Media', digital advertisements and innovative and interactive formats were also introduced

Analyzing Political Campaign Expenditure through the Lens of Google Ads Transparency

The Google Ads Transparency Center is a publicly accessible tool by Google where one can learn more about the ads that you see on Google and look up information on ad types and statistics. It is a search engine for advertisers that lets users learn about advertisers, see the creative for ads, sort by region, date, and format, and dig into historical ad data. It also provides more transparency around political and election ads by including information about funding sources, targeted demographic groups, and spending. Moreover, users can flag ads that violate policies. The product helps to foster trust, hold advertisers

accountable, fight misinformation, provide marketers with competitive intelligence, and enable compliance with global advertising regulations. The content can be accessed through a dedicated website or through Google Search, YouTube, and Discover ads (Google, 2024).

The Google Ads Transparency report shows digital advertising spending for April 2024, as per the table.

Digital advertising expenditures for April 2024 are given in the table's Google Ads Transparency report.

The Google Ads Transparency report covering April 2024 contains rich information on spending under digital advertising, and raises important trends-especially for political advertising during an election in India.

Based on analyses using the Google Ads Transparency Centre:

In the month of April 2024, campaign-related expenditure by political parties (especially in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections) on digital advertisements was very high.

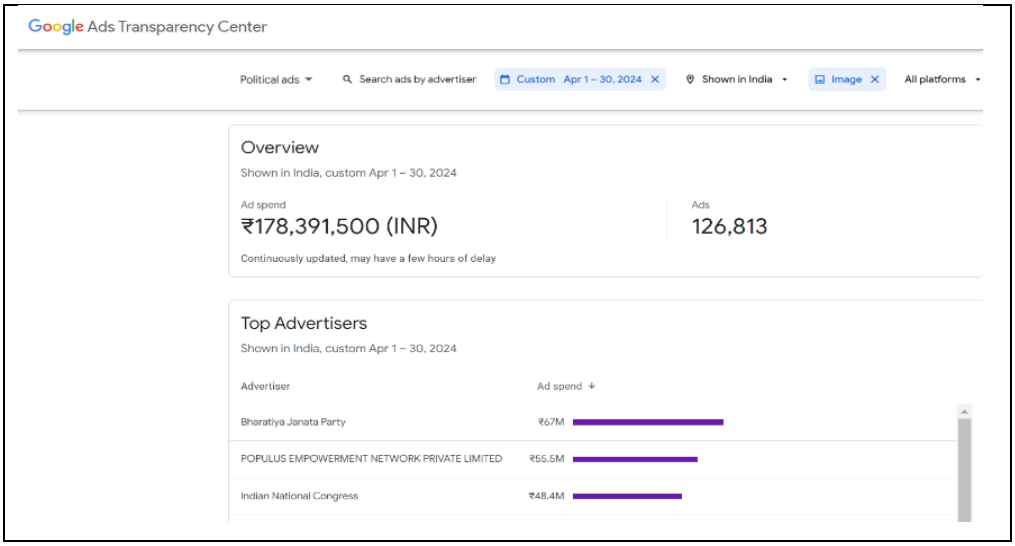
During the week of April 18-24, 2024, political parties together shelled out at least ₹14.7 crore for Google Ads. The Congress Party emerged as the highest Google Ads spender of the week, coming in at ₹5.7 crore, followed closely by the BJP that spent ₹5.3 crore.

In the previous phase (March 15 to April 13), the BJP had dominated digital ad spending at ₹14.7 crore, followed by Congress (₹12.3 crore) and DMK (₹12.1 crore).

Through the long election cycle (May 2018-April 2024), the BJP has spent, cumulatively, over ₹106 crore on 167,543 ads (almost 73% of all political ads on Google in India), followed by the Congress, at ₹53 crore, and regional players like DMK, which have spent ₹25 crore. (Google, 2024).

These numbers are drawn from direct data from the Google Ads Transparency Centre's index of ad count and spend value, which enables us to investigate all-rounded party-wise and phase-wise outlays during prominent electoral contests.

Figure 1.5 Screenshot of Google Ad Spend Report- April 2024



Interpretation and breakup -Summary Table of Digital Advertising Spending (Selected April 2024 Data):

Party	April 18–24, 2024 (₹ crore)	March 15–April 13, 2024 (₹ crore)	Comments
Indian National Congress	5.7	12.3	Top spender in late April 2024
Bhartiya Janata Party	5.3	14.7	Led in the earlier phase
Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	Not specified for the week	12.1	Significant presence in digital ads
Other parties	Remaining spend	-	Regional/national level targeting voters

Source: Polstrat. (2024). India's political spending on Google Ads. https://polstrat.com

Ethical Guidelines from the Election Commission of India

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has come out with a set of guidelines and advisories for ethical use of social media by political parties to prevent misuse of social media platforms in the campaigns for the conduct of elections.

These guidelines emphasize the importance of responsible communication, particularly during the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), to ensure transparency and a fair process. The ECI expressly prohibits AI-driven tools being utilized to create deepfake audios or video or any other content which is misleading, misinformation and censored material including any content which is blasphemous or derogatory to politicians and political parties, derogatory remarks relating to personal lives of leaders or workers of different parties, spreading or creating the impression of hate speech of any individual or group of individuals, and children being used for political messages. Political parties are required to delete such content within three hours of receiving a complaint and pull up the guilty people, while also sending any illegal content or fake account names to social media platforms. Repeat offences, we can escalate to the Grievance Appellate Committee under IT rules. These steps have been taken to ensure the purity of elections, wherein social media is increasingly used for political communication (Election Commission of India, 2024).

1.9 Emerging Role of Influencers in Indian Political Social Media Campaigning

Another trend that emerged in the General Elections is the growing importance of Influencers.

India has recently witnessed exponential growth in the influencer ecosystem, which encompasses individuals from varied backgrounds and niches. Influencers have created their own digital realms, have millions of followers, and exert influence over their audience.

In the 2024 elections, political parties harnessed the power of influencer marketing to the optimum. Influencers can engage with audiences and amplify political messages, and they have become indispensable assets for political parties vying for voter attention in the digital age. (Context, 2024)

To sway public opinion and gather support for them, they organized an array of events and meetups to leverage their popularity and following. Influencers play a key role in setting political narratives and driving political discourse.

Hence, they have a great responsibility to deliver unbiased, transparent, and responsible content to their audiences on Social Media.

As political parties navigate the digital landscape, influencers have emerged as powerful agents of change, reshaping the electoral landscape and democratizing political discourse like never before.

To recognize the content creators and influencers present on social, 'The **National Creators Award** ', an Indian award, was also established in 2024 to recognize and celebrate excellence and positive influence among creators in the digital content space. In this event, the Prime Minister met the creators from the country. (MyGov India, 2024; Deccan Herald, 2024)

PM Modi also interacted with the top online gamers of the country, which is decoded as a move to develop connections with the 'Youth' of the country. (The Hindu, 2024).

1.10 The Changing Trends in Indian Political Campaigning

a. Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

Search engine marketing (SEM) is a form of digital marketing that involves promoting websites by increasing their visibility in search engine results pages (SERPs), primarily through paid advertising. This is primarily done on search engines like Google.

In political communication marketing, search engine marketing (SEM) promotes the specific websites of the political party or candidates. SEM has become an essential strategy for political parties aiming to enhance their visibility and effectively engage with voters.

Political parties are employing SEM to run targeted ad campaigns on search engines. This form of digital marketing runs on bidding on competitive, specific keywords related to the domain. This ensures that the ads appear when potential voters search for elections or relevant topics. This allows political parties to reach their potential specific demographics and customize their messages to resonate with different voter segments.

By using search ads, parties can promote their events, manifestos, and key messages in real time, ensuring that they capture the attention of voters who are actively seeking information.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) campaigns by political parties use analytics tools to track the performance of their digital advertising campaigns by analyzing data and tracking KPIs, and henceforth, they can refine their strategies and optimize their advertising spend to maximize impact. This data-driven approach allows for continuous improvement in targeting and messaging.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is often integrated with 'Social Media' marketing efforts. Political parties can create cohesive campaigns that utilize both search engine ads and Social Media ads, reinforcing their messages across multiple digital platforms. This cross-channel strategy enhances the overall impact, visibility, and engagement with prospective voters.

With the rise of misinformation during election periods, search engine marketing provides a platform for political parties to promote factual information and counter false narratives. By investing in search ads that highlight their achievements and policies, parties can combat negative narratives and shape public perception.

For smaller political parties, search engine marketing offers a cost-effective way to reach a broad audience. Unlike traditional media, which can be prohibitively expensive, search engine marketing also allows parties to control their budgets and only pay for actual engagement (clicks), making it accessible for parties with limited resources.

Political parties can use search engine marketing to run localized campaigns targeting specific regions or constituencies. This allows them to address local issues and connect with voters on a more personal level, which is particularly important in a diverse country like India.

In summary, Search Engine Marketing (SEM) played a crucial role in political marketing in India during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

"Ads Transparency," a project by Facebook and Google to increase transparency around political advertising.

The amount of expenditure that other political parties disclosed was far less. It is challenging to determine the precise amount spent on political advertising on digital platforms because a large portion of the expenditures is made by organizations with ties to political parties, either directly or indirectly. Additionally, it is outside the purview of what parties have pre-certified as political advertising.

B. 'Social Media' campaigns

'Social Media' platforms have become indispensable tools for political communication, as it has the ability to interact and connect with voters directly, spread their messages, and rally support.

With over 500 million monthly active WhatsApp users in India, the BJP attempts to interact with voters by sending them a personalized "Letter from the Prime Minister" that highlights the accomplishments of the Narendra Modi administration and requests comments.

The BJP introduced the website 'My First Vote for Modi,' which enables users to promise to support Modi and upload a video explaining their decision. The website also features a number of brief videos showcasing the development activities carried out by the NDA government. (Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP], n.d.)

However, the Congress maintains a Rahul Gandhi WhatsApp group.

C. Role of WhatsApp and other messaging apps

With the rising use of 'Social Media' and the messaging software WhatsApp by India's political parties in their campaigns, analysts have coined the term "The WhatsApp election" to describe the 2019 parliamentary election. (Neyazi, 2021)

During the 2019 General Elections, WhatsApp's usage in "political" election-related conversations in India initially caught media attention. According to reports, political parties and their campaign teams were contacting prospective voters by adding them to WhatsApp "groups" and incessantly sending them messages about the election. Voters were also using WhatsApp as their main source of political news and information. (Mozilla Foundation, 2024)

These reports state that the messages included a combination of standard campaign material and disinformation directed towards the leaders of rival political parties, as well as statements blatantly meant to sow discord among the populace. Reports also revealed the spread of misinformation about certain candidates or phony polls that predicted the success of certain parties in the election.

D Role of Data Analytics and AI

With the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the 2024 elections held recently, political players extensively used digital tools to engage voters, create narratives, and even manipulate perceptions

The 2024 elections are noteworthy for using Social Media analytics and targeted advertising in a way never seen before. Massive volumes of user data are analyzed by AI-powered algorithms to micro-target particular demographics with customized political messaging. With this tailored strategy, political parties may create messages that appeal to various voter demographics and increase the effectiveness of their campaigns. (Rebelo, 2024)

1.11 'Social Media' Ethical Concerns, Regulations in the Context of Political Campaigning

Misinformation and Deepfake Videos

During the elections, many political parties circulated 'Deepfake' videos. These videos are 'They are manipulated media generated by artificial intelligence that portray a person as saying or doing something they did not'.

A recent investigation by Access Now and Global Witness shows that YouTube approved 48 advertisements in English, Hindi, and Telugu that violated YouTube's policies about advertising and election misinformation. (Access Now & Global Witness, 2024)

These types of misinformation disrupt the integrity of elections, undermine the electoral process, and threaten democracy by misleading voters, distorting their

understanding of critical issues, creating echo chambers, and replacing reliable information.

The role and responsibility of the government is to regulate and increase independent fact-checking platforms to avoid fake videos and false information that misguide citizens.

In India, some fact-finding institutions are Alt News and Boom. The Indian government runs the Press Information Bureau (PIB), which runs the PIB Fact Check.

The Supreme Court recently ordered a stay on the establishment of a Fact Check Unit within the PIB, a body with the power to mark alleged misinformation published about the government and its agencies.

Besides, the Election Commission of India issued multiple guidelines during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections to curb misleading information and direct Social Media platforms to self-regulate as per their guidelines.

1.12 Theoretical Framework of the Study – Communication, Political Communication & 'Social Media'

In the ever-evolving 'Media Landscape' and with the steep rise in the extensive use of ' Social Media' and varied emerging sources of news, these theories, which offer varying perspectives and pros and cons, need to be validated over time. And there might be a requirement for the emergence of new theories that cater to the complexities of new digital communication.

For this research, the "Media Impact Theories" are primarily categorized into effect-based theory categories, which are the 'Magic Bullet Theory,' the 'Two-Step Flow Theory,' Process-based theory, i.e., 'Agenda Setting Theory,' the 'Cultivation Theory,' and most importantly, 'Uses and Gratification Theory.' Among some critical theories and models are the propaganda model and the framing theory. The additional relevant theory is the 'Priming Theory.'

Communication Theory – Uses & Gratification Theory (UGT)

Uses and Gratifications Theory (1970s)

The ‘Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)’ is highly relevant in the contemporary communication age, where 'The Internet’ and 'Social Media’ have emerged as powerful communication technologies.

The **Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)** serves as a comprehensive framework for studying **’Social Media’**, concentrating on the reasons individuals seek out particular media and the needs that these platforms fulfill. This theory lays a crucial foundation for this study, offering valuable insights into ‘Social Media’ by highlighting the active role users play in pursuing content that satisfies their specific needs. By focusing on the motivations behind ‘Social Media’ usage, UGT provides a deeper understanding of **user behavior**, **content engagement**, and the broader effects of ‘Social Media’ on modern society, including how it influences both personal and shared experiences in the digital landscape. (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)

Henceforth, it equips ‘Social Media’ marketers to create strategies from a political communication perspective to persuade voters and disseminate information in a creative manner, as per their preference.

In the 1970s, the ‘Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)’ was developed (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Lazarsfeld, 1955; Gurevitch, 1963). The work was based on the foundational contributions by Harold Lasswell and Herzog (1974).

The ‘Uses and Gratifications’ theory delves into why individuals choose to consume certain forms of media and how they use it further to meet their individual needs and gratifications.

The prime assumptions of the theory were :

- 'Media is a highly available Product.

- 'Audiences are the Consumers of the product'.

- Audiences select suitable media to fulfill predefined needs, such as Social and psychological Needs. This encompasses detailed information, knowledge acquisition, fostering social connections, and seeking entertainment and diversion.

This has been applied to variant forms of media channels. And it applies to Broadcast media- television and Radio, Print media, and most importantly, to the newest form of media- the Internet. It assumes 'Audiences as Proactive'.

It also studies to identify the motivation behind the increasing use of 'Social Media',' Online Gaming', and 'Mobile Phone Usage.'

Overall, the **Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)** is an important theoretical framework for understanding how media is utilized and its impact on individuals and society as a whole. However, it faces criticism for being overly **individualistic** and for neglecting the **social context** of media use. Additionally, there is often a lack of clear distinction between the **gratifications** that users seek and those that they actually obtain. The foundation of the **Uses and Gratification Theory** lies in the concepts of purpose and selectivity regarding media consumption. This theory is particularly relevant today, given the vast array of media choices available and the control audiences have over their media consumption decisions.

Audiences in contemporary times are empowered to choose and select and expose themselves to the 'Content' of their choice. They align themselves with the personal preferences of information, entertainment, personal identity, and social interaction. (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Some Prime ways the theory becomes highly germane in today's digital age are as follows:

The Internet: In the context of 'Internet Usage', its relevance is high. 'Internet' is a gateway to provide an expansive range of gratifications, including 'Content Gratification' by means of 'Finding Specific Information', 'Process

Gratification' by the 'Navigation of the Web', and 'Social Gratification' by 'Forming Social Connections'.

'Social Media': 'Social Media' is extensively used by people to meet the requirements for information gathering, entertainment, giving insights into their personal lives, engaging and connecting with friends, venting emotions, etc. The continued use of 'Social Media' depends on whether these functions are being fulfilled (Gratification) or not. If it's fulfilled or gratified, then the continued engagement of 'Social Media' will be prevalent.

Mobile Phones: Mobile phones are used by people to fulfill gratifications like entertainment, status, immediate access, global connectivity, and psychological reassurance. The gratifications received by the people also differ by gender.

Online Gaming: Online Gaming gives enjoyment, thrill, a sense of achievement, and opportunities for social interaction. 'Gratifications' obtained in the process determine whether the people will remain engaged in it or not.

Another prominent effects-based theory for this study is the Two-Step Flow Theory (1940s), as it emphasizes the role of Opinion Formation and opinion leaders.

In the year 1944, the '**Two-Step Flow Theory'** was established by the political communication theorists Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet.

In the realm of political communication, this theory is a critical concept that emphasizes the vital position of the 'O**pinion Leaders'** in shaping the public's opinion. The theory suggests that the general public forms its opinions based on the influence of these opinion leaders, who, in turn, are affected by the messages conveyed through **mass media**.

According to the theory, 'opinion leaders' are the first to receive mass media messages, interpret them, derive meanings, and then share the meaningful messages with their social networks (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955).

This two-step process is crucial in influencing the opinion of the people and molding their behavior.

Relevance of Two-Step Flow Communication in Contemporary Digital Political Communication

The Two-Step Flow theory is applicable in contemporary tech-driven communication in the following ways:

a. 'Social Media' has emerged as the most powerful platform -' Social Media' is a platform for connecting and communicating, allowing individuals to connect and interact with one another. It is widely utilized, extensively and intricately, by political parties, political leaders, and opinion leaders who act as influencers, often comprising celebrities, thought leaders, or everyday individuals.

These influencers leverage Social Media to express their views and share their thoughts and perspectives on political matters. The opinion leaders, as influencers, have followers who engage with their messages and become influenced by them. This entire process generates a two-step flow of information that ultimately shapes public opinion.

b. Influencers and Opinion Leaders: The role of 'Opinion Leaders 'and 'Digital Influencers' has exponentially grown and gained importance in shaping 'Public Opinion.' They use varied 'Social Media' channels to disseminate 'Information ' in the form of podcasts, feeds, analyses of news, etc. Their followers consume the content transmitted by them for guidance and to decode the 'Political Issues'. This two-step flow of information has a significant effect on 'Political decision-making' and 'Opinion formation.'

c. Filtering and Interpretation:

According to the communication theory named 'Two-Step Flow Theory, 'Opinion Leaders filter and interpret media messages. This filtering process is crucial in the current times due to the prevalent 'information overload.' Opinion

leaders assist their followers in comprehending the information, processing it, and deriving meanings from their own perspectives.

d. Network Effects:

The ‘Social Media’ platforms amplify the network effect of the 'Two-Step Flow Theory.' The rapid pace of information dissemination through the engagement of ‘Social Media’ enables the messages to reach a wide audience and facilitates further engagement. The swift distribution can significantly influence the formation of public opinion and impact political decision-making.

The two-step Flow theory is an important framework for defining the role of opinion leaders. The theory is criticized for underestimating the strength of mass media and the direct influence of 'Digital Communication' on 'Public Opinion'. Besides, it doesn't take into consideration the new flow of information that occurs on Social Media. (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Rogers, 2003).

Political Communication Theory-Priming Theory

Priming Theory is a comparatively newer theory that directly links 'media exposure' to 'audience thought processes and their effects' (Iyengar, Kinder, & Peter, 1982). The founders of Priming Theory were political communication scientists Donald Kinder, Shanto Iyengar, and Mark Peter (Iyengar, Kinder, & Peter, 1982).

Priming theory is a key concept in media effects research that decodes the role of media in influencing the audience's judgments and decisions.

According to this theory, the following are the main takeaways:

This theory assumes that the 'Images and Ideas' transmitted through media stimulate related thoughts and associations among the audience.

According to the theory, the 'images and ideas' transmitted through media stimulate related thoughts and associations among the audience (Smith, 2020).

The base of 'Priming Theory' is the 'Associate Network Model' of human memory. As per this model, 'ideas and concepts' are stored in interconnected nodes, and 'priming' by activating these nodes makes the associations accessible (Smith, 2020). Priming influences the evaluation of political figures and issues by making certain specific issues conspicuous (Smith, 2020).

The base of 'priming Theory' is the 'associative network Model' of human memory. Priming influences the evaluation of political figures and issues by making certain specific issues conspicuous.

Priming is close to Agenda Setting theory, as it tends to push certain issues into the minds of people. Whereas the primary difference is that agenda setting makes issues more salient, priming administers the formation of judgments. (Iyengar, Kinder, & Peter, 1982).

Priming is used intensively in 'Election Political Campaigns' to lead Voters. Research results reveal that the 'Effects of 'Priming' are evident in varied fields like evaluations of political leaders, behavior of people, and perception of violence.

In conclusion, 'Priming Theory' studies and highlights the role of media in subtly molding the perception, opinion, and judgment of people by placing certain associations and considerations in their perceptual map of the mind without their conscious awareness.

‘Social Media’ Theory -Goffman's Presentation of the Self

‘Social Media’ is a multidisciplinary and multi-dimensional approach. Various studies based on decoding and understanding the dynamics of ‘Social Media’ platforms and their interrelationship with human behavior are executed.

These theories of ''Social Media'' are based on various philosophical and scientific frameworks. (Goffman, 1959)

Some noteworthy critical theories related to ‘Social Media’ are as follows:

The theory of 'Presentation of Self' is a foundational work in sociology proposed by Goffman (1959) and is widely applied to the study of the emerging discipline of ‘Social Media’ and understanding ‘Social Media’ behavior and dynamics.

The critical points and assumptions of this theory are as follows:

a. According to this theory, individuals present themselves to others through ‘Social Media’ profiles, showcasing their social identity and self-image. The core idea of Goffman's theory is about social interactions, where individuals engage in a "Performance" to present a "Desired Self Image" to others. (Goffman, 1959)

In his theory’ he argues that people have two sides to showcase; one is

a." Front Stage, "where they carefully curate and manage their impressions. And b, where the people can reveal their authentic selves. (Goffman, 1959)

The main constituents of Goffman's theory are:

1. Self Presentation - Depicting and managing a self or individual's presentation by using verbal and nonverbal cues before the people's self-presentation.

2. Impression Management - Individuals attempt to create an image or cast an impression away from themselves.

3. Front Stage Vs. Back Stage: The "Front stage" is the "Public Persona" that an individual presents before the world, whereas "Backstage" is the private and unguarded real self.

4. Idealization: People tend to present a positive, idealized version of themselves to the world and emphasize the positive attributes.

In 1959, Goffman published a book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, which describes, discusses, and analyzes the 'process and meaning' in day-to-day trivial interactions (Goffman, 1959).

Goffman, in his book, has adopted a symbolic interactionist perspective and emphasizes a qualitative analysis of the constituents of the interactive process.

Goffman adopted a micro-sociological analytical approach to address an unexplored topic. He has attempted to identify the details of individual identity, the dynamics of group relations, the importance of environment, and the process, movement, and interactive meaning of information.

Goffman's study and perspective within a limited scope of study gave fresh insight into the meaning of 'Social Interaction' and the psychographic profile of the individual.

He adopted a "Dramaturgical Approach" that concerned the presentation mode adopted by the "Actor and its meaning " in a broader social context in his study.

He, in his book 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959), laid out the dramaturgical standpoint he used in subsequent studies, such as 'Asylums (1961) and Stigma (1964).

In Frame Analysis (1979) and Forms of Talk (1981), Groffman highlighted and analyzed the ways people "Frame" or "Define Social Reality" in the communicative process. This definition of social reality is so aptly applicable to contemporary ‘Social Media’. (Goffman, 1959)

Goffman's ideas have been very influential in sociology and have also been applied to understanding online behavior and identity construction on Social Media.

According to the Theory of Goffman, the Vital key takeaways are as follows:

a. 'Social interactions' are a "Performance" - he views individuals continuously acting in different roles and putting on a show for others.

b. These performances are shaped by the "Environment, i.e., the setting," and the audiences are the people interacting with it.

c. Individuals articulate their performance strategically to project themselves before others, creating "Impressions" that are in accordance with the predefined goals they want to achieve.

d. The "Actor" is the person engaging in the performance. Their goal is to control the impressions others form of them.

A Few key elements of his theory are :

- Environment and audience are elements that mold the 'Interaction' and ' Performance'.
- Irrespective of the mental state of an individual, the performance takes place.
- A 'Persona' is assigned to a person even if they are unaware of it. They might like or dislike it, or even be ignorant about the perception of their image.

The theory concludes that people often present a particular persona or image before the exterior world, even though they might not fully believe or are even self-aware of the performance before the world.

Stated differently, the 'Impressions' and 'Perceptions' that people form of an individual are not always in accordance with the person's true inner self or intentions.

The persona is "imputed" or attributed to the individual by others, regardless of whether the person has consciously crafted that image or even agrees with it.

This can happen for a few reasons:

1. Individuals may not be fully conscious of the impressions they are giving off through their behavior and interactions. The performance can be somewhat automatic.

2. People may strategically present a certain image for a specific purpose, even if it doesn't fully reflect who they are.

3. Audiences have their own preconceptions and biases that lead them to ascribe certain characteristics to a person based on limited information.

So in essence, the persona or identity projected in a social interaction is not always a perfect match to the individual's actual beliefs, feelings, or intentions.

To summarize, Goffman put forward that people in social interactions behave like actors on a front stage. Individuals carefully articulate their behavior and conduct before the world and the way they want to project a desired "Public Image" before others to attain their objectives of their "Self Image". The performance before the external world is altered as per the "Audience " and the "Situation".

Groffman's dramaturgical metaphor offers a framework for decoding and understanding the intricacies of how people navigate social life and create their self-identities through interaction.

The contemporary social dynamics and technology-driven environment have empowered individuals to create a distinct 'Online Personal Image' or 'Personas' and have equipped them to broadcast content to a larger audience base and engage in asynchronous interactions. These newer social dynamics are not catered to by existing sociological theories.

The adoption of classic frameworks like Goffman's "Presentation of Self" and the development of new theories or models can provide insightful perspectives to analyze and understand Social Media behavior.

Besides, ‘Social Media’ has become an integral part of everyone's modern life, be it personal, professional, or social. This has transformed everything from the manner in which people form relationships to the consumption of information and participation of individuals in public discourse.

Theoretical models are needed to explain the societal impacts and implications of these platforms, whether it's the role of ‘Social Media’ in political polarization, the effects on mental health and well-being, or the dynamics of online communities and social movements.

Finally, the expeditious pace of technological change in the ‘Social Media’ landscape requires flexible theoretical frameworks that can evolve alongside the tools and practices of digital communication.

As new features, algorithms, and business models emerge, theories must be developed and refined to keep up with the shifting realities of how people interact, share information, and construct identities online. This will enable a more nuanced and insightful analysis of ‘Social Media's influence on individuals, organizations, and broader social structures.

In summary, ‘Social Media's inherent strengths, ubiquitous societal impacts, and continuous evolution all point to the critical need for robust theoretical foundations to guide research, inform policy, and deepen our understanding of this transformative technological-mediated communication phenomenon.

Applying Goffman's Theory to Contemporary ‘Social Media’

Erving Goffman's ideas remarkably map the dynamics of ‘Social Media’ behavior and dynamics:

1. Self-Presentation: ‘Social Media’ equips its users to deliberately curate and present a desired self-portrayal of self-image by frequently updating their user profile information, posts related to insight into their personal and professional lives, and photos, etc.

2. Impression Management: 'Social Media' users, whether celebrities, politicians, business entities, government officials, or others, use these platforms extensively to engage in strategic self-presentation and manage their self-image and brand image to cast a favorable impression on their online audience.

3. Front Stage vs. Back Stage: The online persona or self-branding is the "front stage," while the offline, real-life, unfiltered self is the "Back Stage."

4. Idealization: 'Social Media' encourages users to present an idealized, enhanced version of themselves and their lives.

Scholars have discovered that Goffman's concepts elaborately discussed in 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life have explored phenomena like "Selective self-disclosure on 'Social Media'" and also gave rise to the following crucial aspects of 'Social Media':-

- The rise of concepts of "Personal Branding" and "Influencer Marketing"
- The tendency to present a "Highlight Reel" of one's personal and professional life.
- The peer pressure to maintain a specific online image
- The disconnect and drifting gap between online personas and offline real-life realities.

Erving Goffman's framework is a popular sociological model that provides valuable insights into how individuals navigate through the social dynamics of the digital age and construct their online identities and social interactions. For their sought benefits. (Goffman, 1959)

1.13 Statement of the Problem

The accelerated proliferation of 'Social Media' in India has radically altered the prospect of political communication, particularly among youth voters. 'Social Media' platforms offer unparalleled opportunities for active engagement, dissemination of information, and mobilization to fulfill various purposes.

However, they also present significant challenges that can undermine the effectiveness of political communication.

The study's problem lies in understanding how the Political Parties and political leaders are leveraging Social Media marketing strategies to persuade and appeal to their prospective voters' electoral constituencies, establish and develop personal direct relationships that can catapult their Personal and parties' image, and raise their awareness about the Parties' ideology and agendas among the youth.

Moreover, how do these changing dynamics and 'Social Media' marketing strategies affect the political engagement of youth and the overall quality of political discourse?

Despite Social Media's potential to enhance the process of democratic participation, there is a growing concern regarding the spread of misinformation, the polarization of opinions, and the manipulation of public sentiment through targeted messaging.

Additionally, Social Media's effectiveness as a tool for political communication is often hindered by the youth's lack of digital literacy, leading to difficulties in discerning credible information from misleading content. This situation raises critical questions about 'Social Media's role in shaping political attitudes and behaviors among young voters.

Furthermore, while various political actors have begun to leverage 'Social Media' for campaigning and outreach, more needs to be understood about how these strategies resonate with youth and whether they foster genuine engagement or merely serve as a superficial means of communication.

The challenge is to assess 'Social Media's effectiveness in facilitating meaningful political dialogue, mobilizing participation among young voters, and identifying best practices to enhance its role in political communication.

1.14 Research Objectives

Despite the growing presence of 'Social Media' in Indian politics, a comprehensive understanding of its effectiveness in influencing young voters

remains a subject of ongoing research. This study aims to identify and examine the following:

− To analyze the changing trends in political communication and the evolving socio-political marketing environment in India.

− To examine the role of social media platforms in influencing voting choices and opinion formation among the youth.

− To assess the extent of youth engagement with political discourse through Social media platforms.

− To investigate gender differences in the perception of the influence of political campaigns on social media.

− To evaluate how the frequency of social media use affects the perceived impact of political campaigns on political attitudes.

− To explore the influence of youth preferences for specific social media platforms on the perceived impact of political campaigns.

This research will contribute valuable insights into the changing dynamics of Indian political communication and its impact on youth voter participation. By understanding the effectiveness of 'Social Media' strategies, political parties can refine their approaches to better engage with young voters and shape the future of Indian democracy.

In summary, the problem addressed in this study is the need to explore the changing trends in Indian political communication through Social Media, focusing on its effectiveness in engaging youth voters. This research aims to analyze the implications of these trends for political discourse, participation, and the overall health of democracy in India.

1.15 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and identify the changing trends in Indian political communication through the use of 'Social Media', with a specific focus on its effectiveness in engaging youth voters.

This research aims to deepen the understanding of Social Media platforms and their marketing, which has become integral to political discourse and mobilizing youth.

This research seeks to primarily examine the role of 'Social Media' that has transformed the political campaigning methods in Indian democracy and how 'Social Media' has gradually swayed the political actors from traditional methods and engaged with young voters in innovative ways.

Assess Youth Engagement: To gauge the extent to which 'Social Media' influences political awareness, attitudes, and participation among young voters. It includes understanding how youth utilize 'Social Media' for political information, discussion, and activism.

Identify Challenges and Opportunities: To explore the challenges posed by 'Social Media', such as misinformation and polarization, while also identifying the opportunities it presents for enhancing political engagement and democratic participation among youth.

Analyze Communication Strategies: To investigate the strategies employed by political parties and candidates in their 'Social Media' campaigns, assessing their effectiveness in resonating with youth and fostering meaningful political dialogue.

Provide Recommendations: To offer actionable recommendations for political actors, policymakers, and civil society organizations on effectively leveraging 'Social Media' as a tool for political communication, ensuring that it serves as a platform for informed and engaged citizenship among youth.

By fulfilling these objectives, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between 'Social Media' and political communication in India, particularly among youth voters. Ultimately, the

research seeks to inform strategies to enhance democratic engagement and promote a more informed electorate.

1.16 Significance of the study

The significance of this research study lies in its ability to provide valuable insights into the advancing role of ‘Social Media’ in shaping political discourse and engagement among youth in India.

By examining how ‘Social Media’ platforms influence political awareness, attitudes, and participation among young voters, the research highlights the growing importance and population of youth as a crucial demographic in Indian politics. It analyzes the communication strategies employed by political parties and candidates, assessing their effectiveness in resonating with youth.

This study can help to identify ‘Social Media’ marketing's best practices and areas for improvement in political communication strategy and messaging on digital platforms.

Furthermore, the study explores both the challenges and opportunities presented by ‘Social Media’ in political communication, providing a balanced perspective essential for developing strategies that mitigate negative impacts while maximizing positive potential.

The study's recommendations and suggestions can inform the development of policies and guidelines for the responsible use of ‘Social Media’ in political communication, promoting informed and engaged citizenship among youth and leading them to make responsible voting decisions.

Additionally, by contributing to the academic discourse on the intersection of ‘Social Media’, political communication, and youth engagement, the study adds empirical evidence from the Indian context, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of these phenomena.

Ultimately, by underscoring the potential of ‘Social Media’ to enhance political engagement, this study emphasizes the importance of leveraging digital platforms to strengthen democratic processes and promote active citizenship,

particularly in India, where youth constitute a significant portion of the electorate..

1.17 Delimitations of the Study

Target Population and Sampling

The research exclusively focuses on urban youth aged 18–29, who are designated as "tech savvy" and residing in the cities of Pune, Kanpur, and Nashik. Respondents outside these cities and/or this age group are not considered.

The findings, therefore, deliberately do not address political communication trends among rural populations, older or younger age groups, or cities beyond the above three. This delimitation allows for an in-depth exploration of urban, digitally-connected Indian youth.

Time Frame

Data collection and analysis are specifically bound to the period of 2023 and the months of February, March, and April 2024, capturing youth perspectives during the pre-2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Political events, campaigns, and media trends after September 2024 are not within the purview of this study.

Thematic and Contextual Boundaries

The primary focus is changing trends in political communication, socio-political marketing, and the impact of digital and social media on youth engagement, as distinct from other campaign methods or communication avenues (such as print, outdoor, or pure traditional media).

The study limits itself to analyzing the effectiveness of online digital tools and platforms for political objectives targeting youth, not the overall effectiveness of traditional offline campaigning, nor the broader sociological or economic factors influencing elections.

Research Methodology

A descriptive research design with mixed methods (both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews) is adopted, but no experimental or longitudinal tracking is undertaken.

The cross-sectional approach captures a snapshot of youth attitudes and behaviors at a specific period; it does not track changes in opinions or behaviors over an extended timeline.

The study utilizes structured questionnaires for surveys and semi-structured, in-depth interviews for expert input, but does not include focus group discussions, case studies in rural districts, or media content analysis.

Respondent Groups

While the survey youth data comes from general respondents, expert interviews were restricted to social media cell heads and coordinators from major political parties in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Additionally, academicians, journalists, AI and digital marketing experts, and political analysts and consultants were interviewed. Broader perspectives from grassroots political operatives, minor parties, or additional states are not included.

Variables and Analytical Focus

The study specifically examines perceptions of the effectiveness of political campaigns on social media, differences in male and female perceptions, the relationship of campaign impact to media consumption frequency and platform preference, and the use of digital media for youth outreach.

It does not attempt to measure actual voter turnout, verify campaign content accuracy, or draw causal inferences beyond observable associations as generated from descriptive and cross-sectional data.

Language and Access

The questionnaire and interviews are conducted in languages accessible to urban, educated youth; perspectives of non-Hindi/English speakers, lower-

literacy urban youth, or those with limited internet access are not adequately addressed.

Rationale:

These delimitations were made to keep the research manageable and relevant to the fast pace of digitalization in political campaigns amongst Indian urban youth within a heavily political season. As such, they serve to contextualize the results, clarifying that the findings are most relevant to this population at this specific time, and should not be overly generalized beyond these parameters.

Key Terms and Definitions

1. Microtargeting: Microtargeting is a data-driven approach where the audience is broken down into particular segments for specific messages. Such strategies are especially significant in political campaigns – individual voters or niches of very few voters are analyzed, and custom-made contents are delivered, hoping to raise the interest of the voters as well as persuade them via means of 'Social Media' networks or email marketing.

2. 'Social Media': 'Social Media' is the term used for activities and applications that help individuals create, exchange, and share information regarding content in the form of text, images, and even videos, and communicate with individuals. Sites like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram encourage instant collaboration and interaction, which are critical elements for socialization, advertising, and politics.

3. Political Advertising: Political advertising is the use of paid media channels, such as television, radio, print, and digital platforms, to promote political candidates, parties, or issues to influence public opinion and voter behavior. It aims to shape perceptions, highlight campaign messages, and mobilize voters, often employing targeted ads based on voter demographics and interests to maximize impact.

4. Political Communication: Political communication is defined as all activities that include the transmission of information, messages, and ideas between people about politics, state management, and public administration policy. It includes speech-making, campaigning, media reporting, and surveys of the general public regarding political leaders, political organizations, and natural persons. The underlying purpose is to change or reinforce the attitudes of the public, the press, the elites, or any other group towards particular ideas, politicians, policies, or political movements.

6. Political Discourse: Political discourse involves oral or written communication about politics, encompassing discussions, debates, and narrations of governance, policies, ideologies, and political actions. This involves how politicians, the media, and the public express views and frame

issues of politics, shaping public opinion and establishing lines of influence over policy and decision-making. Political discourse may often occur across a variety of forums, such as speeches on Social Media, news, and public forums, often reflecting the broader social and cultural nuances of political engagement.

7. Public Opinion: Public opinion essentially refers to the attitude, beliefs, and opinions shared by the general public regarding a particular social, political, or economic issue. Public opinion may be affected by the dynamics of media, communication in politics, cultural values, or perhaps even personal experience. Public opinion largely defines politics, policies, or even an election's outcomes, as most governments and politicians would take it into consideration while implementing policies or formulating strategies.

8. Misinformation/ Disinformation: Misinformation refers to false or inaccurate information that is shared, regardless of intent to deceive. It can result from misunderstanding, misinterpretation, or lack of fact-checking.

The other side is disinformation, an intentional spread of false information to manipulate, mislead, or deceive the audience. In politics, disinformation is often used with the intent to sway public opinion, create confusion, or undermine opponents. Misinformation and disinformation run quickly through Social Media and digital platforms, making it challenging to provide accurate information.

9. Neuromarketing: Neuromarketing is a field of marketing that applies insights from neuroscience to understand how consumers' brains respond to marketing stimuli, such as advertisements, products, or branding. It uses techniques like brain imaging (e.g., fMRI, EEG) and biometric analysis (e.g., eye tracking, heart rate) to measure subconscious reactions and emotions. The goal of neuromarketing is to optimize marketing strategies by tapping into consumers' unconscious preferences and decision-making processes, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of campaigns and consumer engagement.

10. Real Time: Real-time refers to the process and communication of data or information exactly when it happens, usually without considerable delay.

There are numerous contexts in which, by technology, communication, and analytics, real-time systems allow any user to instantly or almost instantly obtain access and send responses to information. For example, real-time updates in 'Social Media' enable the posts, comments, and interactions to be seen just as they occur. Other fields, such as finance or emergency response, require real-time data to make quick decisions based on current conditions.

11. Fact-Checking: The process of verification of information and truthfulness of information, statements, or claims is known as fact-checking, which is the system used in various areas, such as journalism, political discourse, or public statements.

Fact-checking implies researching and cross-checking sources, evidence, and data to determine whether the information given is factual or misleading. Fact-checking further promotes transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making processes by verifying correct information and tracing misinformation or disinformation. It is, therefore, an essential practice in this day when a lie goes without saying instantly, most especially through Social Media.

12. Artificial Intelligence: Artificial Intelligence refers to the creation of computer systems that perform tasks or functions similar to those that a human would perform. Such tasks include reasoning, problem-solving, understanding natural language, identifying patterns, and making decisions.

13. Augmented Reality (AR): Augmented reality (AR) is a technology that superimposes digital information on the physical environment, like images, sounds, or data, enhancing user perception of their surroundings

14. Virtual Reality (VR): Virtual Reality (VR) is immersive technology to create a simulated environment, equipping users to experience and interact with a three-dimensional digital space as if they were physically present within it. VR requires the use of specialized hardware, such as VR headsets and controllers, to engage the senses—sight, sound, and sometimes touch—creating a realistic experience.

15. Data Analytics: The term data analytics refers to the practice of systematically analyzing the data in hand in order to identify useful information, such as trends and patterns. The process entails collecting clean data, analyzing it, and interpreting it, among many statistical and analytical techniques employed to achieve this.

16. Digital Native: The term was coined by American writer and educationist Marc Prensky. A Digital Native is a person who is predominantly comfortable with using technology for communication and was born after the 1980s.

17. Digital Shift: A digital shift refers to the process of transitioning from traditional analog or physical methods to digital ones.

18. User-Generated Content: It is popularly called 'UGC.' This is the original content published on the Internet by the users and consumers of the Internet.

19. Filter Bubble: Filter bubbles refer to the algorithm-driven personalization of online content that limits exposure to diverse viewpoints.

20. Echo Chambers: Echo chambers are social environments where individuals only encounter information that reinforces their existing beliefs, leading to increased polarization.

21.AI Terror: AI terror refers to the potential misuse of artificial intelligence (AI) for malicious purposes, such as autonomous weapons, deepfakes, and cyberattacks. It poses significant risks to global security and stability.

22. Predictive Analytics: Predictive analytics is a type of data analysis that uses statistical models and machine learning algorithms to predict future trends

and outcomes based on historical data. It is used to identify patterns and relationships in data that can be used to forecast future events.

23. Deepfakes: Deepfakes are highly realistic, artificially generated media content that can be used to manipulate or deceive people. They are created using deep learning techniques, which allow AI models to learn from large datasets of real images or videos and generate new content that is indistinguishable from the original.

Deepfakes can be used for malicious purposes, such as spreading misinformation, blackmail, or impersonating individuals.

24. Immersive Technologies: Immersive technologies create a sense of presence or immersion in a virtual or simulated environment. They are used in various industries, including gaming, education, healthcare, retail, and architecture.

25. Obamafication: It refers to the strategic use of data analytics and 'Social Media' in political campaigns, particularly as exemplified by Barack Obama's presidential campaigns. This term encapsulates the innovative techniques employed to personalize political messaging and engage voters through targeted outreach.

26. Hyperlocal: This refers to information, services, or content that is specifically focused on a very small, well-defined geographical area, often addressing the unique needs and concerns of the local community. This term can apply to various contexts, including news, marketing, and service delivery.

27. Political Narratives: Political Narratives are structured stories used by political leaders to communicate their visions, values, and goals, shaping public opinion and influencing political behavior. They frame issues in relatable terms, fostering a sense of collective identity and mobilizing support for policies.

Abbreviations

1. **UGC – User Generated Content**
2. **SNS:** Social Networking Sites
3. **B2B:** Business to Business
4. **B2C:** Business to Customer
5. **PIB:** Press Information Bureau
6. **SEM:** Search Engine Marketing
7. **IAMAI:** Internet and Mobile Association of India
8. **AI-** Artificial Intelligence
9. **VR-** Virtual Reality
10. **EC-** Election Commission
11. **AAP-** Aam Aadmi Party
12. **BJP-** Bhartiya Janta Party
13. **IAMAI-** Internet and Mobile Association of India
14. **TRAI-** Telecom Regulatory Association of India
15. **CSDS Lokniti-** Centre for the Study of Developing Societies
16. **KAS-** Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
17. **IPAC-** Indian Political Action Committee

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The 21st century is witnessing transformational changes in varied aspects. Political dynamics and communication, overridden and driven by technology-assisted means of communication, have evolved, and the global landscape of political communication has transformed considerably. India, the largest democracy in the world, has undergone significant transformation and evolution as a result of the swift rise of various social media platforms and their connection with the field of political communication.

The 'Digital Revolution' has profoundly impacted how 'Political Players' and participants involve and entrust with the electorate, especially with the 'Youth' and the young demographic.

This chapter of the literature review examines the evolving and changing trends in Indian political communication. It also examines the effectiveness of social media in engaging and mobilizing 'Young Voters,' which can be assessed through its usage patterns and impact.

It incorporates scholarly research from various disciplines, including political science, political communication, communication studies, sociology, digital media, and social media, to comprehensively understand this dynamic, ever-evolving phenomenon.

The review begins by contextualizing the rise of social media in India and its growing influence on the political sphere. It then delves into the theoretical frameworks, theories, and models of the disciplines, which are interrelated and affect the nature of the study.

Theories of communication that address the core of the study are emphasized. Secondly, the sociological theories provide a base to study the sociological aspect of the study, dealing with sociological groups and individual dynamics.

Thirdly, political communication theories will be examined to explore the theoretical frameworks of political communication and its relationship with mass media, as well as its application to social media.

The theories and academic literature on social media address the strategic use of these platforms by Indian citizens, political parties, influential figures, candidates, and

government institutions to disseminate information, publicize their policies, shape narratives, influence voters, and galvanize public support for their party's ideology and issues.

This research study examines the diverse engagement patterns and choices of 'Young Voters' on social media in the context of political communication and marketing strategies, which are key factors influencing their role and voter turnout.

Additionally, the literature review also critically assesses the influence and effects of social media-driven 'Political Communication' and 'Marketing Initiatives' on aspects such as voters' media consumption habits, political participation, and the overall integrity of the democratic process. It also examines the potential advantages, challenges, and issues related to the growing dependence on and the emergence of digital platforms for political outreach, mobilization, and marketing.

This literature review draws insights from empirical studies and theoretical frameworks. It aims to contribute to the ongoing academic and research discourse on the interplay of social media, political communication, sociology, and engagement of the youth in the contemporary Indian context.

The study aims to delve deeper into the subject and update marketing communication professionals, Public Relations strategists, digital marketers, policymakers, political strategists, and the people of civil society bodies. So that they are able to direct their efforts to harness the potential of social media for sharper, effective, and inclusive, effective political engagement, these concentrated efforts sensitize the citizens countrywide.

The Indian political scene is experiencing a drastic metamorphosis due to the rise of social media. This digital revolution has fundamentally changed how political parties engage with voters, particularly the ever-growing demographic of young Indians.

This study aims to explore the changing trends in Indian political communication through the lens of social media and evaluate its effectiveness in reaching and influencing young voters.

2.1 The Rise of Social Media in India:

India has one of the largest and most active internet user populations globally, with a considerable portion of this population actively engaging with social media platforms. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become vital tools for information dissemination, public discourse, and social interaction.

In recent years, social media has emerged as a transformative force in India, reshaping the socio-cultural and political landscape of the nation. As per the reports of the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) State of World Population 2024 report, India's total population surpasses 1.4 billion (United Nations Population Fund, 2024).

India stands as one of the largest markets for social media globally, characterized by a diverse tapestry of languages, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds.

The proliferation of affordable smartphones and internet access has catalyzed an unprecedented surge in social media usage, with platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter (now X) becoming ubiquitous in everyday communication.

The Indian social media ecosystem is marked by its unique characteristics, reflecting the complexities of a rapidly modernizing society. It serves as a vital conduit for self-expression, community engagement, and political discourse, particularly among the youth, who constitute a significant demographic of the user base.

This demographic shift has not only fostered new forms of social interaction but has also facilitated grassroots movements, enabling marginalized voices to gain visibility and influence in public discourse.

Moreover, social media in India plays a dual role as both a platform for empowerment and a site of contention. Although social media has democratized access to information and provided a platform for civic engagement, it has also led to challenges, including the proliferation of misinformation, cyberbullying, and issues related to privacy and data security. The interplay between these positive and negative aspects of social media usage underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of its implications within the Indian context.

This thesis aims to uncover the diverse dimensions of social media in the Indian context. It aims to contribute to the existing body of literature by examining not only the technological and economic factors driving its growth but also the socio-political ramifications that accompany its pervasive presence. By situating social media within the broader framework of Indian society, this research seeks to illuminate the complexities of digital interactions and their impact on contemporary social dynamics.

Social media has profoundly influenced nearly every aspect of society, including political life. Politicians utilize social media as a powerful tool to connect with potential voters and convey their campaign messages. (Baker, 2012; Chadwick & Howard, 2010; Biswas et al. 2014) ; while at the same time, citizens use social media to access political information,

Howard (2005) said that 'digital media strategies are a crucial component of contemporary political campaigns'. He examined the role of digital technologies in shaping contemporary political culture using ethnographic and survey evidence from four election seasons between 1996 and 2002.

He said, "Democracy is deeper in terms of the diffusion of rich data about political actors, policy options, and the diversity of actors and opinion in the public sphere. Citizenship is thinner in terms of the ease with which people can become politically expressive without being substantively engaged" (Howard, 2005, p. 153).

2.2 Focus on Youth Voters:

Young voters represent a crucial demographic in Indian elections. This tech-savvy generation relies heavily on social media for information and communication. Political parties are increasingly leveraging social media to reach this demographic with tailored messaging and campaigns.

Youth voters, a rapidly growing demographic in India, represent a crucial segment for political parties. Understanding how social media caters to their political engagement is essential. The study examines how political actors employ social media to engage young audiences, the content strategies they adopt, and the potential effects on youth voter turnout and decision-making.

2.3 Political Engagement through Social Media

It is essential to recognize that political engagement via social media is not exclusive to adults; evidence shows that young people are increasingly utilizing social media for online political participation (Yang & De Hart, 2012). Wei (2016, p. 180) notes that the use of mobile media for making political decisions is gaining popularity in numerous countries. In particular, younger individuals are turning to social networking platforms like Twitter to create a new narrative of citizenship, marked by a more personalized form of activism that intentionally positions their struggles outside the traditional political party framework. Political engagement through social media is not limited to adults, but there is evidence that young people increasingly use social media for online political participation (Yang & De Hart, 2012).

The study by Yang and De Hart (2012), titled "Social Media Use and Online Political Participation Among College Students During the United States Election 2012," investigated the relationship between social media usage and political participation among college students in the context of the 2012 United States presidential election.

The key findings were as follows:

The study revealed that social media has a substantial impact on political participation among college students. Students who actively interacted with political content on social media were more inclined to engage in political activities, including voting and discussing political issues.

He surveyed 4,556 U.S. college students immediately after the 2012 election, providing a robust dataset to analyze the impact of social media on political behavior.

The findings indicated variations in social media usage and political engagement across different demographic groups, suggesting that factors such as age, gender, and political affiliation play a role in how students engage with social media in a political context.

The study concluded that social media serves as a powerful tool for enhancing civic engagement among young people.

The findings of the study emphasized the significance of social media in molding political behaviors and attitudes among the youth, especially during crucial electoral events, encouraging them to participate more actively in the democratic process.

Mukhongo and Machaira (2016) contend that social media platforms empower users to adopt a proactive role and allow them to not only consume information but also create and produce content, thereby positioning them as agents of change. The study revealed that social media allows users to be proactive rather than merely passive consumers of information. Student were actively engaged with content that was political in nature, and which further influenced their political attitudes and behaviors. The research also examined how different forms of social media exposure affected students' political decisions, revealing that platforms like Facebook and Twitter have significantly influenced their political views.

The findings suggested that social media has a significant influence on students' political perspectives, indicating that it can be a powerful tool for political mobilization and raising awareness among young people. The study provided demographic insights into the participants, including age and gender distribution, which helped contextualize the impact of social media across different groups.

The study emphasized the importance of understanding the role of digital platforms in contemporary political landscapes. Hence, it could be derived from the Mukhongo and Machaira research that social media significantly influences youth political participation in South Africa, highlighting its potential as a tool for enhancing civic engagement among young people during elections (Mukhongo & Machaira, 2016).

Allen and Light (2015) suggested in a book named From Voice to Influence: Understanding Citizenship in a Digital Age that social media platforms may have changed the nature of relationships and the power dynamics between political institutions and youth. They raised questions about how online protests, such as the recent backlash against the Komen Foundation's decision to withdraw funding from Planned Parenthood, have transformed political action.

Additionally, they inquired about how platforms like Facebook and other popular social media sites influence discussions surrounding current political issues. The steep rise in digital media usage has also fundamentally altered the way information is gathered about current events and communicated with others. Politics is no longer restricted to institutional and electoral contexts, which significantly impacts our understanding of citizenship and political participation. Drawing on a diverse body of theory, from Hannah Arendt to Anthony Appiah, From Voice to Influence offers a

range of distinctive visions for political ethics to guide citizens in a digitally connected world (Allen & Light, 2015).

2.4 Review of Theoretical Foundations in Political Communication & Digital Media

To better understand the impact of social media on political communication, the researcher has grounded the conversation in historical and contemporary theoretical perspectives that have shaped systematic thought in the area. Several core concepts can be used for an analytical basis:

Agenda-Setting Theory

The theory of 'Agenda Setting' was first proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972). In this Agenda-Setting theory, it is argued that the media influence the salience of issues to the public. In social media, issue salience factors in not only news, but also in the fusion of traditional journalism, algorithms, user interaction, and networked communication that define political agendas for each other. In India, the contribution of social media to the salience of particular political issues is indicative of this theory's relevance in online environments (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Framing Theory

Entman's (1993) framing theory describes how the media builds core considerations about an issue, which dominate all other considerations, in order to shape audience interpretation, thereby conditioning public opinion and political attitude. Framing is also used strategically in social media messages by political parties and actors in order to affect voter perception, and to do so in a way that appeals to certain demographic groups (Entman, 1993).

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratification theory was founded by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973), who emphasized the active role of the members of the audience in using media to serve different functions: informative, social, or entertainment. Tracing out voter attention to social media is especially appropriate to youth, among whom Karp and

Milhailik (1976) found that young voters of today are very similar to voters in the past; the way that youth use the media for election-related news during elections is a direct function of the way media covers the campaign (Karp & Milhailik, 1976), young voters have preferences for how much media they want to consume while acquiring information on elections (Krysan, 1998), and finally that young voters active in using social media actively look for political information that matches their information preferences and consumption (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973).

Deliberative Democracy Theory

The emergence of deliberative democracy, a concept originating from political philosophy, deliberative democracy attaches importance to events of reasoned conversation and public deliberation in a democracy (Habermas, 1984). According to its advocates, social media can open up new avenues for political discussion and citizen deliberation, and simultaneously poses challenges concerning the quality of discourse, misinformation, and echo chambers—a key tension for democratic engagement in the context of India's politics (Chadwick, 2013).

Hybrid Media Systems

Chadwick (2013) theorized the dynamic political communication ecology of today as a hybrid media system, within which offline and online media are connected and in continuous interplay, impact, and rivalry with each other in the shaping of the practices of political communication. This hybrid system comes to life in Indian political campaigns that use and combine television, print, and digital, including social media, for communication and mobilization of voters (Chadwick, 2013).

2.5 Review of Seminal Works and Prime Theoretical Foundations

There are seminal theories and landmark studies that provide the requisite frameworks for analyzing the impact of social media on political communication, particularly among its youth in India. Key theoretical insights and studies provide necessary frameworks for examining the impact of social media on political communication, particularly in involving India's youth in today's politics. Although it opens up new possibilities concerning participation and user access, social media proves to have a limited transformative impact in light of ongoing inequalities and disinformation

challenges. It would require a critical, theory-driven framework to responsibly exploit the role of social media in India's changing democratic landscape.

2.5.1 Seminal Works in India

Recent academic studies together emphasize the weighty and tangled influence of social media in influencing political communication and youth participation in India's democratic development. Sumit Kumar Sarma, & Tapan Saikia. (2023) empirical analysis on first-time voters of Assam finds that social media (WhatsApp and Facebook) considerably improves access to political information for the rural youth. Although this is a significant step forward for political socialization, they identified a mixed form of participation where many young people are still consuming messages while not becoming actively involved in the selection of their messages. This distinction highlights a key challenge in converting digital access into empowered political participation. (Sarma & Saikia, 2023).

Deploying a wider lens for youth political participation, this literature review draws upon Suresh Babu's work (2018), which highlighted the simultaneous presence of traditional mass media and new media in shaping youth political consciousness and attitudes. In recognizing hybrid media ecology, he has substantially described liminal dynamics. However, his work is subject to critique, as it may have underestimated the increasing influence of social media as a major channel for youth communication in the late 2010s and 2020s (Babu, 2018). This suggests the need for new longitudinal research that takes into account the rapid advances in the digital world.

Narasimhamurthy (2014) trailblazed with an account of campaign-oriented use of social media in Indian elections, and 'its emergent significance in mobilizing the young voter'. While the study has provided an initial understanding, its coverage was prior to the rapid growth in the prevalence of advanced digital campaign tools, such as microtargeting, influencer collaborations, and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled personalization, which are now critically described by Kumar and Hooda (2022). The latter provides weighty historical and contextual grounding to social media not only as communication platforms, but as the power relations between political players and the public turn on their head. They also reflexively followed through with reminders of

ongoing challenges, such as the proliferation of misinformation and gaps in digital literacy, which are most applicable to online active youth audiences who are more susceptible to manipulation (Kumar & Hooda, 2022).

2.5.2 Seminal Works-International

These findings are supported by international comparative work from Yang and DeHart (2012), which finds that active social media use is associated with higher levels of youth participation in civic activities, with variations across sample characteristics. Their United States-based sample indicates potential differences that should be taken into consideration with respect to generalizability to Indian youth, and localized research can help address unique socio-political contexts (Yang & DeHart, 2012).

Together, these studies provided a multidimensional portrait of youth political engagement through social media in India, with converging accounts reflecting broader trends of increased access and opportunity but uneven participation and emergent risks. For example, Sarma & Saikia (2023) and Kumar and Hooda (2022) focused on the digital divide in relation to political efficacy, while Babu (2018) and Narasimhamurthy (2014) introduced important historical and media ecological contexts that help account for the growing trends. For example, the incorporation of international perspectives, such as those of Yang and DeHart (2012), expanded the scope of digital youth involvement, emphasizing both shared and distinctive issues.

There has been substantial development in the academic scrutiny of social media's effect on political communication. Howard (2005) was among the first to notice that digital political participation is a “thinner” form of citizenship, in the sense that citizens can express their political opinions more easily, but are not necessarily encouraged or motivated to provide substantial input. This insight provided a foundational basis for ongoing discussion about digital political participation.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973) constituted a paradigm in which, from the active standpoint of the audience, the audience’s activities in search for content to satisfy cognitive and social needs are underlined. Empirical works, such as those by Yang and DeHart (2012), show that interacting with social media is associated with greater political participation among youth. Contrary to past

generation theorizing, there is evidence that the young are not disengaged. Recent scholarship has emphasized the emergence of data-driven, micro-targeted political campaigns, their persuasive force, ethical concerns, and socio-political effectiveness (Chadwick, 2013; Bimber, 2014).

Furthermore, skepticism about misinformation and the echo chamber effect (Sunstein, 2001; Pariser, 2011) challenges narrative, highlighting the difficulties that digital contexts pose to this measure of deliberative democracy. Together, these works represent the foundational literature for the study of social media and political communication in democratic contexts.

2.6 Review of Research Papers, Research Articles, Books, and Their Need

In this Literature Review chapter, we draw on a range of sources, including research articles, papers, books, and YouTube videos, to provide a comprehensive and multifaceted picture of the evolving landscapes of political communication and youth engagement on social media. Each kind of source has its own specific and productive function in shaping a robust academic conversation.

This section is particularly receptive to theoretically grounded, methodologically sound research articles (preferably peer-reviewed research) that present new empirical findings and/or theoretical developments, making vital scholarly contributions to the fields of political communication and digital media studies.

Their standardized nature and their credible methods provide strong evidence for the study framework and hypotheses. In the meantime, research articles — while usually slightly more inclusive, often up to including type of literature (i.e., reviews, secondary analysis, etc.) in their review of the literature — should still provide context for what researchers know, fill in the blanks on where more research is needed, and offer critical analysis that further illuminates complex issues. They may also be academic submissions or conference papers that address current controversies or new developments in the field.

Books offer in-depth examinations of these and other topics in political communication, media ethics, and campaign tactics. Their holistic properties can facilitate the formation of complex thoughts in the long run, thereby deepening the philosophical foundation

and historical context required for contemporary research. Ultimately, YouTube videos offer practical, real-time insights from practitioners, experts, and media coverage, providing detailed information on the practical applications and emerging trends in political campaigning and digital engagement. Such multimedia materials facilitate the inclusion of visuals and interactivity – and these elements are important to understanding the contemporary digital culture and context that shape the way young people are politically engaged, so they decided to keep them in.

Both these academic and media sources together offer a rich and comprehensive coverage in terms of theory, evidence, and practice, essential for assessing the contribution towards Indian political communication and the perspectives of young voters and the social media.

2.7 Review of Research Papers

Sarma, S. K. (2021). *Young India Votes: Assessing The Impact Of Social Media On First-Time Voters With Special Reference To Voters Of Assam*.

The research article titled "*Young India Votes: Assessing The Impact Of Social Media On First Time Voters With Special Reference To Voters Of Assam*.' (Sharma, 2021). aimed to assess the impact of social media on first-time voters' political engagement in Assam, especially the rural youth. In India, during election-centric times, more and more youths participate in elections. The study sample consisted of more than 230 first-time voters, aiming to determine how these groups are politically socialized, particularly through the use of digital platforms.

Nonetheless, Social Media has, in turn, made political efficiency easier than before, with numerous conceivably political threats and opportunities. The study also observed an increasing dependence on social media for political information within the youth electorate, with the growing use of WhatsApp and Facebook by this population as an example.

The main goals of the research comprise the attempt to determine the problems connected with the availability of the Internet and digital devices among first-time voters, the exploration of the influence of social networks on voters' political

persuasion, and many others, including the perspective of such changes on future campaigning in India. The findings show that while more young voters are willing to participate in acts of citizenship within the digital space, the intensity of their interactions with the political sphere online differs, with some opting to receive news passively rather than engage in active discussion.

In all cases, Sarma & Saikia, (2023) work is important in addressing issues linked with social media and its effects on the voting patterns of the young population in India and the electoral process.

This research paper is closely related to the topic of this research**,** as the 'Youth is the prime demographic here; understanding their preferences and behaviors is crucial for political parties aiming to engage effectively with this demographic. The prime aspects of both studies are common. It also provides a regional insight into the rural youth of Assam. (Sarma & Saikia, 2023).

Political campaigning in India: changing contexts of political communication. By Varughese, A. M., & Semetko, H. A.

This research article explored the advancements in communication technologies that influence perceptions of professionalism in political campaigning, both in India and globally.

It discussed the prime findings from empirical case studies, positioning these thematic studies within a comparative framework of political marketing research.

The authors delved into the different theories, such as media agenda-setting, priming, and framing processes, highlighting the need for future research opportunities and methodologies for studying political campaigning and communication in India. (Varughese & Semetko, 2022).

While ethnographic studies have been prevalent, the authors advocated for diverse research methods such as content analysis, big data analytics, text analysis, survey research, panel studies, and experiments.

They noted that India's political parties, candidates, and varied media landscape generate a wealth of online data that could be effectively analyzed using computational social science techniques. (Varughese & Semetko, 2022).

Use and Rise of Social Media as Election Campaign Medium in India By N. Narasimhamurthy.

Narasimhamurthy (2014) examined social media as a new-age tool and its emergence as an efficacious medium for electioneering in the article "Use and Rise of Social Media as Election Campaign Medium in India."

The paper examined the impact of sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp as medium channels through which the political parties can reach out, most specifically the youth. The author also noted a rise in the use of social media in elections and the effect that it has on voter turnout, as well as the communication strategies of political parties towards the elections.

The research also contained facts showing that social media serves as a channel through which messages are passed from contestants to voters, emphasizing that they are major determinants of voter behavior.

Particular attention is paid to the repositioning of political actors in the context of emerging communication tools. Findings also indicate that due to the increased digital engagement, there will be a greater scope of social media in future political campaigns in India. (Narasimhamthy, 2014).

Political Participation of Youth and Role of Mass Media By P. G. Suresh Babu.

In the work "**Political Participation of Youth and Role of Mass Media,"** Suresh Babu focused on youth political participation, particularly in relation to the role of mass media in India.

The study pointed out the growing relevance of mass media as a means of political education for younger members of society who have started taking an active role in the democratic processes of the country.

This particular paper showed how the youth in any country uses media or its programs, whether older media or newer media, to form a political mindset, motivation, and attitude for participation in particular elections. It is considered that social networking sites have made it easier for political parties to communicate with the youth, thereby enhancing their participation.

The analysis revealed that while there is still a place for this traditional media, the sweet spot for the youth in terms of gained media for campaign and political conversations is the new media. For this reason, it has become apparent that political parties must rethink how to win the target audiences over, especially the young and active ones. The paper finally contended that for greater democratization processes in India, understanding the present scenarios is required to enable the political participation of the youth. (Suresh Babu, n.d.).

Who surfs? New Technology, Old Voters, and Virtual Democracy in the 1996 and 1998 US Elections. *Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government*.

This research article is important in the context of this study as it studies the interrelationship between technology, political engagement, and older voters during the U.S. presidential elections held in 1996 and 1998. Moreover, this gives an international perspective to the study.

In the research article "Who Surfs? New Technology, Old Voters and Virtual Democracy in the 1996 and 1998 U.S. Elections," the author Pippa Norris investigated the relationship between emerging communication technologies and political engagement among older voters during the U.S. elections of the late 1990s.

The study delved into the impact of the internet and digital platforms on voter participation, particularly within demographics that have historically shown lower levels of electoral involvement. Norris evaluated empirical data to determine the effectiveness of online campaigning techniques and their influence on voter mobilization.

She addressed the consequences of these technological innovations for democratic processes and contended that while new media can potentially enhance political engagement, they may also deepen existing disparities among various age groups. The research underscored the necessity of comprehending how technology transforms political communication and voter behavior, providing valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities that virtual democracy presents in modern electoral scenarios. (Norris, n.d.).

The Research Paper by Brian E. Weeks, Alberto Ardèvol-Abreu, and Homero Gil de Zúñiga, **titled "Online Influence? Social Media Use, Opinion Leadership, and Political Persuasion,"** analyzed how the active users of social media, or "prosumers," conceive themselves to be opinion leaders and their functions in political persuasion.

An analysis based upon a two-wave panel survey in the U.S. presented results of a wider population of such prosumers as more likely to discuss politics and deliberate efforts to influence others than less active users.

The study examined the role of social media and how it contributed to enhancing personal influence in political communication, negating the earlier estimations to the contrary that it diminishes the role of traditional opinion leaders.

To conclude, it underscores the importance of individual engagement in shaping political discourse in the digital age. (Weeks, Ardèvol-Abreu y Gil de Zúñiga, 2017).

The study by Bimber (2014) highlights the vital role of social media in today's political campaigns. The study focused on learning how social media has become an essential element of contemporary political campaigns and how it is significantly affecting the ways in which candidates connect with voters and influence public discourse.

It discussed how the popular social media platforms Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have facilitated politicians to communicate and connect directly with the voters, enabling them to connect with the public without depending on varied traditional media outlets. This change has positively increased the candidates' visibility and altered the dynamics of political persuasion.

The study analyzed the examples of Donald Trump's 2016 campaign and Boris Johnson's 2019 run for Prime Minister, where their social media presence played a vital role in their electoral victories.

It also thrusted on the other purposes served by Social media, as it not only helped to spread political messages but also facilitated the creation of spaces for opinion leaders to emerge, impacting their peers' political attitudes and behaviors. Furthermore, He had also highlighted the challenges and aspects of negative campaigning and targeting of vulnerable populations.

To conclude, this study emphasized that the effective leverage of social media can significantly improve the chances of winning the election and standing out among competitors by engaging and interacting directly with the voters. (Bimber, 2014).

The ‘Centre for the Study of Developing Societies(CSDS)- and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) report focused on the perspectives of youth in India. This formed the core of the report in the age group of 15 to 34 years, "Attitudes, Anxieties and Aspirations of India's Youth: Changing Patterns." India has a massive population of 15 to 34-year-olds, which is why Indigenous research on their attitudes is Necessary. -The Report concerned itself mainly with working-age youth of the country, i.e., 15 -34 years.'

This survey by the 'Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS)', with the assistance of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung KAS Germany, covered a total of 6122 respondents from 19 states in India.

These insights identified and analyzed the socio-economic and political factors influencing most youths in India, and in that way, understanding the promotion of these political parties for the youth audience becomes more accessible. One of the report's key findings was that the youth have many concerns about employment and education, stating that about 78% of the youth aged 18 to 25 years worried about obtaining a job before being included. This anxiety was aggravated by the fact that almost 54 percent of the respondents stated that people have become intolerant of various views, as it was before. It is pertinent to note such sentiments when considering how political parties can persuade the youth who feel they will not have a decent pension. Also, the report noted a growing change in young people's attitudes towards society. (Kumar, Palshikar, & Shastri, 2017)

Additionally, the report highlighted a notable shift in social attitudes among youth. At the same time, there is a growing acceptance of modern values—such as intercaste marriages—and traditional views persist, particularly regarding gender roles and expectations. For instance, many respondents believed that wives should always listen to their husbands and that women should not work after marriage. This juxtaposition of modernity and conservatism presented challenges and opportunities for political campaigns aimed at youth.

The findings from the CSDS-KAS report are essential for the thesis titled "A Study of Changing Trends in Indian Political Campaigning Through Use of Social Media with Reference to Youth Voters" for several reasons. First, it provides empirical data on the attitudes and anxieties that shape youth political behavior. Understanding these factors is critical for developing effective social media strategies that resonate with young voters' concerns. Moreover, as political campaigns increasingly utilize social media to engage youth, insights from this report can inform how messages are crafted to address the specific anxieties identified—primarily around employment and social issues. The report's emphasis on youth participation in associational activities suggests that political parties can effectively leverage these platforms to mobilize young voters.

To summarize, the CSDS-KAS report serves as a foundational piece for analyzing how social media can be used to engage with youth voters in India. Highlighting both the anxieties and aspirations of this demographic provides valuable context for understanding how political campaigns can adapt to meet their needs in an increasingly digital landscape. This understanding is vital for shaping electoral strategies that attract and retain young voters' interest and participation in India's evolving political scenario (Kumar, Palshikar, & Shastri, 2017)

The research work titled **"Use of New Media in Indian Political Campaigning System"** by the researcher Rahul K., published in 2016 in the Journal of Political Science and Public Affairs, the author focuses on the changing dynamics of political campaigns in India with the help of new media.

The work noted that online communication, especially social networking tools, has changed the way political organizations reach out to their target voters, the youth population in particular. The author has emphasized that instead of ad campaigns, it embraces the use of the Internet, where a direct connection between the candidate and constituents provides opinions. This is especially critical for India as a significant fraction of its population is young and technologically advanced.

The paper stated that young voters rely on social media for news about elections, and thus, the websites are not only used for information but also to promote active participation in politics among the youth. This research is important as it covered a number of aspects that shape the social media trends in India. To start, it lays the

groundwork for understanding the shifts in political campaigning strategies that are evident in Indian politics, with its concentration on youth populations.

First, it provides foundational insights into how new media have altered the dynamics of political campaigning in India. By focusing on youth, Rahul's work aligns closely with the thesis's objective to investigate how social media influences young voters' political behavior and engagement.

Moreover, the paper underscored the necessity for political actors to adapt and implement newer innovative strategies that appeal to younger audiences who predominantly consume information through digital channels. As political campaigns increasingly rely on social media to mobilize youth voters, understanding these trends becomes vital for developing effective campaign strategies that address this demographic's specific concerns and aspirations.

To summarize, this study contributes significantly to the literature on political communication in India by elucidating the role of new media in shaping electoral strategies. It serves as a critical reference point for examining how these changes affect youth voter engagement and participation in contemporary Indian politics. (Rahul K., 2016).

The **study "Neuromarketing in Predicting Voting Behavior: A Case of National Elections in India"** by Raveena Gupta, Harsh Verma, and Anuj Pal Kapoor explored the use of neuromarketing methods for the prediction of Indian voting patterns at the time of national elections.

Gupta, Verma, and Kapoor (2024) suggested that these principles can be adopted in political surveys for the purpose of determining voter appraisal of commercials or speeches. This technique presented an opportunity to appreciate not only the aspects of voter causes but also the underlying conditions that contribute to the causes, especially for the youth who primarily appeal to emotions.

The authors noted that the way in which voters feel about issues or events works to their advantage or disadvantage in voting. Eye tracking techniques and brain imaging are utilized in following the gut reaction of voters towards adverse informing messages. The research reveals that, among others, feelings like fear and hope have among the highest impacts on young voters. The study stated that social media is crucial for

people’s political participation in a country. It discussed how political parties can use the knowledge of neuromarketing to appeal to the youth through the content that they put up online and run campaigns on.

Citing the reasons for the last national elections held in this country, those authors have shown how, through neuromarketing, political parties have focused on youth voters. This includes dedicating specific social media ads to the younger generation's interests.

The evidence provided in Gupta et al.'s study forms a foundation for the study titled “A Study of Changing Trends in Indian Political Campaigning Through Use of Social Media with Reference to Youth Voters.” As it is simply defining that if there are apparent reasons why the youth vote the way they do, which are psychological, it is possible to strategize on how social media will be used in engaging the youth, mainly.

The further political campaigning techniques become more digital, the further neuromarketing message specialization should address the revealed fears and wants of the youth. This is especially pertinent in the case of a rapidly developing political environment, which renders more traditional forms of campaigning inadequate.. (Gupta, Verma, & Kapoor, 2024).

2.8 Review of Research Articles

The article “The Youth Vote Made BJP Victory” related the accomplishments of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP); Sanjay Kumar focused on how critical young voters were to the Party’s electoral success in India. The paper showed that when the BJP sought to rally the young constituency, it did so through campaigns as well as social media, where the interests of this segment of people were harnessed. This research, however, demonstrated that, indeed, young people did need to be involved in elections, and they were, in fact, one of the critical groups of voters, by looking at the data on who literally turned up at the polls and the extent of their campaign strategies.

This paper drew the conclusion that the Lok Sabha elections 2014 had been a success for the BJP, because they reached out to the youth using strong communication tactics, which eventually showed that the youth could change the political picture of the nation. These insights indicated that parties hoping to enjoy similar success in the next electoral

process had to learn about the objectives and actions of young voters. (Sanjay Kumar, n.d.).

The article "Can Artificial Intelligence (AI) Influence Elections?" published by UNRIC, explored the dual nature of AI in the context of electoral processes, particularly as over 60 countries prepared for elections in 2024. It discussed both the potential benefits and risks of engagement with AI technologies in political campaigning.

The Role of AI in Enhancing Electoral Processes was also highlighted in several ways in which AI could improve electoral efficiency and voter engagement. AI technologies, such as chatbots, were equipped to facilitate real-time information regarding polling station locations, voting procedures, and candidate platforms. This made the electoral process more accessible and transparent. By personalizing communication based on individual preferences and behavior, AI reached voters more effectively, thereby enhancing participation.

Moreover, AI's capabilities in data management allowed for the accurate collection and analysis of extensive electoral data. This enabled election officials to identify trends swiftly and make informed decisions, reinforcing public trust in the electoral process. The potential for AI to strengthen cybersecurity measures against cyber threats was also noted, ensuring the integrity of the electoral infrastructure.

Despite its benefits, the article raised significant concerns regarding the misuse of AI in electoral contexts. One significant risk was the potential for disinformation campaigns facilitated by AI-generated content. Deepfakes and other forms of manipulated media could mislead voters and undermine trust in democratic processes. The growing sophistication of AI made it increasingly challenging to distinguish between authentic information and falsehoods.

Ethical considerations were also paramount; biases inherent in AI algorithms could lead to unfair advantages for certain candidates or parties. Transparency and Accountability were the prime concerns regarding AI's functionality and deployment during elections. The article emphasized the need for robust ethical guidelines to mitigate these risks.

The insights from this article were particularly relevant to the thesis. As political campaigns in India increasingly leveraged social media platforms to engage younger voters, understanding how AI could enhance or hinder these efforts was crucial.

The ability of AI to personalize communication aligned with the preferences of youth voters who were accustomed to tailored content on social media. Campaigns that utilized AI-driven insights could better resonate with young voters' interests and concerns.

Given the rising influence of social media in Indian elections, addressing the risks associated with disinformation was critical. The findings of this article highlighted the importance of developing strategies that not only engaged youth but also educated them about recognizing credible information amidst a sea of digital noise.

As political parties adopted new technologies, understanding the ethical implications became essential for maintaining fairness in electoral processes. Ensuring that AI tools were free from bias was vital for fostering trust among young voters.

In summary, the UNRIC article provided valuable insights into how AI could both enhance and threaten electoral processes globally. As India approached its national elections, integrating these findings into political campaigning strategies was essential for effectively engaging youth voters through social media. By leveraging AI responsibly while being mindful of its risks, political parties navigated the complexities of modern campaigning, ultimately contributing to a healthier democratic process. (UNRIC, n.d.).

The article "What Research Reveals About the Impact of Media on Voter Behavior," published by India Spend, elaborately discussed the media's significant role in shaping voter behavior in India.

As political campaigns increasingly utilized various media forms, particularly social media, understanding these dynamics became crucial for effectively engaging voters.

The article's significant understanding was relatable to this study. One of the primary insights from the article was the differentiation in media consumption patterns among various demographics. Traditional forms of media, such as newspapers and television, continued to dominate among older voters, while younger voters increasingly relied on digital platforms for information.

This generational shift necessitated that political campaigns adapted their strategies to effectively reach youth audiences through social media. Understanding these

consumption patterns was essential for crafting messages that resonated with younger voters who engaged primarily through digital channels.

The article also highlighted the phenomenon of information overload, which could lead to voter disengagement. With an abundance of information available through various media channels, voters struggled to discern credible information from misinformation.

This issue was particularly relevant for youth voters who were often inundated with content on social media platforms. The overwhelming amount of information hindered their decision-making processes and reduced overall engagement in the electoral process. Moreover, the unique characteristics of social media facilitated direct interaction between voters and political candidates.

This platform allowed for real-time feedback and engagement, making it a powerful tool for mobilizing young voters who were more likely to connect with content that aligned with their values and concerns. The interactive nature of social media enabled political parties to foster a sense of community among young voters, encouraging greater participation in the electoral process. However, the article also raised significant concerns regarding the misinformation present on social media platforms. The dissemination of false information distorted public perceptions and negatively influenced voter behavior.

This issue was specifically applicable to youth voters, who were more susceptible to viral content without critical evaluation. The authors stressed the importance of developing strategies to combat misinformation while promoting credible sources of information.

The insights from this article were crucial for the thesis. By highlighting differences in media consumption patterns between age groups, the article provided a framework for understanding how political campaigns could tailor their messages to engage youth effectively.

Additionally, the findings regarding information overload underscored the need for campaigns to present clear and concise messages that cut through the noise on social media.

To conclude, the India Spend article provided valuable insights into how various forms of media influenced voter behavior in India. As political campaigning increasingly

shifted toward digital platforms, understanding these dynamics became essential for effectively engaging youth voters through social media. By addressing issues related to information overload and misinformation while leveraging the interactive nature of social media, political parties enhanced their outreach efforts and fostered greater participation among young voters in India's evolving electoral landscape. (India Spend, n.d.).

The article "How AI, Social Media, and Internet Shape Elections 2024," published by Hindustan Times and authored by Aparajitha Nair, examined the transformative roles that artificial intelligence (AI) and social media played in shaping electoral dynamics, particularly in the upcoming 2024 elections. In contemporary times, political campaigns increasingly relied on digital platforms to engage voters, and understanding these influences became crucial for effective campaigning.

One of the central themes of the article was the integration of AI technologies into political campaigns. The authors discussed how AI enabled political parties to analyze vast amounts of voter data, enabling them to create messages that were going to impact the specific target audience, especially young voters who were active on social media.

By employing predictive analytics, campaigns identified the trends and fine-tuned their marketing strategy in real-time, enhancing the ability to engage effectively with young voters. However, the article also raised ethical concerns regarding privacy and data security, emphasizing the need for transparency and accountability in the use of these technologies.

In addition to AI, the article highlighted the significant impact of social media on electoral processes. Besides social media platforms, Facebook, X, and Instagram became immensely popular political communication tools, enabling candidates to connect directly with voters.

The interactive nature of social media facilitated two-way forms of communication, real-time engagement, and a sense of community among young voters, which significantly influenced their perceptions and mobilization efforts. The quick dissemination of 'Misinformation' on these platforms presented challenges for political campaigns.

The article stressed the importance of developing strategies that promoted campaign messages and educated voters about discerning credible information—a critical consideration for youth voters who were more susceptible to viral misinformation.

The insights from this article were particularly relevant to this study. Understanding how AI could enhance campaign strategies provided a framework for analyzing how political parties could effectively engage youth through tailored messaging. As young voters increasingly relied on digital platforms for information, leveraging AI-driven insights became essential for capturing their attention.

Moreover, the discussion on social media dynamics underscored the importance of crafting effective communication strategies that resonated with youth values and concerns. Recognizing the interactive nature of these platforms allowed political campaigns to foster greater participation among young voters.

Lastly, addressing misinformation challenges was crucial in today’s digital landscape; educating young voters about credible sources was imperative for maintaining trust in democratic processes.

In conclusion, the Hindustan Times article offered valuable insights into how AI and social media were reshaping electoral dynamics in India. As political campaigning continued to evolve toward digital platforms, understanding these influences was essential for effectively engaging youth voters through social media. By addressing issues related to data privacy, misinformation, and interactive engagement strategies, political parties enhanced their outreach efforts and encouraged greater participation among young voters in India's changing electoral campaigning. (Hindustan Times, 2023).

The article titled "How Dead Relatives, AI, and Deepfakes Are Reshaping Politics in India," published by Rest of World and written by Barkha Dutt, explored the innovative yet contentious application of artificial intelligence (AI) and deepfake technology in influencing political campaigns during India's recently held elections.

This review of the article consolidated essential findings from the article. The article highlighted the growing trend among political parties in India to leverage AI and deepfake technologies to boost voter engagement.

To forge emotional connections and ties with the electorate, realistic digital avatars of deceased political leaders were used by parties in their constituencies for promotion. An example was the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party of former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi. This party, in the 2024 general elections, utilized a video generated by the use of 'Deepfake' technology to present his video and image at a youth conference, despite his death in 2018. (Dutt, 2024).

Such tactics demonstrated that AI could serve not only as a means of deception but also as a mechanism for fostering emotional connections with constituents.

Furthermore, the article elaborated on the prevalence of AI-driven personalized communication in contemporary campaigning. Political entities employed AI to deliver customized messages to voters, often through automated calls or personalized videos on platforms such as WhatsApp.

This hyper-personalization proved particularly effective in engaging younger voters, who were familiar with digital communication and anticipated tailored content.

The incorporation of multilingual features further amplified outreach efforts, enabling parties to communicate effectively within India's diverse linguistic context. Ethical Concerns and Misinformation Despite the potential benefits of AI and deepfakes for voter engagement, the article highlighted critical ethical dilemmas. The risk of misinformation and the manipulation of public perception through deepfake technology presented significant challenges to democratic integrity. As political parties exploited these tools, the implications for informed electoral decision-making became increasingly concerning. (Dutt, 2024).

The article "How Has Political Communication Evolved in the Digital Age?" published by Political Edge explored the transformative changes in political communication brought about by the digital age. This literature review synthesized critical insights from the article and related them to this study.

One of the most significant changes in political communication was the use of different social media forms.

According to the article, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram became critical arenas for political discourse, allowing politicians to engage directly with constituents. This shift democratized political communication, enabling a two-way

interaction that contrasted sharply with traditional top-down media models. The immediacy and accessibility of social media facilitated real-time engagement, making it essential for political campaigns to connect with voters, particularly younger demographics who were more active on these platforms. Direct Engagement and Interactivity

The article emphasized that digital platforms enabled politicians to establish two-way communication with prospective voters and generate a sense of connection and transparency.

This kind of interactivity allowed for immediate feedback and engagement, which could enhance voter participation. As political campaigns increasingly relied on these platforms, understanding how to leverage this direct engagement became crucial for appealing to youth voters who expected authentic interactions with candidates.

Despite its advantages, the digital age presented challenges, particularly regarding misinformation. The speedy transmission of fake news on different social media was also a concern for political communication actors. The article highlighted that to create a credible image, the political actors also had to combat this hostile environment and inform the electorate. This challenge was particularly relevant for youth voters, who were more susceptible to misinformation due to their extensive use of social media for news consumption.

The article also highlighted the emergence of data-driven political campaigns. Vast amounts of data were available, which politicians could use to customize their messages based on demographics and individual behaviors. This micro-targeted approach enabled more effective outreach but also raised ethical concerns related to the issue of privacy and manipulation. Decoding these dynamics was essential for developing political campaigning strategies that resonated with young voters while maintaining ethical standards in campaign practices.

Furthermore, the digital age obliterated geographical boundaries, allowing political messages to transcend borders. Politicians could now communicate directly with an international audience, influencing opinions globally. While this connectivity presented new opportunities for diplomacy and collaboration, it also posed challenges in managing cross-border influences and understanding diverse cultural contexts.

The insights from this article were particularly relevant for this study as they provided an understanding of how digital platforms influenced political communication and provided a framework for analyzing how political parties could effectively connect with youth through tailored messaging. As younger voters increasingly relied on social media for information, leveraging these platforms became essential for capturing their attention. Moreover, addressing the challenges posed by misinformation was vital for maintaining trust in democratic processes. Educating young voters about discerning credible sources aligned with the thesis's objective to explore how social media could be used as a campaigning tool to promote informed voter engagement.

To conclude, the article from Political Edge provided valuable insights into how political communication evolved in the digital age. As political campaigning increasingly shifted toward social media platforms, understanding these dynamics became essential for effectively engaging youth voters. By addressing issues related to misinformation and ethical considerations while leveraging innovative communication strategies, political parties enhanced their outreach efforts and fostered greater participation among young voters in India's changing electoral trends. (Political Edge, n.d.;).

In their article "An Analytical Review of Political Communication in India with Special Reference to Social Media," Sudhir Kumar and Sonia Hooda took the reader through a vivid historical chronicle of political communication in India, underlining the role of social media in this transformation. This literature review assimilated the most important aspects of the article and contextualized them within the broader issue of political advertising, primarily focusing on the issue of mobilizing the youth electorate.

Kumar and Hooda first presented the historical background of the case study on political communication in India and stated that such a scenario was not the same in the early 1980s when television communication began to dominate Mass Media. The authors claimed that this was an important era in which the way political content was produced and, more importantly, consumed underwent a major turn with the incorporation of news bands into the media.

The article focused on the primary aspect that dealt with the transformation of political communication in the country owing to the introduction of social media. Politicians could easily connect with their constituents through social networking sites like

Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and the connection was both instant and interactive. Kumar and Hooda argued that this permitted connection altered how people engaged in politics, as they could now address issues and share their views on them. Moreover, the writers advocated that social media had, over time, equipped politicians to implement innovative ways that enabled immediate connectivity with audiences.

One of the central points of this article was the role of authenticity in political communication, with a special emphasis on the impact of this aspect on young voters. The authors stated that young people were more and more willing to connect with political figures who shared their interests, even on the other side of the world. With this appeal for transparency came the expectation that these politicians would communicate with their voters more interactively and even over social networks. The paper gave the example of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Twitter, which he often used to bring his followers close by giving them information on his life and work.

Even with the positive factors of social media, as discussed above, Kumar and Hooda also provided a keen insight into misleading information. The rate at which false information circulated in such spaces was alarming and was capable of altering the public's perceptions and even trust to the extent that all the democratic tenets seemed to be in chaos. The authors pointed out that even if social media made it easier for people to engage socially, it also called the attention of both the politician and the voter to where the right information had to win over the wrong information. This was a challenge that cut across all the eater unions, especially the youth voters who were the most active on social media in searching for news.

The conclusions drawn in this article were of the utmost relevance. It also outlined the basis for understanding how political messages could be designed and delivered to target the youth, who were an important constituency for all political parties. An increasing number of younger voters were also looking for information in digital format. (Kumar & Hooda, n.d.).

In the article "Politics and Communication: It is Time to Reconsider Its Scope," which the writer of this article had analyzed, the changes in political communication in India were investigated through the prism of the appearance of political communicators and the consequences of their activities for elections. This literature review aimed to extract some important points from the above literature and to connect them to the Indian youth

voters' social media campaigning trends study titled "A Study of Changing Trends In Indian Political Campaigning Through Use Of Social Media With Reference To Youth Voters."

According to the article, it was in this latter context that a shift in the practice of political communication from politicians to professional strategists had occurred, with Prashant Kishor as the epitome of such practices. Kishor was described as a revolutionary force in the field, one who had transformed the very definition of political communicators in India. His success rate of 100% in any electoral activities had made him a subject of both adoration and condemnation in politics. The article pointed out, however, that Kishor had motivated the emerging crop of strategists, but there were questions about sustainability and the long-term efficacy of such strategies.

A critical notion the article raised was the need to take communication down to the grassroots levels. Using Kishor's approach also required one to appreciate the context within which voters existed. This was different from the 'helicopter strategists,' who were so-called and had no affection for grassroots issues. As the article had contended, any good campaign was one that did not advance without the aid of active party workers who were also well-placed to know what the people thought. This prioritization of local people helped develop communication appropriate for the electorate, especially the youth who were looking for realness in the politics spoken.

The article also found space within itself where political communicators were faced with challenges in an era bursting with misinformation. At the same time, such campaigns were being waged more and more in the virtual context, which added risks of unintended misinformation dissemination. The author stated that reputation was something that political communicators should not compromise on and was more paramount when addressing the aid of younger voters because the population was more gullible to misinformation. It was further stated that with regard to political communication, there was an aversion and a strong need for both ethical principles regarding the work that had to be entrusted with the support of the templates trusted by political dialogue. (Reputation Today, n.d.).

The article "The Changing Face of Political Ad Campaigns in India," published by Campaign Asia, provided a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of political advertising in India, particularly emphasizing the shift from traditional media to digital

platforms. This literature review synthesized key insights from the article and situated them within the broader context of political communication strategies, especially regarding youth voter engagement.

The article outlined a significant transformation in political advertising.

The piece of writing explained how political advertising had changed over the last ten years, from television and radio to mainly online. This change was due to the large number of mobile phone users in the country, cheap data plans, and the presence of many social networks in the country. According to Ravikant Banka, the founder of Eggfirst Advertising, all political parties had revamped their modes of operation to get the attention of people who spent more time on the internet.

However, while some segments of the population might still have held on to other sources of information, the traditional media was expensive and most often inaccessible to the less funded parties, thus leading to inequality in the effectiveness of their campaigns.

This article also examined the impact of social media on political communications strategies. When it came to campaigning for the youth, political parties had been able to turn social networking platforms like Facebook, Twitter (X), YouTube, and, currently, Instagram, more or less, into their voting machines. With more than half, roughly 65%, of the Indian population being under 35 years of age, and many of them active on social networks, it helped political leaders target the aspirational young demographic. In support of this trend, Banka argued that 'the digital horizon had also focused on promotion and quick changes in the content, thus enhancing the efficiency of communication politics.' Citing the example of politics and social media in India, Sanjay Jha, a politician and author in India, said that what was unique about social networking sites was that users could engage with the content as opposed to just sitting back and enjoying the show.

For instance, it was considered outdated to watch television commercials because once you had watched them, there was nothing more left out of the material presented—tertiary Users, in this Case. Picture how social media even allowed people to interact by giving a thumbs up or a shared benefit. This was where social support came in and encouraged the consumption of more political content, as it helped socialize such content less rigidly.

Misinformation in campaigns that especially utilized cyberspace was also tackled in the article. Jha, however, said that using digital space for campaigning created an avalanche of information for the voters, out of which they would not be able to identify the real information or the content intended to mislead people. This was a serious issue, especially in India, which had rising disinformation warfare, as it distracted people from the proper functioning of democracy. As such, the authors stated that while social media had many positive aspects in terms of participation, it also called for the fight against misinformation.

With the 2024 electoral contests and subsequent events in mind, the authors asserted that the proportion of income generated through digital ad campaigns would continue to increase and would surpass that produced by other means of advertising. Nevertheless, they warned about the dangers of excessive online campaigning, as political activities could be structured in other ways. Banka emphasized that there was no way political strategies would not have incorporated both modern digital campaigning and traditional marketing techniques in order to achieve the widest audience span possible without compromising on the essence of the message. The article stated that the 2014 election campaign in India was a watershed event in political advertising, as the Bhartiya Janata Party produced a highly efficient digital campaign, leading them to incredible election results. This effort to minimize the use of integrated marketing strategies in election campaigns was a first for such elections (Campaign Asia, 2021).

To sum up, the paper “The Changing Face of Political Ad Campaigns in India” offered essential information on Marketing and campaigning of political ad development in India in correlation to the technological developments and age factors of voters. As different political parties started to plan their campaigns with digital media more and more to target the youth population, it was also important to comprehend these factors in order to ensure that the campaigns were successful. Political parties could address these concerns by combating misinformation, but also allowing young people to connect in genuine ways through social media, so that they could increase the efforts made to get young people interested in elections in India.

The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation published an article titled Artificial Intelligence as a Tool in the 2024 Elections: AI and the 2024 Elections. It was an article by renowned author Danielle Allen that investigated the various aspects of the role of AI (Artificial Intelligence) in elections and the democratization process. This literature review sought to highlight and integrate the relevant aspects from the article in relation to the advantages as well as the threats posed by AI in the coming elections and emphasized the interrelated issues of electoral integrity and turnout, as discussed in the literature.

Allen noted that 'the 2024 Elections would beyond any doubt be the most competitive on the world's surface with the highest number of voters from over 64 nations, and that states would also be having emerging AI technologies.' To those fears was added anxiety in the public sphere over AI and its direct or indirect capability to throw a spanner into the works of the electoral cycle, especially through misinformation and disinformation. This created a worrying landscape for the maintenance of an informed electorate, as Allen asserted that the means to produce false content had now outpaced the ability of fact-checkers to neutralize this effect. There was no doubt that such a realization called for the development of measures that encouraged the public to participate in democracy, but at the same time dealt with the disruptive innovative potential of AI.

In short, a recurrent issue within Allen's narration was how accountability for misinformation should be sought, especially in election periods. She proposed three tactics to improve information processing in elections: identify who would be trusted sources prior to the election, assume any media content could be fake, including deep fakes, and focus on educating the audience for better digital education, especially considering the voters. (Allen, 2024).

Concerning the Increasing Political Power of AI and Voter Turnout: A Study of Allen

Voter participation was another aspect that Allen considered in a tactical way by looking at the benefits of AI. She supported universal voting and ranked-choice voting as reforms to motivate the positive electoral behavior of citizens. In this way, these adjustments could have minimized the adverse effects of negative advertisements that tended to capitalize on AI technology and its ability to alter or engage the public.

Afro-American Race and Election Infrastructure

Moreover, the article continued to examine issues relating to the election structure, especially the treatment of this infrastructure with AI technologies. Nate Persily, whom Allen cited as one of the panelists, averred that while AI was used by both the good and the bad in the system, the main danger lay not in the technology but in how people perceived it. Due to the existence of the term 'AI Terror,' people were less likely to believe in the absolute truth, and this worked against the tenets of democracy.

This quote from Alyx discussed the difference between the varied challenges presented by AI and the other ones posed by people's perception of trust in the electoral process.

In this article, Sandy Pentland dealt with the concept of trust that could exist in cyberspace when users could provide information verifying their identity. He cited Taiwan's example as a good one of protecting users' identities while making sure that they) They were indeed real people. This mode would have helped in controlling unwanted behavior online without violating the privacy rights of the individual, thus providing a way in which trust could have been cultivated in political communication conducted over the internet.

The findings presented in Allen's article bore considerable relevance to the current issues of electoral fairness and voter participation in the face of growing digitization. It was of paramount importance to comprehend these aspects appropriately, as political campaigning already included such technologies. Hence, devising effective measures improved voters' hardworking demeanor.

Furthermore, given the recurrence of apathy, it was possible to argue for reforming the entire mechanism of voter engagement, which was in line with the broader democratic engagement goals. Future inquiry, however, should have looked into how these solutions might have been applied to different issues of elections so that such technologies did not end up being the means of oppression. (Allen, 2024).

To Sum Up, "AI and the 2024 Elections" made a significant contribution in terms of the potential effects of artificial intelligence on electoral processes in the world. It was necessary to address all these issues to the extent that policymakers and stakeholders wanted and could have ensured that AI worked for, as opposed to against, democracy. With the elections of 2024 on the horizon, it was critical to comprehend these factors

in order to maintain an appropriate electoral climate and encourage the active and informed participation of the public.

2.9 Review of Books

How to Win an Indian Election by Shiv Shankar Singh

In "How to Win an Indian Election," Shiv Shankar Singh In "How to Win an Indian Election," Shiv Shankar Singh delved into the intricacies of contemporary Indian electoral politics, exploring the tactics and techniques employed in the process. He had worked for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and hacked into the relationship between data management, the behavior of voters, and the campaign strategist. This literature review touched on certain portions of Singh's work and attempted to develop an overall framework through political communication and electoral strategy in India.

Singh ingeniously attributed the explosion of data analytics to its application in political campaigning, especially in India. He stated that data enabled the political party to pinpoint specific voters and demographics, and coupled this with information on the analysis of previous elections, and described campaign messages. Coordinated campaigning went hand in hand with the electorate. Singh's observations were consistent with modern studies, especially in political communication, where campaigns were characterized by a high degree of "data usage," which guaranteed success. It implied that the participants in the political contest used information technology to reach out to as many voters as possible.

Singh's discussion raised another salient point: narrative construction and political marketing campaigns. He explained the notion of 'Voter Segmentation,' which made it possible for parties to perform and disseminate specific messages targeted to specific voters or regions, even building a storyline to blend in with the local concerns. The author observed that politics was not only about understanding the audience but at the same time communicating, identifying issues, and making the audience or voters feel a particular way about the issues.

This approach reflected broader trends in political marketing, where emotional appeals were increasingly recognized as vital for mobilizing support.

According to Singh, social media played an important part in the electoral campaigns of that time. He explained how campaign activities had positively interfaced with social networking sites, for example, Facebook and Twitter, where voters were reached and their correspondence was responded to on time. Traditional ways of campaigning could only have achieved reaching and disseminating messages out to audiences and waiting for a response at the right time; but such had then advanced, whereby people were able to communicate directly and in matters that were of concern. It went hand in hand with the available literature that emphasized the effectiveness of social media in that period's politics as being more than just a communication platform.

Much as Singh provided a thorough narrative on a wide range of campaigning techniques, he also drew attention to ethical concerns regarding the role of data and technology in politics. He cited concerns, including those of disinformation and tactical abuses that twisted normal voters' sentiments. It was also important because this kind of ethical concern was already developing in the field of political communication with respect to what political actors would or would not make threats to democracy.

Singh's depiction was pertinent in predicting the future of electoral trends in India, especially when one factored in technology. Since the focus was on data ascertainment, future campaigns would be evidence-based and necessarily guided by data analytics to improve decision-making. It was also expected that when in politics, people used the relationship between technology and society as they worked in projecting and maintaining their image.

To sum up, "How to Win an Indian Election," written by Shiv Shankar Singh, was an important book that shed light on the understanding of modern-day electoral politics in India. In particular, Singh focused on the relations between data analytics, narrative building, social media, and finally, the ethics of contemporary electioneering, which enabled one to scrutinize current election theories in the most crucial and pragmatic manner. Indeed, he added to the literature on political communication quite usefully by demonstrating how such tools could be utilized in campaigns, and also the implications of using these tools in a political campaign. (Singh, 2019).

The Book 'Social Media, Political Marketing and the 2016 U.S. Election,' edited by Christine B. Williams and Bruce I. Newman, was an examination of US elections that chronicled the fusion of social media and political marketing in one of the most

turbulent campaigns in America's history. This literature review presented the most crucial findings of the collected book, which was authored by numerous scholars and practitioners, and addressed those findings in the larger scheme of political communication and electoral planning.

The text highlighted the media overstepping itself and not merely being focused on the circulation of political messages, but also actively campaigning during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaigns. According to the editors, social network services such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram turned out to be the main means through which voters could be reached by the candidates, information provided, and assistance sought. Numerous chapters explained this phenomenon, providing examples of candidates directly communicating with constituents through social media and avoiding traditional media. Such changes in the media landscape not only paved the way for active political participation but also restructured the politics of the voters, especially the younger ones, in addressing them.

The dependence on data to formulate campaign approaches was among the core issues discussed in the text. According to the contributors, campaigns undertook advanced data collection to identify and effectively reach selected groups of voters. Campaigns identified different audiences and adjusted their messages and commercials to those audiences using data on how voters behaved and what kinds of individuals comprised each segment. This tendency of political marketing had become more pronounced in recent years, where campaign suggestions went along with the understanding of voters' behavior in one way or another.

The volume also explained the challenges of disinformation in that digital era. Many of the chapters illustrated the extent to which untrue information spread, in particular through social media channels, during the 2016 elections, and the impact that had on people's perceptions and decision-making regarding voting. The authors explained why misinformation, in particular, was a major concern in the ethical use of social media in political marketing practices and the duty of social media platforms in fighting it. This was even more so considering the ongoing conversations surrounding the social media companies and how they had to self-govern, particularly in ensuring fair elections.

Another important dimension in the book was focused on the impact of the emerging online environment on political marketing. The authors examined the ways in which

existing models of advertising were carried over and developed on the Internet, which made it possible to use more sophisticated and interactive advertising campaigns. Political marketing also created possibilities for appealing to voters with individually tailored messages, which, however, raised issues surrounding privacy and data safety. These discussions demonstrated the importance of understanding how voters' information was gathered, utilized, and given regarding campaigns.

The arguments put forth in the book were pivotal with regard to dealing with every future election. Given the continuing advancement of social media, it was vital for political aspirants to comprehend the same and how it related to communication with the electorate. In this respect, the book's outlook was that future campaigns would be developed under digital circumstances where active communication with the audience and usage of ethical practices concerning misinformation and data usage would be challenging.

By discussing evidence-based approaches and the concerns of false information, as well as the transformation of advertising, the book shed light on the new face of political communication. This was an important piece of literature on social media and its threats to democracy, given that many scholars and practitioners were still trying to come to terms with the very social media dynamics and the political processes. (Williams & Newman, 2018).

Shaili Chopra, in her book "The Big Connect: Politics In The Age Of Social Media," analyzed the effect of social media on political communication and campaigning within India. In this book, the author discussed how new media had turned the tables upside down in the paradigm shift, especially when it came to elections. In this context, she talked about popular leaders such as Narendra Modi, Rahul Gandhi, Arvind Kejriwal, and others, and how they had used the theory in practice. These leaders had engaged in e-politics.

The first thing that she did was to take a quick historical overview of the development and growth of social media in India, and what then transformed lobbying and exerting influence for election campaigns. She ventured to state that before everything else, then, instead of eventually growing up to different forms of engagements such as rallies and giving speeches, they were actually replaced by other forms that were electronic.

A comparable trend could be observed in the growing role of social media networks, like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, for keeping in touch with voters on the part of political parties. After all, she asserted that a tweet or a Facebook status would not guarantee any votes coming in; there was a greater impact these elements had on preferences and potential voters.

Chopra's work had a significant advantage due to her ability to compare and contrast different political campaigns. For instance, she compared the impact of social media on Barack Obama's presidential campaigns and the social media strategies of the Indian political class. In this manner, Chopra addressed how these political figures had employed digital tools, arguing that the platforms created engagement that indeed reached even the people who were previously absent from the political processes.

The book also offered case studies of Narendra Modi and his party's usage of social media during the electioneering period. Modi came across a narrative that made young voters fund their way into the presidency in 2014. Likewise, Chopra highlighted how the digital forays of game-level politicians like Rahul Gandhi and Arvind Kejriwal had changed over the years and why it was necessary.

These illustrations highlighted the importance of political parties adapting to the utilization of the digital world if they were to survive the challenges presented by the ever-changing politics.

Since it contained the benefits of social media networks to politics, it also catered to its confines. Aspects such as false news, inequality in technology usage, and the ethical concerns of advertising politics have been experienced from all angles. She worried about how undisciplined and damaging moral values would become once heart-seeking messaging and every other irrelevant thing were sent through social media and other porous channels of communication.

This region especially remembered the disturbing facts witnessed in various countries during elections, where disinformation and its dissemination availed a certain side victory.

Chopra's conclusions were, of course, important for our understanding of future political engagement in India. With the younger population growing ever more active online, there would probably be great expectations for audience engagement with

political leadership, and the preference for authenticity would increase, too. The book further argued that strategies designed for these media were forced to incorporate elements of openness and real engagement with the public in order to win people's confidence and encourage their participation in civics.

In addition, Chopra warned that it was not simply enough to communicate such messages. Political parties were not only fighting for votes within the new external environment. Politicians strategized on the use of digital media and dealt with moral concerns in their issues. Such issues included privacy and data protection in eliciting their messages and the need to avoid messaging that caused division or created falsehoods.

As a final note, I would like to mention that the book "The Big Connect: Politics in the Age of Social Media" by Shaili Chopra is dedicated to analyzing the radical changes in political communication in India brought about by social media. Through the critical analysis of case studies and an assessment of the challenges faced by individuals in the digital age, this book makes a significant contribution to current avenues of election research. While this work by Chopra has pointed out the advantages of social media, it has also emphasized the need for caution, moderation, and ethics in politics– a politics that uses social media and other technologies as a means of engagement without putting the citizenry at the level of mere spectators. (Chopra, 2014).

In **"The Dynamics of Political Communication: Media and Politics in a Digital Age," Richard M. Perloff** provides an extensive examination of how media and politics interact within a contemporary digital world. This book is important in analyzing the communication strategies and tactics and the impact of technology on those, with a concentration on politics and engagement with the public.

Overview of Political Communication

Political communication is configured in periodic extremes; this is the primary aspect that Perloff pointed out in his arguments. Political communication is described by several principles and functions that help to consider the role of political communication in altering the attitudes toward the masses and the activity of the masses. He presented a chronological development of the field, outlining its past and present concerning communication through the mass media. This historical context is

essential, hence to wonder how, over the years, changes have taken place in the political statements that have addressed the voters and the campaigns themselves.

The Role of Social Media

One of the issues that Perloff made in his work was the way in which online platforms and audiences were changing traditional political boundaries. He contended that social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram changed the ways of political communication in a way that the politicians could talk to their voters in real time. Perloff observed that through communicating with supporters on social media, political figures were able to cut out the intermediaries of the mainstream media, enabling a quicker and more personal approach to the electorate. As a result of this change, information became more accessible to everyone, and the politics of engagement in those campaigns equally changed them from one-way sorts of communication to two-way dialogues. (Perloff, 2021).

Theory and Effects

The chapter looked into the different theoretical paradigms that informed the field of political communication, such as agenda-setting and the media's public opinion effect. He aimed to illustrate the applicability of these theories, which had already been put into practice in the historical domain, in the context of modern communications systems using research material. He did this by mapping out relevant work done in the area. He considered the relevance of these theories to the context of electoral politics, especially then, when content was everywhere in the form of messages and images that people were inundated with.

Difficulties and Ethics

On the one hand, while appreciating the benefits of the new media for communication, Perloff, on the other hand, also spoke about some significant issues regarding these media. For example, he expressed fears regarding false information, echo chambers, and divisions in society. The author pointed out that it was the duty of politicians and every media outlet to see that the correct information was given to the people. This was important, especially then, when there was an increase in the prevalence of fake news targeting the normal functioning of democratic processes.

New Frontiers in Research

Perloff's work has far-reaching consequences for political communication studies of the future. Most importantly, as the technology grows, it will be relevant to understand how it influences the nature of public discourse and electoral politics. The book also calls for an investigation into how new technology can promote democracy with less risk of distortion from misinformation.

To sum up, Richard M. Perloff's "The Dynamics of Political Communication: Media and Politics in a Digital Age" presents an important viewpoint on the transforming nature of political communication, taking into consideration the impact of new media.

Through its comprehensive analysis of historical developments, theoretical frameworks, and contemporary challenges, this book serves as a vital resource for understanding the complexities of modern political discourse. Perloff's work not only highlights the opportunities presented by digital platforms but also calls for a responsible approach to their use in politics—one that prioritizes ethical considerations and promotes informed citizen participation. (Perloff, 2021).

In **"The Election That Changed India," Author Rajdeep Sardesai** offered a vivacious and meticulous narrative of the Indian General Elections held in 2014, which he described as a pivotal point in the political history of the country. The book, published shortly after the elections held the previous year, was ahead of the times in terms of the changing forces of political power and public mood, especially relating to the ascent of Modi and the downfall of Congress. The review of the literature synthesized the salient issues and arguments in Sardesai's work and its place in the study of political communication and elections in India.

Historical Context and Importance

To begin with, in this work, Sardesai attempted to place the elections of 2014 in the larger picture of history, asserting that it was the first time since 1984 that one party, the BJP, had received a clear majority of seats in Parliament without forming a coalition. The author painstakingly reconstructed the pre-election picture, detailing even the last scandals of the UPA government led by Manmohan Singh, those in particular that swayed the electorate. This background was indispensable for realizing how Modi's campaign skillfully benefited from the dissatisfaction of the masses and what image

Modi was projected for the cause, a man who could bring about the desired and expected reforms.

Campaign Strategies and Media Influence

A recurring element in the story told by Sardesai was the remarkable campaigning techniques, especially the comprehensive usage of social media and other channels of the BJP. He pointed out how the young voters were targeted by Modi's team, who overused Facebook and Twitter in addressing the audience with the message about growth and development that was prevalent at that time. The argument was also made in the book that this election was unlike other elections in the sense that it was not dependent on the exercise of sticks, balls, banners, and posters, as this time around, the campaign bore the usage of all available digital resources towards breaking even political news and rallying the electorate.

Rajdeep Sardesai has also addressed the question of how the election period and the campaign affected the coverage performed by different types of media and the public's perception of the election itself. He also explored the national campaigns of the two presidential candidates and assessed the extent to which media products widened or narrowed the perspective of the competition. This case revealed the intricate associations between how the media reported and the actual election outcomes, indicating that the way a voter was shown a candidate might affect the way they voted.

Character Studies and Political Personalities

The growth in the book comes with the richness of character and political identities, beginning with the likes of Modi up to Rahul Gandhi and his contemporaries. The portrayal of Modi as a determined man with the gift of leadership and his contrasting depiction of Gandhi as one lacking in charisma, fully experiencing the ghosts of political history, does break up the compass, as it were, of latitudes in political descriptions. Observing their behavior and tactics during the election, as well as how they are presented, gives an idea of their politics and the politics of their parties at that moment.

Indeed, the author's technique is such that one easily immerses oneself, thanks to specific episodes, into the very contest of politics or political competition. Such a

technique helps not only to emphasize certain characters but also enhances the conception of the magnitude of electoral politics.

Consequences on Indian Democracy

Sardesai's work has raised crucial issues regarding the impact of these elections on Indian democracy. There are such examples of his work where he explains why and how elections in 2014 marked the onset of the era of majoritarian politics and the implications of this for our concept of Indianness. The book also encourages readers to think about the consequences of such electoral processes on the functioning of the government, individual liberties, and cohesion within society over an extended period.

Additionally, as aware citizens, Sardesai issued a register warning in the sense that people ought to be on the lookout for the preservation of democratic principles because 'the history is that in this day and age, images and speeches can be easily manipulated'. His appeal for enlightened patriots is quite in line with current concerns regarding the state of democracy in India today.

Last but not least, Rajdeep Sardesai wrote "The Election That Changed India," which provides an in-depth discussion of the events surrounding the 2014 General Elections, a crucial and relevant topic in contemporary Indian politics. It analyzed campaign techniques, media, and people's behavior, and as such, it includes materials fundamental for the comprehension of the electoral processes in India. The author also chronicles a crucial juncture in the chronology of Indian culture and society while also encouraging contemplation on the future of democracy, given the rapid speed of technological advancements.(Sardesai, 2014).

2.10 Review of Web Resource Videos on YouTube

The Function of Digital Advocacy During Elections: The Case of the 2015 UK General Elections

The impact of digital campaigning in the 2015 UK General Election, especially regarding the Labour Party's partnership with Blue State Digital, is the main focus of the Bloomberg segment featuring Caroline Hyde. This section reviews salient points from the discussion, demonstrating the ways in which strategies of this kind altered participation and fundraising in the course of the election in question.

As reported, Hyde had pointed out that Blue State Digital is a well-known company that was crucial in implementing the digital strategy of the Labour Party during the elections of 2015. The company's ability to use social networking sites to solicit votes and raise money proved to be a game-changer in UK electioneering that had not existed before. This transformation was indicative of a shift where more and more campaigning rhetoric is enhanced with modern innovations that help parties reach their audience more easily. (Bloomberg, 2015).

Mobilization of messages and Fundraising

Message mobilization was a critical aspect of the strategies employed by the Labour Party, which entailed sending out campaign messages to the voters through social networks, websites, video, and other means. In Hyde's words, "This strategy focused not just on increasing the target population's awareness but also on making them able to donate money online in order to cut down on the use of high-value patrons and mainstream donation channels". The growth of small donations has, however, been used as an argument for the move towards more reliance on crowdfunding in politics, similar to that witnessed in some of the recent American campaigns.

Encouraging Participation Among Groups with Different Age Profiles

Hyde refuted a commonly held assumption that online campaigning is predominantly designed for young voters. Sam Jeffers, the UK head of Blue State Digital, proposed that their approach is to reach out to target audiences of different age brackets. Within this context, the use of various methods and channels, including Twitter, Instagram, and Email, was intended to communicate with voters in swing districts effectively. This strategy reinforced the view that digital strategies are welcome in engaging different people and highlights that there is a need to modify messages to be able to talk to all people without excluding any voter.

Challenges and Future Implications

On the one hand, the discussion appreciated the digital campaigning revolution; on the other hand, it posed difficulties in trusting how political engagement would be in the future. The emergence of social media as a tool for political fundraising and inducing votes raised the danger of being attacked by counterpropaganda and threats on moral issues concerning the handling of sensitive information. As political contests became

more advanced due to technological changes, knowledge of these factors was key in upholding the ideals of democracy.

The coverage, last but not least, shed light on the help digital campaigning had in how the 2015 UK general election was carried out, specifically the Bloomberg segment. It expanded on the Labor Party's partnership with Blue State Digital, showing how relevant the use of social media could, in fact, borrow and blend political communications and money. In an era of advanced technology where political parties were dependent on digital strategies, this conversation reinforced the necessity of morality, ethics, and engagement for every member of the electorate. (Bloomberg, 2015).

An Unboxing with Prashant Kishor: What it Takes to Plan, Execute, and Win an Election - This segment on YouTube sheds light on the advancements in technology and social media, and how they have affected political campaigning in India, especially in the post-2009 era. The Key Political strategist of India, Mr. Prashant Kishor, points out that their use has productively changed the design and structure of political messages to the extent that parties manage to reach out to the voters more comfortably than ever before. Technology topped the list of such factors, with many speakers highlighting the unbelievable 3D holograms and mobile platforms that were extensively used during campaigns. The changes in the 2014 elections were significant in that political parties finally appreciated the influence of social media on the public and its role in managing public opinion as a tool to engage and mobilize the masses. This came, however, somewhat late to many traditional parties, as most of them incorporated an over-optimistic view of social media's role. (Prashant Kishor, 2023).

The discussion also emphasizes the role of mobilizing people at the grassroots level and the need for candidates to establish personal relationships with their constituents.

The panelist, Mr. Prashant Kishor, argues that the effectiveness of a campaign largely depends on an established base of support, which significantly aids in driving the campaign's messages. According to him, while an effective campaign requires significant resources, the appeal to the average voter is often more effective than money.

In addition, the segment focuses on the effects of information disorder in the modern age. The panelists, however, share the view that in spite of these, social media has

enabled political engagement, feedback, and discourse from many who would otherwise remain voiceless.

Broadly, the conversation contextualizes the changing nature of political engagement owing to technological innovation in India and recapitulates its prospects and issues in political campaigning. (Prashant Kishor, 2023).

The impact of social media and Web ads on political campaigns by Iowa PBS
Political Science professors Dave Andersen and Chris Budzisz explained how campaigns were using more and more social media and Web ads to reach supporters and potential voters, in addition to the traditional broadcast television commercials. They said sophisticated campaigns were harnessing the power of new media.

In the panel discussion, the political science professors and Dave Andersen and Chris Budzisz, the experts, had a conversation regarding the changing influence of social media and the web in political campaigns. The experts analyzed how campaigns were apparently moving from old-age broadcast means like TV advertisements to digital platforms to directly connect with the voters. This change enhanced the ability of the campaigns to reach their supporters and prospective voters, who were more likely to engage with content online rather than through traditional media. (Iowa PBS, 2019).

Moreover, an important observation made in the conversation was that through social platforms, audiences targeted by campaigns were reached within shorter periods of time. Everyday broadcasting was about inviting the maximum possible number of people, while, in social media, the users invited themselves to engage – for instance, by giving them the option to 'like' a page or to follow its updates. This kind of environment facilitated campaigns taking the initiative to organize and engage their members, as well as urging them to disseminate messages to their friends. The professors pointed out that users who employed advanced forms of these campaigns ended up using these social networks for the purposes of monitoring their users and even to go further to reach other users with similar interests.

Additionally, this segment said that even though conventional broadcast components would be used in future elections, canvassing plans geared towards digital strategies were growing more prevalent. One such indication was the increase in the usage of ads online, such as the various forms of banner ads, Google Ads, and even in-stream ads on

YouTube. With the new generations growing up with less traditional media, it became imperative for these campaigns to evolve in order to successfully reach the electorate.

To conclude, such debates justified the evolution in political campaigning practices from conventional textile posters and similar methods to the integration of social networks and a reorientation towards internet advertising, which entailed both the effective use of innate resources and new managerial challenges. (Iowa PBS, 2019).

In this Cover Story on the YouTube channel of 'News X ', a panel discussion by Priya Sahgal titled "Lok Sabha Elections 2019: Role of Social Media In Indian Politics, the attention is drawn to how the advent of social media has changed the political landscape and campaigns, giving the 2016 U.S. elections as an example.

Amit Malviya, Head of BJP's I& T Cell, evaluated the way such sites, as Facebook or Twitter, had altered the course of traditional campaigns – and it was that they were no longer doing to the voters but with the voters and, as a result, could broadcast their messages more efficiently. It had contributed to the democratization of information, and alternative views had been presented.

However, the highlighted changes were interesting and probably most important in emphasizing the use of digital technologies and social networks on the internet rather than epic approaches to the media. This relationship allowed them to develop strategies called microtargeting campaigns, whereby specific strategies would focus on a few that they believed were influential in winning over, and therefore spent limited resources on them. This was a very basic stratagem in those days' politics, where games were played, and voting and politics were seen simply as a sport to entertain the masses.

The issue of misconceptions and how fast lies could spread through social networks was also mentioned in the section. Professionals pointed out that even though social media helped reach out to more voters, such an environment made it easy for false narratives to come into being, thereby hindering the election process. A delicate point concerning the audience’s engagement and activism through social networks was also discussed. The dynamics of the internet allowed for the mobilization of support for movements and across candidates, where such traditional campaign infrastructure might be out of viability.

In general, the present section examines the role social media has played in political advertising and its pros and cons in intervening in public dialogue and elections. (News X, 2024).

The video on YouTube titled 'How Do Political Campaigns Go Viral? | Lok Sabha Elections 2019- The Indian Express channel looked at the growing influence of social media in elections and their campaigning in India, especially during the period of general elections. Given that the country had around 300 million internet users, political parties were taking advantage of the online channels as a way of reaching out directly to about fifty percent of the total population.

This development was indicative of a complete overhaul in the way voters were targeted and campaign activities conducted.

Another important aspect of the conversation was how social media was tactical for the major political parties, especially the BJP and the Congress party, which mobilized a wide range of activists. These political parties also had complex hierarchies of activists who were supplemented by the likes of WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram to provide and even canvass support. This approach of going to the people allowed for the swift circulation of content, making it possible for campaigns to go further into the local spine.

In addition, the section drew attention to the important contributions of volunteers in such campaigns. A large number of people took part in it for free by posting and uploading their respective posts and videos of the campaign. This bottom-up mobilization was essential to promote the local supporters' active participation and helped them feel real ownership over the cause.

Nevertheless, the fact that the discussion only focused on the positive aspects of social media would be a gross overstatement. On the one hand, social media provided a tremendous capacity for mobilization. On the other hand, it was fraught with the undesirable consequences of falsehood, and the importance of educating the electorate on digital literacy.

All in all, this part of the analysis spoke about how social media had taken over the political landscape of campaigning in India and had transformed the dynamics between the parties and the supporters in the pre-election period. (Indian Express, 2019).

2.11 Research Gap:

Despite the growing presence of social media in Indian politics, a comprehensive understanding of its effectiveness in influencing young voters remains a subject of ongoing research.

This study aims to bridge this gap by examining:

- The evolving and changing trends in social media use by political parties and candidates in India.
- The types of content and messaging employed on social media platforms.
- The level of engagement generated by these campaigns among young voters.
- The perceived effectiveness of social media communication in influencing young voters' political choices.

This research will contribute valuable insights into the changing dynamics of Indian political communication and its impact on youth voter participation. By understanding the effectiveness of social media strategies, political parties can refine their approaches to better engage with young voters and shape the future of Indian democracy.

In summary, the problem addressed in this study is the need to explore the changing trends in Indian political communication through social media, focusing on its effectiveness in engaging youth voters. This research aims to analyze the implications of these trends for political discourse, participation, and the overall health of democracy in India.

Key Terms and Definitions

1. Cyberbullying: The inappropriate use of technology to intimidate, threaten, shame, or target individuals via different digital channels such as social media, messaging applications, email, and online gaming.

2. Data Security: Data security is the protection of data from unauthorized access, alteration, disclosure, destruction, or use. It involves implementing measures to safeguard sensitive information and prevent data breaches.

3. Microtargeting: Microtargeting is a data-driven approach where the audience is broken down into particular segments for specific messages. Such strategies are especially significant in political campaigns – individual voters or niches of very few voters are analyzed, and custom-made contents are delivered, hoping to raise the interest of the voters as well as persuade them via means of social media networks or email marketing.

(Refer to all the key terms attached at the end of Chapter 1)

Abbreviations :

1. **UGC:** User Generated Content
2. **PR:** Public Relations
3. **UNFPA:** United Nations Population Fund's
4. **BJP:** Bhartiya Janta Party
5. **CSDS:** 'Centre for the Study of Developing Societies '
6. **KAS:**Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

Chapter 3

Research Methodology and Design

3.1 Descriptive Research

A descriptive research design is a methodology that is supposed to outline the characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes of a specific population or phenomenon.

Descriptive research design is a type of research methodology that provides the portrayal of specific population or phenomenon characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes (Creswell, 2014; Kothari, 2004). In either case, these last methods are more of the question "what" and how" rather than exploring into the "why". (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Due to its unique strengths and capabilities, such as gathering and analyzing data in real-time, descriptive research helps uncover patterns and trends within the data. The descriptive research method has been selected for this study.

This research is detailed and elaborate in nature, enabling descriptive research intended to serve a deeper description of a specific phenomenon or population without the inclusion of manipulating variables (McCombes, 2023). An importer of past datasets simulates the data collection and analysis that reveal patterns and trends crucial to comprehending relationships among variables, steer follow-up research, and gather evidence for public policy-making.

Descriptive research is also very flexible and customizable. Additionally, it is capable of utilizing various data collection techniques, including surveys, observations, and case studies (Enago, 2023). For instance, in order to understand the behavior of youth voters, surveys can capture what media sources they consume and how their decisions are influenced; observation will track youth voter mobilization movements, if any; and case studies may document the political campaign strategies that target this age group (Aggarwal, 2019).

The optionality in methods allows for the choice of whatever best completes research questions or fits most meaningfully within the given context.

Likewise, descriptive research generally uses a mixed approach by using quantitative data, such as vote statistics, but also using qualitative data, like interview answers, to go deeper (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

Descriptive research yields procedures, facts, or analyses with immediate practical applications. Politicians or political parties can leverage the findings to know about voters' media usage habits that will enable them to modify social media marketing campaigns and persuasive communication efforts (Graham, 2019).

The present study is considered descriptive research, as no variables were manipulated and the sample size and resources were limited.

This adaptability facilitates the researcher in selecting the most suitable method to answer their specific research questions and contexts. This type of research can encompass both quantitative and qualitative data. The combined approach enables the researcher to gather numerical data for statistical analysis while also obtaining deeper insights through qualitative techniques, such as interviews or open-ended survey questions.

Results from descriptive research can have immediate practical applications. For example, in this study, political parties or leaders can utilize descriptive research to understand voter media consumption habits and the factors that influence voting decisions, which can further direct and guide social media marketing strategies and persuasive communication efforts.

Furthermore, 'Descriptive Research' often centers on real-world situations and contexts, making its findings particularly relevant to practitioners and policymakers.

This relevance can help to enhance the research's impact and support informed decision-making.

Some of the important descriptive research studies, similar to the core idea of this study, that have been done both at the international and national levels are :

- Sperry and Hall (2017) examined the specific factors that impacted youth

voter turnout during the 2016 U.S. presidential election in a cross-sectional survey analysis of young adults, finding that registration methods were critical.

• A survey of over 1,500 Generation Z Australians by Gauja, Bean, and McAllister (2025) described youth voting behaviors, focusing on informational rather than apathy explanations for poor turnout.

Amenyeawu (2021) used mixed methods to illustrate contemporary campaign strategies, explaining how political parties in Ghana employed social media to appeal to young voters.

A few of the descriptive Studies related to the Indian Context are :

The Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme of the Election Commission of India, which deals with visuals and rhetorically increases participation of youth, first-time voters through educative and outreach elections. (Election Commission of India, n.d.)

The pilot study by Tagat, Khandelwal, and Kapoor (2023) on using behavioral nudges to boost youth electoral participation in Mumbai is detailed in their report "Nudging Voter Registration in Mumbai." The study involved plan-making nudges with college youth, combining descriptive and experimental methods under the Shambar Takke Shaii (STS) campaign, which is aligned with the ‘You4Youth’ and SVEEP goals to enhance voter registration and participation (Tagat, Khandelwal, & Kapoor, 2023).

Sanjay Kumar (2014) conducted an analysis of the BJP's success in mobilizing its youth vote through communication and campaign strategies, providing a descriptive approach to understanding political outcomes.

A study by Khalil, Mookerjee, and Tierney (2019) investigated the impact of social interactions on voter turnout in Indian constituencies. Their results show that people are more likely to vote when the turnout in their social circles is high, drawing attention to the impact of their peers on the decision to vote. This work emphasizes the role of social networking in voting and the potential to harness such connections in the aim of increasing voter turnout (Khalil et al., 2019; Mookerjee et al., 2017; Tierney, 2008).

3.2 Nature of Research: Mixed Methods Research (Both Quantitative and Qualitative)

In the present study, the researcher employed a mixed-methods design, which involved the use of both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (in-depth interviews) research to build a complex yet nuanced understanding of young individuals who use social media as part of their political communication in India.

Mixed methods research, an approach that mixes methods and methodologies, features systematic measurement and numerical analysis (both descriptive and inferential) from quantitative approaches (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017), to explain rich, contextual insights provided through qualitative methods.

This type of research methodology is a useful and adaptable methodology available to researchers faced with these types of questions. It allows for data sources and methodologies to be triangulated, adding a qualitative component that creates a richer and more truthful picture of complex social phenomena (Tzagkarakis et al., 2022). Because this design incorporates both quantitative data and narrative qualitative experiences, it partially addresses the problems with the relevance to research purposes of interpretations produced in studies employing a single technique (Creswell, 2014).

Rationale for Choosing Mixed Methods:

The phenomena under investigation—social media, youth voters, their media consumption, and their role in contemporary Indian election campaigns—span both quantifiable aspects (such as patterns of media use and voter behavior) and more nuanced dimensions (such as perceptions, motivations, and strategic campaign narratives).

Quantitative methods measure behaviors and patterns, while qualitative methods explain the underlying 'how' and 'why,' making this a robust approach as both methods align with the study’s objectives and research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Quantitative Tools and Procedures:

The quantitative data for this study were primarily gathered through structured questionnaires, administered both online and in physical form, comprising demographic items, Likert-scale measures, and semantic differential scales to capture attitudes, voting intentions, and media consumption. Sampling is convenient and purposive with the youth voters in various Indian cities (Bryman, 2016).

Qualitative Tools and Procedures:

Qualitative data collection involved semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted both virtually and in person with 10 experts, including social media heads from the state cells of major national political parties (BJP and INC) in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

In addition, the panel of expert interviewees included academicians from political science, mass communication, journalists, political analysts, digital marketing strategists, and artificial intelligence-driven synthetic media production specialists involved in crafting and implementing political communication strategies. The interview guide comprised eleven open-ended questions designed to elicit in-depth insights on campaign planning, execution, digital strategy evolution, and youth engagement dynamics.

The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and content analysis was carried out. This study employed a convergent parallel mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017), wherein quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously but analyzed independently.

Integration Strategy:

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017), wherein quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously but analyzed independently. The study utilized triangulation of findings at the interpretative phase, where results were integrated and contrasted. Thus, methodological triangulation can help validate findings by validating numerical trends against expert narratives and deeper context

(Tzagkarakis et al., 2023).

Limitations and Challenges:

While mixed methods research provides comprehensive insights, it also poses challenges by requiring significant time, resources, and methodological expertise for data collection, along with the need to correctly analyze and synthesize multiple types of data (TKW Research Group, 2024). Interpretation difficulties may arise from integrating different data formats. In this study, these issues were addressed by employing consistent procedures for survey deployment and interview analysis, and by scheduling concurrent stages to ensure effective data integration.

Contextual and Indian Political Communication Examples:

Mixed methods approaches have been successfully applied in contemporary Indian political communication research. For instance, Tagat et al. Benjamin, 2023, Mumbai (mixed methods, survey, and behavioral interventions for youth voter registration,2023). More generally, Sanjay Kumar's analysis of BJP electoral successes, combined with quantitative voter turnout data and qualitative observations on campaign strategy (Kumar, 2014), speaks to the benefit of employing mixed methods research approaches to unraveling electoral phenomena.

Henceforth, this mixed-methods design, combining structured quantitative measurement with rich qualitative expert insights analyzed via content analysis, provides a balanced and rigorous framework for investigating youth political engagement with social media campaigns in the Indian scenario. To capture the complexity of political communication dynamics, the researcher thus paired both data forms — party and media coverage — and had to ensure that they were empirically robust while also being insightful for contemporary real-world contexts.

3.1.3 Approach of Research:

The study employed a deductive research methodology, beginning with the formulation of research objectives and questions, and hypotheses derived from

established theories on youth political behavior and the impact of social media. Data was gathered and analyzed to evaluate these hypotheses, resulting in confirmation or rejection based on empirical evidence (Saunders et al., 2019).

Quantitative data from surveys were cleaned, coded, and assessed, and then subjected to further statistical analysis to evaluate relationships, identify causal connections, and gain insights.

Whereas qualitative data facilitated contextual comprehension and the enhancement of theoretical frameworks. This method equipped the researcher to thoroughly assess existing knowledge and provide empirically based insights from the experts, and add some grounded interpretations.

3.1.4 Time Dimension: Cross-Sectional

This study utilizes a cross-sectional research design, wherein data were collected from youth respondents across three different cities of Pune, Nashik (Maharashtra), and Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh) at a particular point in time.

Adopting a cross-sectional approach allowed the researcher to take a "snapshot" of the phenomenon of political engagement amongst young people together with their patterns and use for media, thereby identifying which types seem to be prevalent and exploring certain attitudes that are in coherence with these particular forms.

A cross-sectional design was employed to match the purpose of the study, which aimed to investigate and chart out present-day associations and developments, without salient changes or growth over time.

It enables both the methodological efficiency as well as feasibility to collect and analyze in a timely fashion, data collection and analysis across a diverse geographical sampling framework.

Additionally, cross-sectional surveys are commonly employed in social sciences research when the aim is to describe current states and associations rather than establish causality or temporal evolution.

Present research supports the suitability of cross-sectional methodology for examining youth political engagement and media use.

For example, present research suggests that cross-sectional methodology is suitable for the study of youth political engagement and media use. Boulianne (2021), for example, using a cross-sectional survey design, examined the impact of social media on political participation among young people and was able to effectively identify important psychological and attitudinal predictors without needing to follow up participants over time. The characteristics of digital civic environments are associated with relationships between variables estimated in cross-sectional designs, as shown in this study. Likewise, a previous editorial on methodology reinforced the fact that cross-sectional studies are appropriate for determining prevalence and mapping associations in large population samples, thereby yielding robust evidence about present-day social processes (Maier et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, the cross-sectional design also has intrinsic limitations that should be recognized. First, this approach cannot make causal inference, as cross-sectional data collection does not allow researchers to determine whether variable X preceded the outcome Z. Also, cross-sectional studies do not enable tracing of developmental changes or mechanisms for attitude and behavior change over time; therefore, they may limit the understanding of dynamic processes.

Thus, interpretation is limited to cross-sectional and associational rather than causal or secular direction (population-based trends). The current study, therefore, recognizes these constraints and highlights that its exploratory and descriptive nature provides an important foundation for more longitudinal or experimental follow-up studies.

3.2 Plan for Data Collection

3.2.1 Primary Data

Primary data is the first-hand original raw information as collected directly from participants, and it addresses the research problem. (Creswell 2014).

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in interpretivist epistemology, which emphasizes the co-construction of meaning between the researcher and participants in social settings (Creswell, 2013).

The research aims to understand how political communication disseminated through social media is perceived, internalized, and discussed by Indian youth voters. Besides, it aimed to track, study, and analyze the changing trends in political communication and the evolving socio-political marketing environment in India.

Given that political content is often rich in symbols, language, and ideological framing, a qualitative approach is most suitable to uncover latent meanings, interpretive strategies, and emotional responses associated with digital political discourse (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Platforms like Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube are not just channels for communication; they are discursive arenas where identities are negotiated, ideologies are disseminated, and power is exercised (Papacharissi, 2010). The interpretive approach enables the researcher to trace how these youth audiences decode, reframe, or resist political messaging in their everyday digital interactions.

To interrogate the complex interplay of language, power, and meaning in political communication, and the advent of technology-mediated communication, the study adopted a hybrid discourse analytic framework comprising Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA).

The primary data for this study were collected through a mixed-methods approach. It combined a structured survey of youth respondents. It was carried out through online surveys, mainly on Google Forms, and physical surveys (paper-based) that were conducted for convenience to improve the coverage.

In-depth interviews of a panel of ten expert panelists from varied disciplines were conducted to strengthen and validate the research insights.

Together, these complementary data collection methods provided a comprehensive and multi-dimensional foundation for analyzing social media's

role in Indian political communication and youth engagement within the scope of this research.

Primary Data Collection -Survey Method

The survey was conducted among 342 youth respondents, a purposively selected sample representing digitally active urban youth from three major Indian cities: Pune, Nashik, and Kanpur. The purposive sampling ensured that variations in socio-political contexts within India could be captured, while representing them consistently across these different urban centers.

The respondents predominantly consisted of college-age individuals, aligning with the study's focus on youth demographics who are most engaged with various social media platforms. This wide demographic and geographic range provided a solid foundation for testing differences in political engagement among social media users, thereby illuminating how the phenomenon of digital political communication varies among youth living in diverse urban settings.

The analysis of this data was done by adopting appropriate statistical tests to obtain verified results.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The analysis of this data was done by adopting appropriate statistical tests to obtain verified results.

A few inferential statistical tests were conducted to examine the survey responses. The differences and interactions across groups were analyzed using ANOVA tests (one-way). Furthermore, a one-sample t-test was used to test if the mean of specific variables differs from expectancy. A one-binomial test was conducted for binomial outcomes, such as preferred social media platforms. They allowed challenging data examination following research assumptions.

One-sample t-test, binomial test, and Two One-way ANOVA tests were conducted.

One-sample t-test:

The one-sample t-test was used to determine if the sample mean for a particular variable, such as voter engagement scores, significantly differed from a known or hypothesized population mean. This test is useful for assessing whether the youth surveyed demonstrated above- or below-average engagement compared to baseline expectations (Creswell, 2014).

Binomial test:

The binomial test was utilized to examine categorical data producing a binary outcome, such as the percentage of youth respondents who prefer a particular social media platform to obtain political information. This test checks if observed proportions (over two cases) are significantly different from base rates and can break out into 'you will learn a lot more about' patterns of communication" (Bryman, 2016).

The one-way ANOVA :

The one-way ANOVA was employed to compare means of the dependent variable across multiple independent groups to detect significant differences. For example, this test helped to identify whether media consumption patterns varied significantly among different demographic groups within the youth respondents, enabling targeted interpretations of subgroup behaviors (Bryman, 2016).

Primary Data Collection -In-Depth Interviews of Experts

Additionally, qualitative data was gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with a panel of 10 distinguished experts and specialists drawn from fields including social media management, political communication, journalism, artificial intelligence, political consulting, and campaign strategy. This panel notably included social media heads and coordinators from two prominent Indian political parties—the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, and the Indian National Congress (INC).

These interviews were guided by a set of questionnaires and aimed to elicit rich

expert insights into contemporary social media campaigning, emerging trends, and the strategic mobilization of youth through digital platforms.

The perspectives gathered from this expert panel complemented the survey data, offering a nuanced contextual understanding and validation of quantitative findings.

The interview transcripts were subjected to content analysis, a qualitative method used to systematically identify key themes, patterns, and insights from textual data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). This approach equipped the researcher to delve deeply into participants' lived experiences and uncover nuanced aspects of the changing and evolving political campaigning trends through social media, and to find the influencing factors that impact the youth political engagement via social media.

Qualitative Data Analysis -Content Analysis

The primary data collected through the in-depth interviews of the experts was analyzed by doing Content Analysis to attain qualitative insights to track and analyze the changing and emerging trends in contemporary political campaigning via digital media. The Content analysis of Interviews was done by doing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA). NVivo is popular for coding themes, discourse patterns, and managing large text datasets. Widely used for both TDA and CDA.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used to uncover how language reflects, reinforces, or contests existing power relations and ideologies (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In the context of this study, CDA helps explore how political messages on social media embed power dynamics—such as party dominance, media control, and algorithmic curation—while shaping public perceptions and voter behavior. CDA is particularly relevant in political communication studies, as it goes beyond surface-level language to examine the sociopolitical consequences of discourse (van Dijk, 2001; Machin & Mayr, 2012).

This approach has been successfully applied in related work examining political

campaigns, propaganda, populism, and digital misinformation (Richardson, 2007; Ekström & Firmstone, 2007). For instance, van Dijk (2006) asserts that digital media discourse, especially in political contexts, is a mechanism for ideological reproduction, and that CDA is essential in exposing such processes.

Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA)

Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA) allows for the systematic identification of recurring themes and discursive patterns while remaining sensitive to the social construction of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Riessman, 2008). Unlike classical thematic analysis, TDA treats themes not as fixed categories but as fluid, evolving, and contextually embedded constructs shaped by discourse practices (Clarke & Braun, 2014). This makes TDA highly suitable for exploring digital political culture, where language, symbols (e.g., hashtags, memes), and identity markers are constantly recontextualized.

Studies in political psychology and media studies have found TDA especially useful for exploring online engagement, activism, and youth civic participation (Banaji & Buckingham, 2013; Loader et al., 2014). In this study, TDA captures the affective and cognitive responses of young voters to political content, enabling an exploration of how emotional triggers, humor, credibility, and peer influence shape digital engagement.

The combination of CDA and TDA strengthens the study's analytical depth and breadth. While CDA offers critical insights into power, ideology, and representation, TDA reveals thematic consistencies and affective resonances in participant narratives. This integrative approach aligns with recent scholarly calls for methodological pluralism in digital media studies to account for the multi-layered, fragmented, and participatory nature of online discourse (Leistert, 2015; Burgess & Matamoros-Fernández, 2016).

NVivo (which stands for 'N vivo' or *in vivo*, meaning 'within the living' in Latin) is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software developed by QSR International. It enables researchers to systematically manage, code, and interpret large volumes of unstructured textual, visual, and multimedia data as it allows for efficient coding of texts, identification of themes and patterns, visualization of word frequency, and mapping of discursive structures. This

facilitates a more rigorous and transparent analysis of how language, power, and ideology are constructed in texts.". (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2020).

In particular, combining these methods allows the research to:

- Examine macro-level discursive strategies used by political actors (e.g., slogans, framing devices).
- Analyze micro-level interactions, such as individual responses to influencer narratives or misinformation.
- Map emergent themes that cut across power, identity, emotional resonance, and civic behavior.

This hybrid method has been validated in similar research contexts involving political polarization (Chiluwa & Samoilenko, 2020), youth mobilization (Jenkins et al., 2016), and digital populism (Waisbord, 2018).

The primary method of data collection was in-depth semi-structured interviews, conducted both virtually and in person. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and addressed the emerging and changing trends in areas such as the visibility of political content, emotional and cognitive responses, influencer impact, credibility perceptions, and peer-group opinion dynamics. Audio recordings and written notes were used to capture responses.

Expert interviews were conducted with:

- The Expert Panel comprised professionals with expertise in various fields, including academicians from Political Science, journalism, political analysts and consulting, digital marketing strategists, and AI experts. And also included three state-level social media head coordinators from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Indian National Congress (INC) of two states, i.e, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

These interviews yielded insightful and nuanced views on the shifting tides of political communication strategies, the use of social media marketing, and how new technologies are being leveraged to mobilize young people. They offered a practitioner's view on changing targeting strategies, content customization, and platform-specific political outreach, enriching the research with insider

perspectives

3.2.2 Type & Nature of Questionnaire

Primary data were gathered through a structured questionnaire survey of youth respondents, with standardized questions designed to maintain validity and consistency (Bryman, 2016). The majority of the questions (19)were closed-ended in nature, allowing for statistical analysis; however, one (1) open-ended question was provided to seek qualitative feedback to inform the data further.

The questionnaire was divided into the following sections.

- Demographic information
- Questions for measuring media use and political knowledge
- Open-ended feedback for qualitative insights

The questionnaire incorporated Likert scales to quantify attitudes toward social media usage and Semantic Differential Scales to assess respondents' evaluations of the effectiveness of political messaging.

To attain unbiased and accurate responses from the respondents, a set of clear guidelines was provided to them, along with disclaimers regarding confidentiality. The size of the survey questions was constrained to ensure they could be completed in ten to fifteen minutes, striking a balance between depth and pragmatism.

Justification for Conducting Interviews

In this study, the researcher employed qualitative interviews as the cornerstone of the methodological approach in order to thoroughly investigate the principal research question:

“What are the changing trends in political communication and the evolving socio-political marketing environment in India, particularly regarding the engagement of youth through social media platforms?”

Quantitative tools, such as surveys, deliver useful data on trends, behavior, and patterns among youth voters, but have their limitations in understanding the complex, contextual, and dynamic character of the political communication

strategies.

Therefore, qualitative interviews were necessary to explore in depth the reasoning, strategies, and experiences behind the observed quantitative phenomena.

Specifically, the qualitative analysis aimed to record detailed insights from key informants actively involved in Indian political campaigning, particularly social media strategists and experts. In-depth interviews, conducted both virtually and physically, included the heads of social media operations for the state units of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan from major national parties such as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC).

These interviews provided firsthand knowledge of campaign planning, execution, trend tracking, and the dynamic impact of social media on youth engagement.

Moreover, the study incorporated a panel of ten experts from diverse professional backgrounds relevant to the research topic. This panel included university-level academicians specializing in journalism and political science, senior journalists, political analysts, digital marketing strategists, social media coordinators for political parties, and artificial intelligence specialists engaged in political data analytics and campaign technologies.

Such a multidisciplinary participant group was purposively selected to offer broad, multifaceted perspectives on the socio-political marketing environment.

The choice of open-ended, semi-structured, eleven (11) interview questions permitted respondents to provide rich, detailed responses that go beyond surface-level data, uncovering nuanced insights about communication strategies, challenges, and innovations.

Adding expert voices from different fields here also increases the credibility and depth of our study findings. But it does help to make sense of the more nuanced and layered political scene in which technology, media, youth culture, and agendas collide. The varied inputs by experts provide an overall picture and interpretation of how the use of social media to mobilize youth voting in India is dynamic and strategic.

Additionally, the survey was deliberately fielded during the 2024 pre-general election period to provide the most current coverage of the ongoing campaign strategies and trends as they were occurring in real time during the electoral cycle. This temporal relevance provides a practical significance and an immediacy to the findings.

In summary, qualitative interviews in this study were justified and essential because they:

- Supplement quantitative data with rich contextual detail and explanations of how and why social media strategies impact youth engagement.
- Capture the latest digital political marketing practices and challenges through insider perspectives.
- Reflect a range of disciplines, enhancing the analysis with academic, journalistic, technological, and on-the-campaign-trail perspectives.
- Provide critical real-time data collected during an active election cycle, enhancing relevance to policymakers and practitioners.

This integrated qualitative approach ultimately strengthens the study's ability to understand and interpret the complexities of India's evolving political communication landscape.

Questionnaire for Expert Interviews

The research uses a questionnaire with eleven open-ended questions designed to elicit in-depth insights from the respondents, who are experts from different disciplines. The respondents were experienced professionals like academicians, journalists, political analysts, digital marketers, and artificial intelligence experts.

This approach allowed participants to express their thoughts and experiences freely, providing rich qualitative data that would capture the complexity of their perspectives.

The open-ended format encouraged respondents to elaborate on their views

regarding the research topic, facilitating a deeper exploration of themes such as the impact of social media on political engagement, the effectiveness of communication strategies, and the emerging technologies and evolving political campaigning trends in contemporary political landscapes. By allowing for nuanced responses, the questionnaire aimed to uncover diverse viewpoints and foster a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. This method not only enriched the data collected but also empowered experts to share their knowledge in a way that reflected their unique experiences and expertise.

3.2.3 Secondary Data

Secondary data refers to information that has been collected previously for other research purposes but is utilized in the present study to provide theoretical, contextual, and empirical foundations (Kothari, 2004).

This research integrates secondary data as a critical component of its interdisciplinary framework, drawing on an extensive range of sources identified through the literature review and methodological planning.

Sources of secondary data in this study include:

Scholarly articles, seminal books, and peer-reviewed journals from disciplines such as political science, communication studies, digital media, and sociology have been employed to establish the theoretical frameworks and provide background on evolving trends in political communication. These works analyze phenomena such as the digital revolution's impact on electoral politics and changing youth engagement in India (Chadwick, 2013; Perloff, 2021; Chopra, 2014).

Official reports and policy documents from organizations like the Election Commission of India and governmental surveys (e.g., the National Youth Policy, Census of India) contribute demographic context and empirical insights, particularly concerning youth populations and digital access (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, 2014; United Nations Population Fund, 2024).

Research Reports and Surveys from research institutions, such as the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), provide large-scale survey findings on youth attitudes, political anxieties, and participation patterns, offering valuable comparative perspectives (Kumar, Palshikar, & Shastri, 2017).

Media Articles and Digital Sources were also reviewed in order to capture current trends and real-time developments. The research utilizes reputable news articles, online publications, and expert opinion pieces focused on social media campaigning, the use of artificial intelligence, and challenges such as misinformation (Hindustan Times, 2023; UNRIC, n.d.).

In order to attain technological and practical insights the study also reviewed practitioner-focused materials, including YouTube expert panels, digital advocacy documentaries, and campaign analyses, to examine the practical deployment of digital innovation, microtargeting, and social media advertising during elections (News X, 2024; Indian Express, 2019).

The integration of these diverse secondary data sources is essential for situating the primary research within a broader scholarly and applied context. It enables effective trend analysis, contextualises primary findings, and enhances the overall reliability and coherence of the study's conclusions (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach strengthens the evidence base, supports the design of research instruments, and provides benchmarks for interpreting the results.

3.2.4 Research Instrument

A mixed-methods research instrument is used in this study to explore the nature of political communication trends and the changing sociopolitical marketing landscape in India, with special reference to the youth's engagement through social media.

To address the research question:

What are the changing trends in political communication and the evolving socio-political marketing environment in India, particularly regarding the engagement of youth through social media platforms?

A qualitative approach was utilized in this study. It analyzed social media communications of political parties and leaders using content analysis, along with interviews with experts from diverse fields. The survey was taken by professionals with expertise in a variety of fields, including academicians, journalists, political analysts, digital marketers, and AI experts. These interviews produced insightful, nuanced views on the shifting tides of political communication strategies, the use of social media marketing, and how new technologies are being harnessed to mobilize young people.

These interviews registered numerous informed, intelligent insights into the changing landscape of political communication strategies, the use and practice of social media branding, and how new technologies are shaping youth participation.

Building on this, it empirically examined hypotheses about youth political behavior and social media influence through a quantitative survey. The survey was not only able to collect structured data from youth respondents to measure their levels of engagement, attitudes towards, and responses to political communication on social media; it also created opportunities for statistical testing of hypothesized relationships.

The set of research instruments in combination allows us a sufficiently robust and multi-faceted analysis of the dynamics of political communication across various Indian states, which will add significant evidence to the extant literature on social media serving as an architecture for mobilizing youth.

Therefore, the results led to a more direct understanding of the potential that social media carries in influencing the electorate within an environment like that of modern Indian electoral politics.

The results of this study helped to differentiate between digital platforms as potential vehicles for deliberative participation among youth and as simply promotional channels for political actors.

3.2.5 Research Objectives of the Study:

– To analyze the changing trends in political communication and the evolving socio-political marketing environment in India.

– To examine the role of social media platforms in influencing voting choices and opinion formation among the youth.

– To assess the extent of youth engagement with political discourse through social media platforms.

– To investigate gender differences in the perception of the influence of political campaigns on social media.

– To evaluate how the frequency of social media use affects the perceived impact of political campaigns on political attitudes.

– To explore the influence of youth preferences for specific social media platforms on the perceived impact of political campaigns.

The collective research objectives are to gather knowledge on the changing nature of political communication in India by exploring the role of social networking sites in engaging the youth audience. They examine the role social media might play in influencing voting behavior, the extent of youth engagement with online political discussion, and differences in young women's perceptions of the impact of political campaigns. Similarly, the goals explore the influence of frequency of and platform preferences of social media use on the perception of the influence of political campaigns. It also aims to identify the evolving and changing political campaigning in contemporary India. Taken together, these goals offer a holistic approach for examining the system dynamics between social media marketing and youth political participation in India.

3.2.6 Originality:

There have been sufficient research articles focusing on the impact, growth, effect, etc., of digital media on youth. Even talking about digital literacy isn't new. However, this research study attempts to determine the influential social media marketing and digital political communication and marketing strategies that are changing trends in the Indian political campaigning scenario and are influential among urban youth, and to track and analyze what persuading factors mobilize them to sway the votes in favor of particular parties.

3.2.7 Research Question

What are the changing trends in political communication and the evolving socio-political marketing environment in India, particularly regarding the engagement of youth through social media platforms?

3.2.8 Hypothesis and Its Explanation

Hypothesis 1:

Social media platforms significantly influence voting choices and opinion formation.

Hypothesis 2:

Social media provides a significant platform for youth to engage in political discourse.

Hypothesis 3:

Males and females differ significantly in their perception of the influence of political campaigns on social media.

Hypothesis 4:

The perceived impact of social media political campaigns varies significantly with the frequency of social media use.

Hypothesis 5:

The perceived impact of social media political campaigns is influenced by youth preferences for specific social media platforms.

Explanation of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1:
Social media platforms significantly influence voting choices and opinion formation.

This hypothesis posits that political marketing communication campaigns on social media platforms significantly influence youth political opinions and voting decisions. These social media platforms not only transmit information, but also act as persuasive agents. They act to persuade, and youth encounter purposively curated content here; they discuss issues here; and a great bulk of their political consciousness is shaped through such portals.

Theoretical Rationale and Relevance

Grounded in political communication literature, digital platforms are recognized as powerful tools for agenda-setting, attitude shaping, and voter mobilization. For youth, these social media platforms are especially influential due to their immediacy, multimedia appeal, and participatory nature. Influence arises from exposure to tailored advertisements, peer sharing, and interactive engagement, which is not possible with traditional media. It is also pertinent to the aim of this study, which seeks to examine the extent to which and the ways in which social media influences the political opinions and behavior of India's digitally connected youth cohort.

Variables

- **Independent Variable:** Exposure to political campaigns/content on social media platforms.
- **Dependent Variable:** Perceived influence of such campaigns on voting choices/opinions.

This interpretation also aligns with the broader aim of the study: to evaluate social media's significance in youth political engagement. Testing it confirms whether social media is acting as an information channel or a bastion for opinion shaping and voter influence. The research focuses on how personalization, emotional narratives, network credibility, and an interactive dialogue sway political attitudes.

This hypothesis supports the study's broader goal of evaluating social media's role in youth political engagement. Testing it clarifies whether social media acts merely as an information channel or as an opinion-shaping, voter-influencing environment.

Hypothesis 2:

Social media provides a significant platform for youth to engage in political discourse.

This hypothesis proposes that social media functions as an active and participatory space where youth discuss, debate, and share opinions on political issues, candidates, policies, and campaigns. These platforms offer much more than just a conduit for information to be disseminated, allowing an interactive dialogue between politicians and young people that encourages actual politically ideated discussion.

Theoretical Rationale and Relevance

This hypothesis is based on theories of deliberative democracy and the public sphere (Habermas): if individuals have access to spaces where they can exchange ideas, then democracy will be well. The development changed the nature of political communication: Social media platforms eliminated editors and allowed for almost immediate person-to-person interaction. For youth, these networks offer instant access to political content, interactive features, and community spaces for collaborative idea shaping. In India's tech-active youth electorate, such engagement broadens political participation and democratizes discourse.

Variables

- Independent Variable: Access to and use of social media for political content.
- Dependent Variable: Extent of youth engagement in political discourse (discussion, opinion-shaping, participation).

These measures perceived influence, readiness to engage, and perceived openness of platforms as spaces for political conversation.

The hypothesis anticipates a positive link between social media use and youth participation in political discourse.

Hypothesis 3:

Males and females differ significantly in their perception of the influence of political campaigns on social media.

The argument posits that gender profoundly informs subjectivities and affects the sensitivity of the influence of social media in political campaigns. It assumes that male and female respondents' beliefs about these campaigns are the same enough, but also different enough, to shape political opinions and voting decisions. Although social media is widely available to and by all genders, differences in use patterns, political engagement styles, and the ability to persuade might produce differences in how social media are perceived. These divergences could reflect differences in political motivation, confidence in online communication, or exposure to political information.

Theoretical / Conceptual Rationale and Relevance

Drawing from political communication and gender studies, demographic factors, including gender, influence political engagement, issue prioritization, and message framing responsiveness. While social media can represent a shared information space, men and women intervene in that space somewhat differently: Women may be more reactive to emotive, community-focused messaging, and men to policy-driven or debate-sharing posts. In India's sociocultural setup, the presence of both genders is felt online, each having its own set of experiences, and therefore, it is important to investigate if these differences in experiences influence perceptions of the influence of social media

campaigns on them.

This is consistent with the objective of the study to explore demographic variables as mediators of the persuasive efficacy of political communication among Indian youth.

Variables and Questionnaire Mapping

- Independent Variable: Respondent gender (male/female).
- Dependent Variable: Perceived influence of political campaigns on social media on voting opinions/decisions.

This hypothesis aims to determine whether the differing perceptions of social media political campaigns' persuasive role among young male and female voters contribute to a more nuanced understanding of demographic support in the digital electoral arena.

Hypothesis 4:

The perceived impact of social media political campaigns varies significantly with the frequency of social media use.

This hypothesis suggests that the perception of the efficacy of social media political campaigns differs for frequent users of such platforms. Users who are more active experience campaigns as more likely to have an effect on their opinion and vote than infrequent ones. This is because repeated exposure to political messages and content increases message salience, familiarity, and chances of persuasion, while rare users have limited exposure and a lower perceived impact.

Theoretical / Conceptual Rationale and Relevance

Aligned with media effects theories like exposure theory and uses and gratifications approach, frequency and intensity of use affect not only information received but also attitudinal change. In political communication, higher use is linked to greater exposure to advertisements, endorsements, peer messages, and debates—all of which amplify perceived influence. Among Indian youth, widespread smartphone and social media access means usage

frequency may affect campaign visibility and relevance. This helps determine if influence depends on message quality or exposure frequency.

Variables

- Independent Variable: Frequency of social media use (e.g., daily for several hours, daily for less than an hour, few times a week, rarely).
- Dependent Variable: Perceived influence of political campaigns on social media on voting opinions/decisions.

This hypothesis is to provide insights into whether the frequency of engagement drives perceived influence in digital political communication. It examines how social media influences political attitudes among Indian youth, enabling marketing and campaign strategists to tailor approaches for both frequent and casual users, potentially requiring different messaging tactics to achieve influence.

Hypothesis 5:

The perceived impact of social media political campaigns is influenced by youth preferences for specific social media platforms.

This hypothesis suggests that the perceived effect of political campaigns on social media differs according to the preference among youth towards media tools such as Instagram, Facebook, X (previously Twitter), or YouTube. It has different persuasive effects among different social platforms, because of the various types of content format, engagement style, and algorithm-direction of personalization.

Youth favoring specific platforms may perceive campaigns there as more impactful, influenced by platform-specific content delivery, social interactions, and trust or credibility associated with each.

Theoretical Relevance

Extending work in digital media effects and political communication, social media platforms vary significantly in their communicative affordances, user demographics, and normative interactions. For instance, Instagram and

Facebook favor visual, emotional, and viral content; X (former Twitter) emphasizes real-time, argumentative political conversation; Facebook is meant to support community mobilization and peer sharing. In India's varied, plugged-in youth terrain, knowing platform preferences helps identify the channels that most effectively disseminate political messages and rally voters. This is consistent with the goal of the research to understand how different social media ecosystems influence the political engagement of youth factions.

Variables

- **Independent Variable:** Youth preference for specific social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, X, YouTube).
- **Dependent Variable:** Perceived influence of political campaigns on voting opinions/decisions.

In summary, this hypothesis expects perceived influence to be significantly different based on the preference of the platform because of content styles, engagement options, the way algorithmic content is tailored, and platform-specific trust. Alternatively, expectations are that it diverges, indicating that the impact of platform choice on the effectiveness of political communication is nuanced.

3.2.8 Research Limitations:

The accuracy of the analysis is inherently dependent on the reliability of the data collected. There is a possibility that some respondents may provide superficial or socially desirable answers, which could affect the depth and validity of the findings.

The study's results pertain only to urban, Internet-literate youth, aged 18-29 years, in a select three urban centres-- Pune, Kanpur, and Nashik, scrutinized. Such a narrow focus means that the results may not have applicability to others:

Rural youth: The study does not include rural populations, which may have different levels of access to social media, digital literacy, and engagement with politics.

Youth in other cities/states: The political and social media context in different regions in India could be different, and the findings may not be generalizable to other urban areas. Since the study looks only at the 18-29 age group, older generations' political communication practices are not considered.

The study is cross-sectional in nature, which means it captures a moment in time and is not longitudinal in design. That makes it impossible for the researchers to observe how those youth political opinions and behaviors might change over time.

The research does not employ media content analysis. In other words, it can measure reactions to campaign effectiveness and not to the campaign information.

The description and cross-sectional aspects of the study preclude the possibility of drawing a direct causal relationship between social media use and youth political attitudes or behaviors.

The sample is limited to "tech-savvy" youths and may therefore not represent young people who are more or less politically active, digitally literate, etc.

The study instruments were restricted to languages understood by "urban, educated youth. This does not encompass the views of non-Hindi/English speaking, low literate, and low internet subscribers among youth, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings.

Interviews with experts were limited to the head of the cell on social media belonging to important political parties. This resulted in a biased view that fails to capture the voices of smaller parties or activists, who may have alternative experiences and approaches to politics and social media.

The data was collected during a specific time period — 2023 and the early part of 2024 — and was able to offer the youth's perception before the Lok Sabha elections. The results may not be applicable beyond this period, given the potential for rapid shifts in political and social media trends.

The study zeroes in solely on social media and digital media in general, which ignores the impact of traditional media (print, outdoor, TV) or other variables on political communication.

3.3 Sampling Design

3.3.1 Population

This research aimed to study the interplay of political communication, social media, and marketing, focusing on the recently emerged strategies and their influence on a specific group: the 'Youth'.

The referent for 'Youth' in this study is empirically defined as tech-savvy, urban individuals in the 18-29 age group, possessing access to internet-enabled devices, residing in the cities of Pune and Nashik (Maharashtra) and Kanpur City (U.P.), India. This specific distinction is based on the following:

Age Demarcation (18-29 years): The choice of the age group 18-29 is not coincidental - it closely represents the voting-eligible population in India, which is the focus of a study on electoral impact. This definition broadly corresponds with the National Youth Policy, 2014, Government of India, which defines 'youth' as individuals between 15 and 29 years of age (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, 2014). This demography represents a large "youth bulge" in India and comprises around 330 million people in the age group of 15–29 years who account for nearly 27.5% of the total population, according to the Census of India 2011 (Centre for Policy Research, n.d.). The fact that they are a large number accentuates their ability to influence the outcome of electoral events, which has made this age group become a very important focus in political studies (International Research Journal, 2023; TIJER, 2023).

Tech-Savvy and Internet Access: Focusing on 'tech-savvy' people, with 'internet-enabled devices' is significant since the research considers the interrelation between political communication and social media and marketing. The literature generally confirms that internet access among young Indians is more prevalent; for example, 50% of 15- to 24-year-olds use the internet,

compared with 11% of those 50 years old and older (Vigers, 2022). This digital competency is important due to the optional use of the social media tool for political mobilization as the social media platforms, e.g., Facebook and Twitter were found as very effective tools of dissemination of their propaganda materials, thus influencing the political parties to utilize this new medium of media in order to win over the young, native digitized voters (Dogra & Kaur, 2021; International Journal of Science and Research, 2024).

Urban Focus (Pune, Nashik, Kanpur): The strategic choice of urban locations, such as Pune, Nashik, and Kanpur, is guided by the differentiated forms of political engagement in which urban youth are involved. Urban youth are relatively more politically conscious and active due to their better exposure to information and resources, such as mass media, digital platforms, and educational spaces (Verma, 2019). This phenomenon is reinforced among these young people because they tend to engage with political content on social media and news sources, which is an excellent effort in these developments (Verma, 2019). Additionally, social media has proven to be a powerful mobilization tool, transforming urban and semi-urban young people from merely consumers to producers of political content in various digital formats (International Research Journal, 2023).

Accessible Population (College Students):

Although the general target population would be all tech-savvy urban youth between 18 and 29 years of age in the targeted cities, the accessible population, which consists mostly of college students, was a practical consideration based on the ease of access for conducting research and the availability of resources. This approach enables one to have a focused and accessible group for data gathering, which in turn allows for a detailed investigation of their media consumption patterns and political engagement. Admittedly, limiting the study to college youth suggests a demographic bias, as the academic status and socio-economic status of college students may differ from those of non-college youth. Nevertheless, this methodological choice is made to enable the study to remain viable and have substance in the scope available, and the exclusion criteria further narrow the sample to those who are actively participating on Social

Networking Sites (SNS), which accords more closely with what this study is trying to achieve.

The respondents include both males and females, with no specific ratio. The target population for this study was tech-savvy, media-literate urban youth of any gender. Educational level or profession was not a criterion for inclusion.

The accessible population for this study primarily comprised college students pursuing graduation in various disciplines, including professional, arts, science, and commerce programs. The exclusion criteria for this study were individuals who did not meet the age requirement and those who did not have active social media profiles.

The inclusion of youth not enrolled in formal education presented limitations, as many were engaged in unskilled employment, reluctant to devote time, or displayed limited interest in the study.

In summary, the 'frame of reference' for 'Youth' in this study is a precisely defined segment of the Indian youth population, chosen for its direct relevance to the research questions concerning political communication, social media, and marketing strategies in the electoral context, while also considering practical research constraints.

For Interview- Questionnaire

The research population of this study comprises a variety of survey respondents, comprising senior practitioners in various professions from various disciplines, who filled in a questionnaire containing eleven (11) open-ended questions.

This chosen cohort comprises university-level academicians from journalism and political science, Senior Journalists, Political Analysts, Digital Marketers, Social media coordinators for political parties, and artificial intelligence specialists, all of whom have unique perspectives and experiences relevant to the topic of study.

The significance of including voices from different spheres in this study lies in its ability to appreciate the full extent of the issue, which is the subject of research, as combining such spheres yields diverse insights.

Open-ended questions were designed to capture short response information while also encouraging respondents to articulate their experiences and express their views more freely in relation to the objectives of the research themes.

Such a population adds to the credibility of the findings. It helps to understand the underlying issues regarding the current state of engagement and communication in politics as a challenging, multifaceted landscape.

3.3.2 Sample Unit

For Quantitative research, the primary sample unit for this study is young individuals aged 18 to 29 years who reside in the specified urban areas. Each respondent was required to provide data regarding their media consumption habits, social media usage, and perceptions of how it influences their voting choices.

For Qualitative research, the primary sample unit consists of senior practicing professionals from various disciplines, including Political Science, Journalism, Political Analysts, Social Media Marketing, and Artificial Intelligence.

3.3.3 Characteristics of the Sample Unit

Age: Each respondent was required to be between 18 and 29 years, consistent with the operational definition of youth.

Location: Each individual must reside in one of the selected urban areas (Pune, Nashik, Kanpur).

Social Media Usage: Each respondent should be an active user of varied social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to ensure that the data collected is relevant to the study's focus on social media trends in political communication and social media marketing.

Justification for Not Using Gender as a Sampling Criterion

While one of the research-specific hypotheses (Hypothesis 2) as stated deals specifically with the possible gender differentials in how political campaigns on

social media are perceived, the sampling design of the study did not use gender as a restricting or stratifying criterion. Instead, the present research adopted an inclusive and naturalistic approach by allowing all eligible participants—regardless of gender—to be represented according to their actual distribution within the accessible urban youth population.

This strategy was guided by several methodological and practical considerations. First, it enables the sample to reflect the authentic gender proportions that exist in college student populations in Pune, Nashik, and Kanpur, thus enhancing the ecological validity and representativeness of the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Bryman, 2016). Rather than imposing artificial quotas, the approach ensures a real-world portrait of gender diversity among tech-savvy urban youth and avoids selection bias.

Second, the study's analytical purpose is to examine whether gender-based differences naturally emerge within the broader youth sample, rather than to pre-engineer such groups during recruitment. Gender thus operates as an independent analytic variable at the data analysis stage, where established statistical procedures (such as t-tests or ANOVA) can robustly identify differences between male and female respondents, as per the study's hypotheses (Kumar, 2019).

Third, Optimum inclusivity of the study, without any limitation in gender-based participation. This gender open approach is also inclusive of participants with other and non-binary gender identities in addition to male and female youth, providing for an updated sampling frame that is reflective of current conceptualizations of demographic diversity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Gender was indeed intentionally not utilized as a filter during sampling to maintain that representation, inclusiveness, ecological validity, and easy actionability. This clause makes it so that if you observe variations due to gender-rating, they're real and not just side-effects of having been forced to sample composition.

Justification for Selecting Kanpur, Pune, and Nashik as Study Sites

The choice of Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh), Pune, and Nashik (Maharashtra) as

research sites is grounded in methodological and contextual considerations aimed at ensuring diversity and relevance in the study of urban youth political communication. These cities allow for regional variation and represent North and West India, and therefore, findings can be generalized to other socio-political and cultural contexts (Qureshi, 2023).

Kanpur is a metropolitan city in North India with a broad and sizeable youth demographic, which is reflective of a trend of digital engagement among the emerging digital consumer space in the region. Pune is one such study site, known as an educational and information technology hub, which draws students who are cosmopolitan and digitally literate and thus can be considered a role model for urban youth (Jain, 2023).

Nashik offers a distinct urban profile, balancing traditional and modern characteristics and drawing students from varied backgrounds, thus enriching the demographic spectrum of the sample.

These cities were chosen because they are feasible to reach, and both data collection and theoretical comparison could be conducted within the same framework. This strategy is consistent with recommended methods in social research, as multi-site urban sampling integrates depth and transferability of findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Abdullah, Tuan Zaki, & Ahmad, 2024).

3.3.4 Data Collection from Sample Units

For Both Quantitative and Qualitative research, Surveys/Questionnaires were used: Data is gathered from each sample unit using structured questionnaires that contain questions regarding their social media habits, frequency of use, types of platforms utilized, and their perceptions of how social media impacts their voting decisions. New technologies are emerging, changing trends in political campaigning, and evolving dynamics in political communication.

3.3.5 Sampling Frame Sources:

For Quantitative research, the sampling frame was developed

using multiple sources, including the following:

1. University and College Students: The study targets explicitly young students from universities and colleges to gather their responses.

2. Social Media User Data: User data from the social media platforms was utilized to identify potential participants.

3. Online Distribution: The questionnaire was disseminated through various online channels.

For Qualitative research, the sampling frame was developed using multiple sources, including the following:

Senior Practicing Professionals from various disciplines – Political Science, Journalism, Educationists, Political Analysts, Social Media Marketing, Social Media Coordinators, and Marketers of Political Parties.

Distribution: The questionnaire was disseminated through various online channels, virtual interviews, and offline interviews.

3.3.6 Sampling Size :

To achieve statistical significance through this survey research, a large enough sample size was required to provide reliable and valid results within the manageable constraints of resources. A sample size of 300 to 500 respondents was targeted initially, and the final sample size was 342.

To achieve proper insight into tracking the changing trends in Indian political campaigning and its impact on youth, a sample size of 10 respondents was finalized.

3.3.7 Sample Duration

The data collection period for this research was conducted during the pre-general elections in 2024.

This duration allowed adequate time to identify participants in the survey.

The Data was gathered during this timeframe, and it provided enough

opportunity to gather responses from a diverse group of respondents, ensuring a representative sample.

Summary

The research design employed purposive, convenience sampling of urban youth across three diverse Indian cities, collecting both quantitative survey data and qualitative interview responses. Inclusion of demographic data facilitated subgroup analysis, particularly around gender, which was addressed analytically rather than as a sampling criterion to maintain naturalistic representation. The mixed-methods approach and carefully timed data collection provide a comprehensive, valid basis for inferences about social media's influence on youth political engagement.

3.4 Reliability and Validity

3.4.1 Reliability -Cronbach's Alpha

Reliability is assessed using the 'Test-Retest' method, which is a straightforward approach to confirm reliability for single-item scaled variables.

In this approach, the same tool is given to the same group of respondents on two different occasions.

Reliability is then evaluated by correlating the two sets of data. For categorical variables, Phi and Cramér's V coefficients are employed, while Spearman's coefficient is used to measure consistency for ordinal variables.

If Phi and Cramer's V value is above .5, and if Spearman's value is above .8, then Reliability is supported.

Table No.3.1

Questions	Phi and Cramer's V Spearman's Coefficient Value (ρ)	Result
How influential do you find political campaigns on social media in molding	Phi and Cramer's V =0.811 Spearman's Coefficient Value (ρ) = 0.986	Reliability Supported

your opinions or decisions as a voter?		
Do you believe social media platforms provide unbiased information about political candidates?	Phi and Cramer's V 1.192, 0.843	Reliability Supported
Have you ever been directly targeted or approached by political parties or candidates on social media platforms?	Phi and Cramer's V =0.607	Reliability Supported
Are you more likely to engage with a political campaign or candidate who actively uses social media platforms to interact with the public?	Phi and Cramer's V = 0.786	Reliability Supported
Do you think social media has made political campaigns more accessible to young people?	Spearman's Coefficient Value (ρ) =. 0.868	Reliability Supported
How Effectively Political Parties responded and engaged with you with your messages, queries, and grievances'	Spearman's Coefficient Value (ρ) = .898	Reliability Supported
Do you think that Political parties only become active on social media during the Elections?	Spearman's Coefficient Value (ρ) =.986	Reliability Supported
Does Social media impact youth?	Phi and Cramer's V = 0.689	Reliability Support

3.4.2 Validity test

Validity is the ability of an instrument to yield accurate results, indicating the extent to which the scale or instrument measures what it is intended to measure. It serves as a quality assessment of a measurement tool; if a scale lacks validation or is deemed invalid, the results may be questionable and unreliable. In the current study, the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) and Content Validity Index, as suggested by C.H. Lawshe (1975), are utilized to calculate the validity index and confirm validity.

This method is crucial for assessing expert agreement on the importance of specific items.

Lawshe suggested that experts evaluate each item using a three-point scale: 'essential,' 'useful but not essential,' or 'not necessary.'

According to Wilson et al. (2012), who recalculated the critical values for Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio, a CVR score of 0.741 or higher (for $\alpha = 0.05$, a two-tailed test, and with seven experts) indicates that the instrument is valid.

The following table shows responses from seven experts to all ten variables under study. All experts perceived the content of the question and response options to each question of the variable ESSENTIAL (hence CVR is 1) accept for two variables, wherein, one expert found the contents NOT NECESSARY, hence the CVR was 0.75, the overall Content validity Index is 0.95, which is above the required threshold 0.741; hence the validity of the instrument/ questionnaire is supported..

Constructs
1. Social Media Marketing
2. Youth
3. Political Communication
4. Media
5. Social Media Platforms
6. Influence on Voting Behavior

Table No.3.2 - Content validity ratio and content validity index

Variable	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Expert 6	Expert 7	CVR
V1	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	1
V2	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	1
V3	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	1
V4	x	x	x	NN	X	x	x	0.75
V5	x	NN	x	x	X	x	x	0.75
V6	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	1
V7	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	1
V8	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	1
V9	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	1
V10	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	1
								0.95

$$\mathbf{CVR} = \frac{n_e - N/2}{N/2}$$

n_e = number of experts saying Essential, N = number of experts

CVI(content validity index)is the average of CVRs

X = ESSENTIAL, NN = Not Necessary

Key Terms and Definitions

1. **Descriptive Research:** To be highlighted as a methodology resulting in the identification of a profile of a specific population or phenomenon through characterization and analysis, including identifying "what" and "how" rather than "why".
2. **Mixed Methods Research:** A combined quantitative and qualitative method of research, where the former lends statistical sensibility, while the latter offers a statistical sense behind the numbers.
3. **Quantitative Research:** The alignment of data in a logical manner to find relationships, test theories, or forecast the future.
4. **Qualitative Research:** It is a Narrative inquiry and an approach to research that seeks to understand the meanings, experiences, and perspectives represented in story-like, open-ended data, such as interviews or observations.
5. **Survey:** A quantitative research tool that gathers information from respondents using structured questions to measure variables of interest.
6. **In-Depth Interview:** A qualitative data collection method involving semi-structured or open-ended questions to gain detailed insights from individual experts or participants.
7. **Purposive Sampling:** A non-probability sampling technique where participants are selected based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives.
8. **Cross-Sectional Study:** A research design that collects data from respondents at one point in time to capture a snapshot of prevailing attitudes or behaviors.
9. **Content Analysis:** A qualitative method for systematically identifying and interpreting themes, patterns, or meanings within textual data.
10. **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA):** A method that examines how

Language, power, and ideology are reflected and reinforced through communication, especially in media or politics.

11. **Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA):** An analytical approach that identifies recurring themes and narrative patterns within qualitative data, focusing on context and meaning.
12. **Reliability:** The consistency of a measurement instrument or procedure in producing stable and repeatable results.
13. **Validity:** The degree to which a research instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure.
14. **Content Validity Ratio (CVR):** A statistical measure reflecting expert agreement on the essentiality of items within an instrument.
15. **Content Validity Index (CVI):** The average of individual CVRs, representing the overall content validity of a questionnaire or tool.
16. **Phi and Cramer's V:** Statistical measures used to assess the strength of association between categorical variables.
17. **Spearman's Coefficient:** A statistical measure of rank correlation, reflecting the association between two ordinal variables.
18. **Social Media Marketing:** The use of social networking platforms to promote political messages, campaigns, or brands to target audiences.
19. **Political Communication:** The process of using communication strategies and media to influence political opinions, behavior, or engagement among populations.
20. **Media:** Channels and platforms, including digital and traditional, that disseminate information, news, and political messages.
21. **Social Media Platforms:** Online applications (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) used for social networking, information sharing, and engagement.
22. **Influence on Voting Behavior:** The impact of media, messages, or campaigns on individuals' decisions and actions related to electoral participation.

Abbreviations

1. **CVR:** Content Validity Ratio
2. **SD:** Standard Deviation
3. **CVI:** Content Validity Index
4. **TDA:** Thematic Discourse Analysis
5. **CDA:** Critical Discourse Analysis

Chapter No. 4

Data Presentation, its Interpretation and Analysis

4.1 Data Presentation and its Interpretation and Analysis

In this chapter, the researcher aims to present and analyze the empirical data collected throughout the research. This sheds light on how social media and its marketing have contributed to creating awareness and transforming political engagement, discourse, and mobilization among the country's younger demographics.

This part of the thesis will highlight the key trends and patterns received by the respondents' inputs by systematically organizing and interpreting the findings.

Through a comprehensive examination of the data, the researcher aims to understand the implications of social media for political awareness, participation, and activism among youth, ultimately contributing to a broader understanding of its role in shaping contemporary social media-driven political landscapes.

It features the collected empirical data from the study, which includes both responses from urban youth and expert interviews. More specifically, the researcher aims to investigate and understand the impact of social media on political awareness, engagement, discourse, and mobilization among young people in India.

The chapter opens with elaborate demographic characteristics of the respondents as representatives of the sample. This was followed by organizing the data into frequency distributions and displaying them through tables and charts to visualize them in the subsequent sections and interpretive analysis related to the study's objectives. After which, the study tests several hypotheses to support key research propositions empirically..

The second section examines the qualitative data from expert interviews using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA) to provide a more nuanced understanding of modern political campaigning via digital media, as well as youth attitudes towards digital spaces.

In this way, the chapter situates these actions within a wider approach to provide detailed insights into the potential influence of social media on political communication and participation among Indian youth.

The data is presented in a systematically organized format to ensure clarity, consistency, and ease of interpretation. Each question is first identified by its respective number, followed by a concise explanation to provide contextual understanding. The available answer options are then listed, enabling readers to grasp the range of possible responses.

4.2 Sample Distribution / Demographic Profile of Respondents

This section, 'Sample Distribution, ' discusses the demographic distribution of the sample of the study, i.e., 342 participants. The Sample distribution is based on geographic locations, such as cities like Pune, Nashik, and Kanpur. It also considers gender, age groups, and educational qualifications. Before proceeding with further analyses, it is important to understand the sample composition and thus interpret subsequent findings in their proper context, thereby ensuring that findings represent the perspectives of the urban youth population this study seeks to reach.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by City

City	Frequency	Percentage
Pune	170	49.7
Kanpur	104	30.4
Nashik	68	19.8
Total	342	100

Table 4.2: Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	242	70.8
Female	100	29.2
Total	342	100

Table 4.3: Age Group Distribution

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18–21	188	54.97
22–25	120	35.09
26–29	34	9.94
Total	342	100

Table 4.4: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Qualification

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Undergraduate	190	55.56%
Post Graduate	118	34.50%
Professional	34	9.94%

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Total	342	100

4.3 Interpretations for the Sample Distribution

In the sample distribution across cities, there are comparable numbers in terms of urban youth from Pune, Nashik,

and Kanpur. The sample predominantly consists of college-age individuals, reflecting the study's intentional focus on digitally active youth. Combining a variety of different urban contexts, this demographic distribution lays the groundwork for assessing how political engagement varies among youths depending on social media use and impact.

Table 4.1 depicts the Distribution of 342 respondents at three locations of the study (Pune, Nashik, and Kanpur)

The data shows that Pune accounted for the largest share of respondents, representing 49.7 % of the total sample (n=170). This was followed by Kanpur, with 30.3% (n = 104), and Nashik, with 19.8 % (n = 68).

The sampling was purposive, aimed at gathering voices from each of the cities to ensure a reasonable degree of representation within each city before broadening the selection space to sample different urban geographies across two states in India. This results in the comparison of responses being more appropriate for later analysis due to the relatively balanced proportions across the three cities. Furthermore, this distribution allows us to meaningfully test whether local socio-political contexts predict how young respondents use social media and become engaged in politics as well.

The table above presents the gender distribution of the research sample. Out of a total of 342 respondents, 242 (70.8%) were male and 100 (29.2%) were female, indicating a nearly balanced gender representation. This proportionality ensures that perspectives from both genders are adequately encapsulated in the

study, enhancing the generalizability of the findings. A balance in the sample also strengthens the validity of comparisons regarding social media use and political engagement across gender lines within the youth population of India.

The majority of respondents (54.97%) fall within the 18–21 age group, aligning with the research focus on politically aware and digitally active young adults. Over half the respondents are pursuing or have completed undergraduate studies 190, 55%), 118 (34.50 %) of them pursuing postgraduate studies, and only 34 of them are pursuing a professional career, which matches the intended focus on the student and early-career demographic.

4.4 Descriptive Analysis

Question number 1 sets the baseline for the level of digital engagement among youth respondents. The frequency of use is a crucial factor affecting exposure to material and the possibility of political messages.

Q1. The Question Number One (1) was -

How frequently do you use social media platforms?

Respondents were asked to comment on the frequency of social media usage:

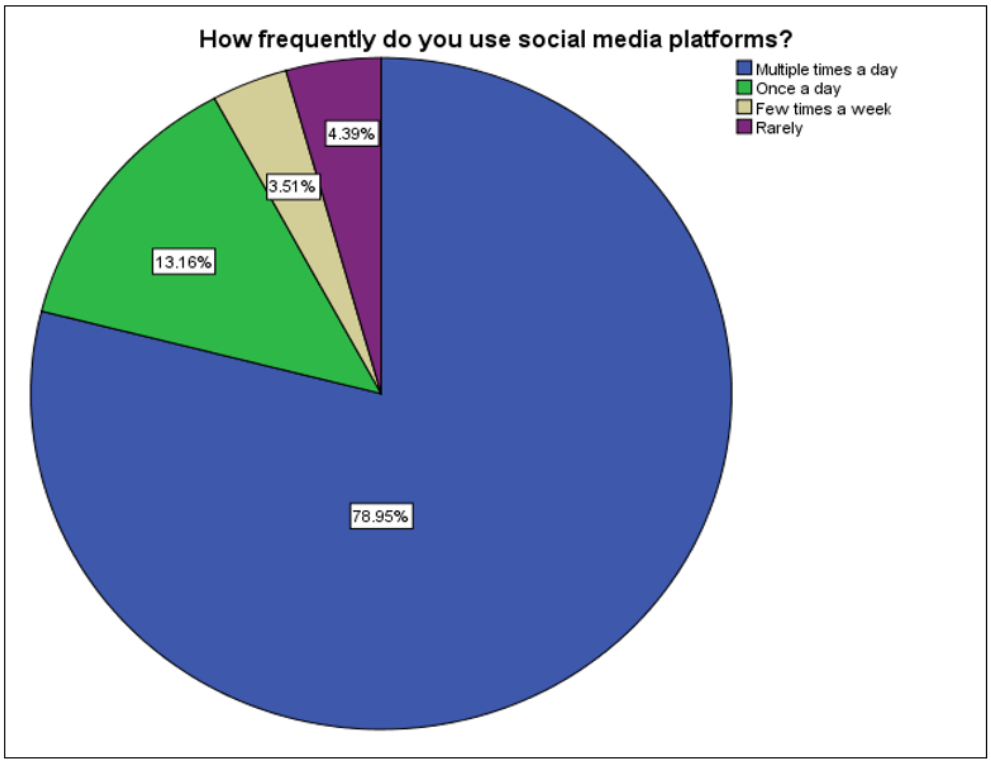
a. Rarely
b. A few times a week, once a day, multiple times a day

Frequency Table

Table No. 4.5

Rarely (R)		A few times a week (FW)		Once a day (OD)		Multiple times a day (MD)	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
15	4.4	12	3.51	45	13.2	270	78.95

Figure No. 4.1



Interpretation

As per the Table no. 4.1 and Figure no. 4.1, the Total No. of Respondents was 342, among which 4.4% responded that they Rarely (R) used any of the social media, 3.51% responded that they used it Few Times a Week (FW), 13.2% used it Once a Day (OD), and 78.95 % responded that they used social media multiple times a day

Hence, it is concluded that the majority of the responses (13.3+ 78.95 % = 92.5%) said that they were present and using social media at least once every day, whereas 78.95% were using social media **MULTIPLE TIMES A DAY.**

The question number Two (2) was –

This question was framed to compare the media trust and reliability among the respondents. They were asked to indicate which sources they found most credible. To understand and interpret the youth's media consumption and its influence, decoding the trust in various media sources is essential. This question

assesses which communication channels youth consider most credible, offering insight into platform preferences relevant for political outreach.

Q2. Which media do you find most reliable?

Respondents were asked to comment on which of the following forms of media they found reliable.

a. Television
b. Radio
c. Newspapers
d. Internet/websites
e. Social Media

Frequency Table

Table No. 4.6

Television		Radio		Newspapers		Internet/ Websites		Social Media	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
81	14.4	21	3.7	85	15.1	147	26.2	228	40.6

Interpretation

Respondents were asked to comment on the most reliable media, and further, they were offered the following options to respond from:

a. Television
b. Radio
c. Newspapers
d. Internet/websites

e. Social Media

And asked to choose as many options as applicable, allowing for multiple choices.

The Data is analyzed using the ‘Multiple Analysis Response Option' in IBM SPSS 21.

Out of a total of 562 YES responses, 14.4% accounted for Television, 3.7% for Radio,15.1% for Newspapers,26.2% for the Internet and Websites, and 40.6% opted for Social Media.

Hence, we can conclude that the TOP THREE MEDIA FORMS considered most RELIABLE by the youth respondents are social media, the Internet, websites, and newspapers.

The question number three (3) was -

The survey next identifies respondents’ presence across major social media platforms. Platform choice significantly shapes user experience, content exposure, and the types of political communication youth encounter.

Q3. Which of the following social media platforms are you present on?

Respondents were asked to comment on which of the following social media platforms they are present on.

Frequency Table

Table No. 4.7

X (Twitter)		LinkedIn		Facebook		Instagram		Telegram		YouTube		TikTok		Others	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	0.1	48	5.8	120	14.5	291	35.3	135	14.4	222	26.9	2	0.2	6	0.7

Interpretation

Respondents were asked to comment on which of the social media platforms they were present on, and further, they were offered the following options to respond from and asked to choose as many options applicable and multiple choices.

a. X (Twitter)
b. LinkedIn
c. Facebook
d. Instagram
e. Telegram
f. YouTube
g. TikTok
h. Any Other

The Data is analyzed using the ‘Multiple Analysis Response Option' in IBM SPSS 21.

Out of a total of 825 YES responses, 0.1%accounted for Twitter X, 5.8% for LinkedIn, 14.5% for Facebook, 35.3% for Instagram, 16.4% for Telegram, 26.9% opted for YouTube, 0.2% for TikTok (Now Banned in India), and 0.7% opted for others.

Hence, we can conclude that the youth respondents consider FACEBOOK, YOUTUBE, AND TELEGRAM as the top three popular social media platforms.

The question number Four (4) was –

In this question, no.4, exploring content preferences helps reveal which forms of digital communication are most effective for engaging youth. This question assesses which categories—video, news snippets, user-generated content, etc.—garner the highest levels of attention and interaction.

Q4. What content present on social media engages you the most?

Respondents were asked to comment on the following forms of content categories available on social media platforms, which they preferred.

Frequency Table

Table No.4.7

Videos		News snippets		Online Contests		Compendium of Speeches		Live Programmes /Watch Party		Webinars		Online Games	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
229	18.1	102	8.1	74	5.9	43	3.4	55	15.4	69	5.5	73	5.8

UGC/ Short Reels		Posts		Online Polls & Surveys		Articles		Blogposts		Any Other	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
124	9.8	171	13.5	68	5.4	128	10.1	71	5.6	55	4.4

Interpretation

Respondents were asked to comment on which of the social media platforms they were present on, and further, they were offered the following options to respond from and asked to choose as many options applicable and multiple choices.

a. Videos
b. News snippets
c. Online Contests
d. Compendium of Speeches
e. Live Programmes /Watch Party
f. Webinars
g. Online Games
   User Generated Content -Short Reels/
h. Posts
i. Online Polls & Surveys
   Articles
j. Blogposts
k. Any Other

The Data is analyzed using the 'Multiple Analysis Response Option' in IBM SPSS 21.

Out of a total of 1262 YES responses, 18.1 % accounted for Videos, 8.1% for News snippets, 5.9% for Online Contests, 3.4 % for Compendium of Speeches, 4.4% for Live Programmes /Watch Party, 5.5% for Webinars, 5.8 % for Online Games, 9.8% for User Generated Content -Short Reels/, 13.5% opted for Posts, 5.4% for Online surveys and polls, 10.1% for Articles, 5.6% for blog posts, and 4.4% for others.

Hence, we can conclude that the youth respondents consider the top three popular content categories as Videos, User Generated Content/Short Reels, and 10.1% of articles.

The question number FIVE (5) was –

The purposes behind social media usage among youth underpin their patterns of engagement. By investigating primary goals for usage—ranging from entertainment to political information—this section contextualizes subsequent data on campaign exposure and political behavior.

Q5. State the primary purpose for which you use Social Media.

Respondents were asked to comment on the primary purpose of using social media.

Frequency Table

Table No. 4.8

Entertainment		News		Social Networking		Professional Networking		Political Information		Upskilling		Others	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
261	26.4	180	18.2	184	18.6	93	9.4	100	10.1	134	13.5	38	3.8

Interpretation

Respondents were asked to comment on the primary purpose of using social media, and further, they were offered the following options to respond from and asked to choose as many options applicable and multiple choices.

a. Entertainment
b. News
c. Social Networking
d. Professional Networking
e. Political Information
f. Upskilling
g. Any Other

The Data is analyzed using the ‘Multiple Analysis Response Option' in IBM SPSS 21.

Out of a total of 990 YES responses, 26.4% accounted for Entertainment, 18.2% for News, 18.6% for Social Networking, 9.4 % for Professional Networking, 10.1% for Political Information, 13.5% for Upskilling, and 3.8% for others.

Hence, we can conclude that the top three purposes of social media consumption by youth are to fulfill the primary purpose of ENTERTAINMENT, SOCIAL NETWORKING, AND NEWS, respectively.

The question number Six (6) was -

Assessing satisfaction with social media helps gauge its effectiveness for youth needs. Whether respondents feel their usage objectives are met indicates broader utility and limits of social platforms as vehicles for information, networking, and activism.

Q6. Do you think that social media fulfills your purpose for using it?

Respondents were asked to comment on whether social media was meeting the goals they had in mind when they started using it.

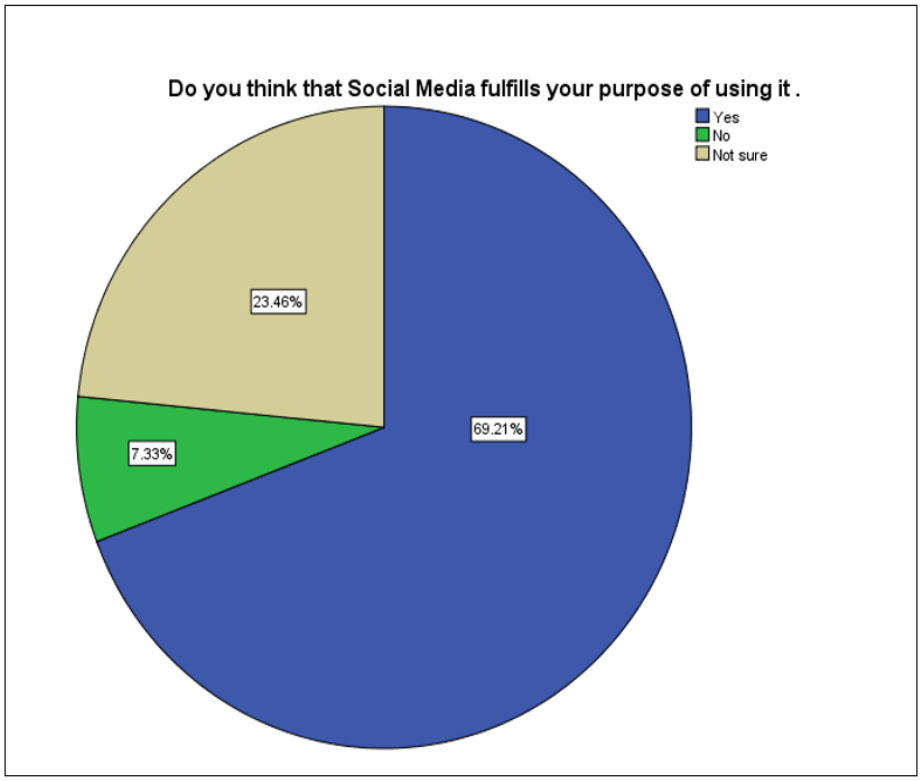
a. Yes
b. No
c. Not Sure

Frequency

Table No.4.9

No (N)		Not Sure (NS)		Yes (Y)	
F	%	F	%	F	%
25	7.3	80	23.4	236	69.0

Figure No. 4.2



Interpretation

The total number of respondents was 342, among whom 69 % responded that social media was meeting the goals they had in mind when they started using it. 7.3% responded that it didn't, whereas 23.4% were unsure.

Hence, it is concluded that the majority of the responses, 69.0%, found social Media to Be Purposeful.

The question number Seven (7) was -

The frequency of encountering political content on social media determines youth exposure to digital campaigning. This question quantifies how regularly respondents interact with political posts, enabling analysis of reach and saturation.

Q7. How often do you come across political content on social media?

Respondents were asked to comment on the frequency of the reception of political messages on social media:

a. Rarely

b. Occasionally

c. Weekly

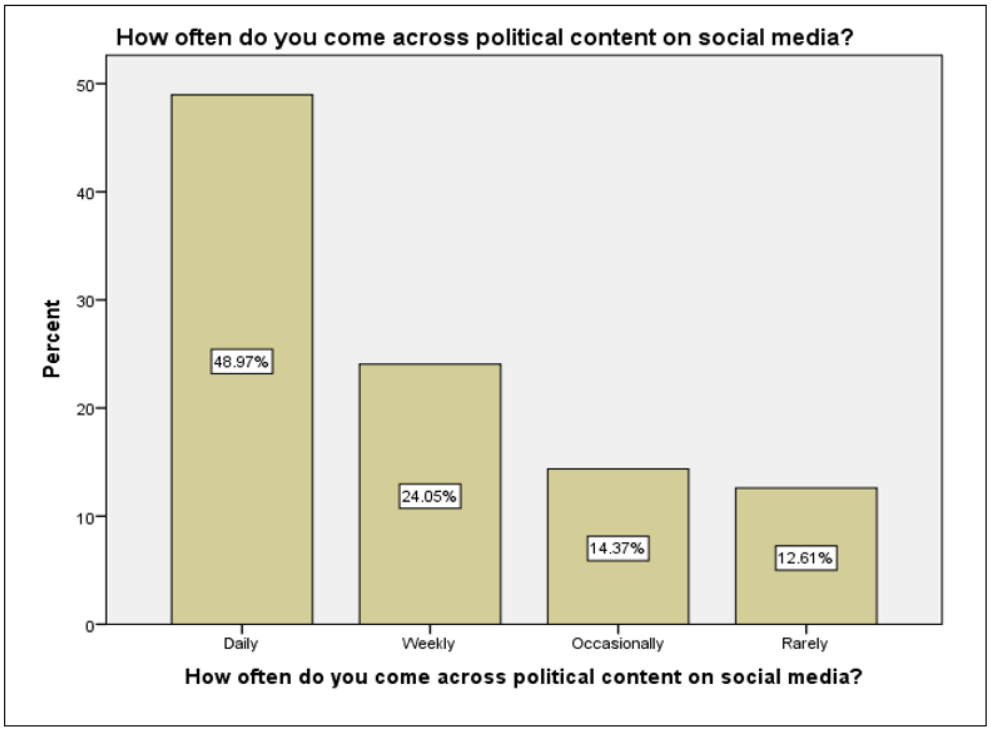
d. Daily

Frequency Table

Table No. 4.10

Rarely (R)		Occasionally(O)		Weekly (W)		Daily (D)	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
43	12.6	49	14.3	82	24.0	167	48.8

Figure No. 4.3



Interpretation

The Total number of Respondents was 342, among which 12.6% responded that they rarely (R) saw any political messages on any social media, 14.37 % responded that they consumed them occasionally (O), 24.5% saw them weekly (W), and 48.97 % responded that they received political messages on social media every day.

Hence, it is concluded that the majority of the responses (24.5 + 48.97% = 73.47%) stated that they received political messages on average once a week, and 48.97% received political messages at least once a day.

The question number eight (8) was –

Direct contact with political campaigns or advertisements is central to understanding digital political marketing. This item measures the extent to which youth are targeted or exposed to formal campaign messages online.

Q8. Have you ever come across political campaigns or advertisements on social media platforms?

Respondents were asked to comment on whether they ever saw any political paid advertisements and campaigns on social media:

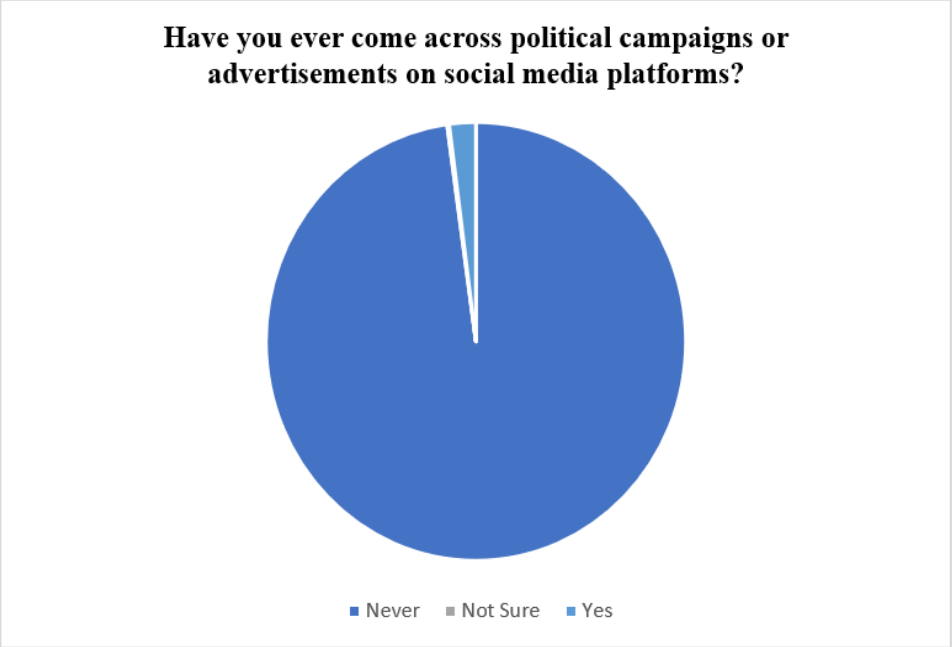
a. Never
b. Not sure
c. Yes

Frequency Table

Table No. 4.11

Never (N)		Not Sure (NS)		Yes (Y)	
F	%	F	%	F	%
105	30.7	17	4.97	219	64.0

Figure No. 4.4



Interpretation

The Total No. of Respondents was 342, among which 30.7 .6% responded that they Never (N) saw any political messages on any of the social media, 4.97 % responded that they were Not Sure (NS)were not sure whether they saw them or not, whereas 64.0 % responded in Yes (Y), that they saw it once.

Hence, it is concluded that the majority of the respondents (64.0%) responded that they received political advertisements at least once.

The question number Nine (9) was -

Insights into which actors dominate youth social media feeds—such as celebrities, political parties, government, or NGOs—allow for the mapping of content competition and campaign effectiveness.

Q9. Who is using social media platforms most extensively? Please tick the checkboxes.

Respondents were asked to comment on whether according to them who utilizes the social media platforms for their message dissemination and

marketing.

a. Business organizations
b. Celebrities
c. Political Parties
d. Non-Government Organizations
e. Central Government
f. State Government
g. Local Government
h. Common People
i. Any Other

Frequency Table

Table No. 4.11

Business org. (BO)		Celebrities (C)		Political Parties (P)		Non-Govt. Org. (NGOs)		Central Govt. (CG)		State Govt. (SG)		Local Govt. (LG)		Common People (CG)		Any Other (AO)	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
202	19.8	209	20.5	120	11.8	68	6.7	72	7.1	63	6.2	46	4.5	200	19.6	40	3.9

Interpretation

Respondents were asked to comment on the primary purpose of using social media and further they were offered the following options to respond from and asked to choose as many options applicable and multiple choices.

a. Business organizations
b. Celebrities
c. Political Parties
d. Non-Government Organization
e. Central Government
f. State Government

g. Local Government
h. Common People
i. Any Other

The Data is analyzed using the ‘Multiple Analysis Response Option' in IBMSPSS21.

Out of a total of 1020 YES responses, 19.8% accounted for Business organizations, 20.5% for Celebrities, 11.8 % for Political Parties, 6.7 % for Non-Government Organizations, 7.1% for Central Government, 6.2% for State Government, 4.5% for Local Government, 19.6% for Common People and any other for 3.9%.

Hence, we can conclude that the top three social media users for marketing and disseminating

Information on social media platforms are **CELEBRITIES, BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS, and COMMON PEOPLE,** respectively.

The question number TEN (10) was -

Perceived influence of political campaigns reflects the direct impact of digital messaging on youth’s opinions and voting intentions. This question links social media exposure with actual shifts in political attitude and behavior.

Q.10 How influential do you find political campaigns on social media in molding your opinions or decisions as a voter?

Respondents were asked to comment on whether social media platforms were influential in shaping or molding their opinions.

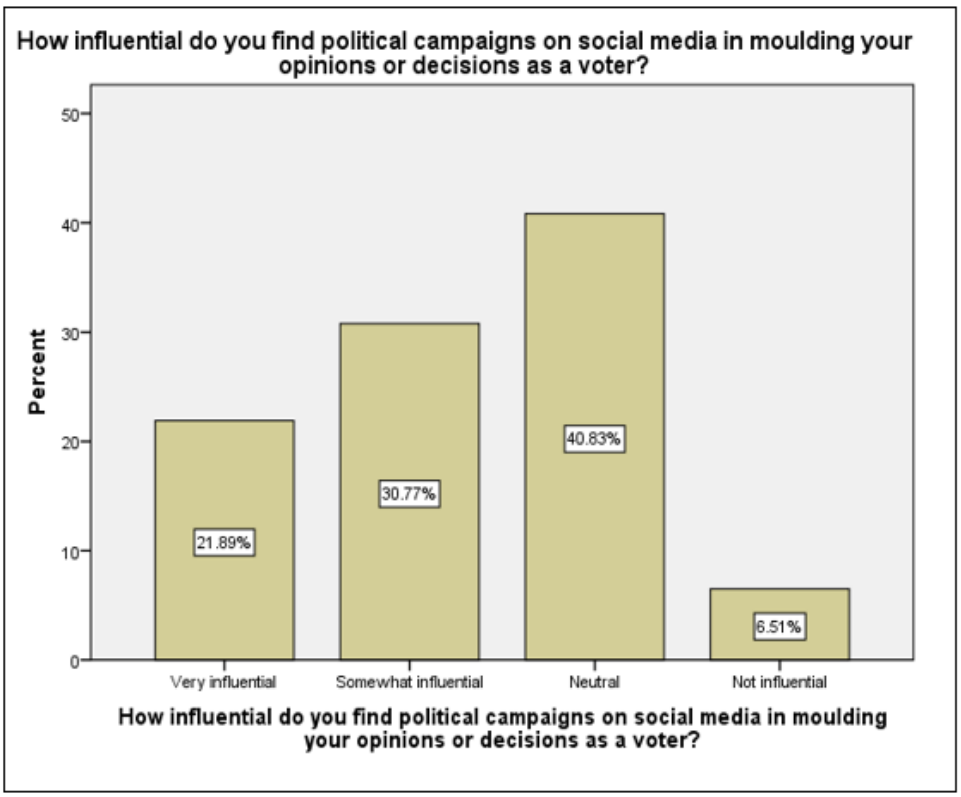
a. Not influential
b. Neutral
c. Somewhat influential
d. Very influential

Frequency Table

Table No. 4.12

Not influential (NI)		Neutral (N)		Somewhat Influential (SI)		Very Influential (VI)	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
22	6.4	138	40.4	104	30.4	74	21.6

Figure No. 4.5



Interpretation

The Total number of Respondents was 342, among which 6.4 % responded that they found social media Not Influential (NA), 40.4 % responded that

it was Neutral (N), 30.4 % found it Somewhat Influential (SI), and 21.6% found it very Influential.

Hence, it is concluded that most respondents (30.4 + 21.6 = 52%) found social media to Be Influential in molding their political choices and voting decisions.

The question number Eleven (11) was -

Trust in the impartiality of content is critical for democratic engagement. This item assesses whether youth perceive political information on social media as unbiased, affecting the legitimacy of online campaigns.

11. Do you believe social media platforms provide unbiased information about political candidates?

Respondents were asked to comment on whether they think the right information about political candidates is disseminated through social media platforms.

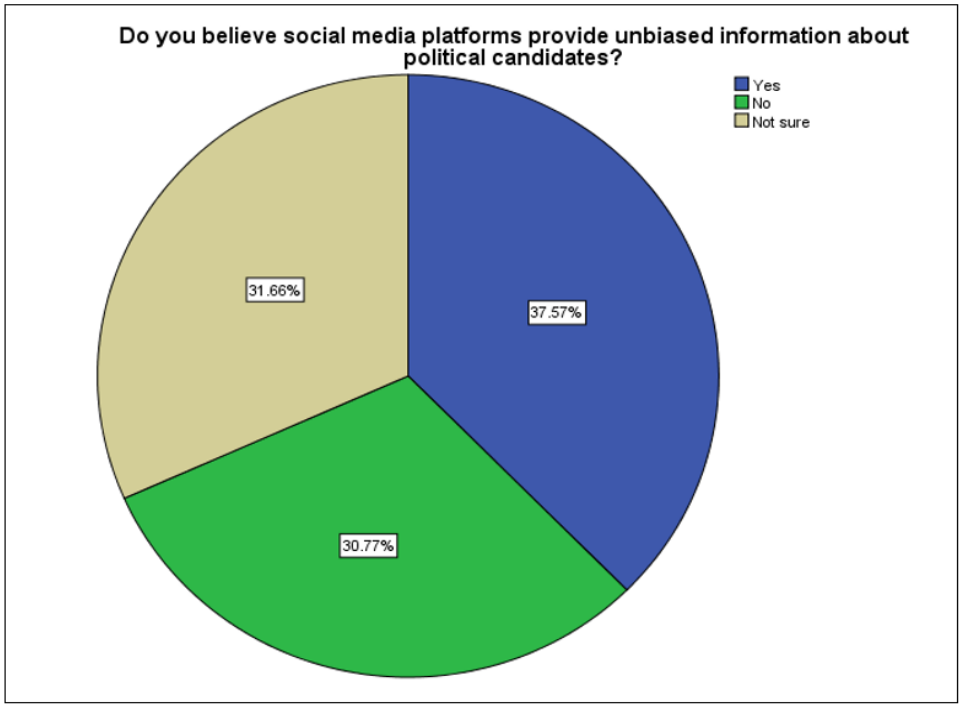
a. No
b. Not Sure/Neutral
c. Yes

Frequency Table

Table No. 4.13

No (N)		Neutral (N)		Yes (Y)	
F	%	F	%	F	%
104	30.4	107	31.3	127	37.1

Figure No. 4.6



Interpretation

The Total No. of Respondents was 342, among which 30.4 % responded that the information found on social media is Not Correct (NC), 31.3 % response was Neutral (N), whereas 37.1 % found it to be unbiased.

Hence, it is concluded that most respondents AGREED (Yes) that social media platforms provided unbiased information about political candidates.

The question number Twelve (12) was –

Personal targeting through digital channels represents an advanced stage of campaign strategy. This question determines how frequently youth are recipients of personalized outreach from political actors.

Q12. Have you ever been directly targeted or approached by political parties or candidates on social media?

Respondents were asked to comment on whether they have ever been directly targeted or approached by political parties or candidates on social media platforms.

a. No

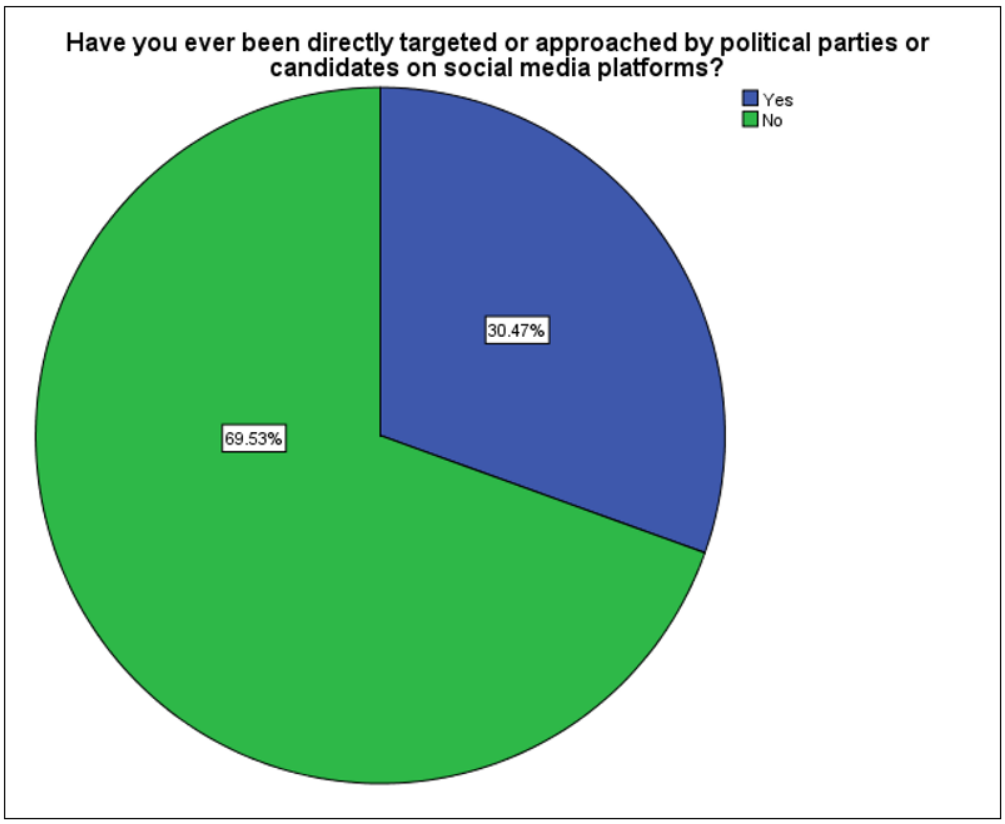
b. Yes

Frequency Table

Table No. 4.14

No (N)		Yes (Y)	
F	%	F	%
235	68.7	103	30.1

Figure No. 4.7



Interpretation

The Total number of Respondents was 342, among whom 68.7 % responded that they were NEVER (N) approached by any political party or actor on any social media. And 30.1% reported being approached.
Hence, it is concluded that most respondents found that they were NEVER

(N) approached by political actors on any social media platform.

The question number Thirteen (13) was –

Measuring the likelihood of engagement provides a proxy for the youth's readiness to participate in interactive political campaigns. Results inform strategies for enhancing campaign effectiveness among digital natives.

13. Are you more likely to engage with a political campaign or candidate who actively uses social media platforms to interact with the public?

Respondents were asked to comment on whether they to engage with a political campaign or candidate who actively uses social media platforms to interact and connect with them.

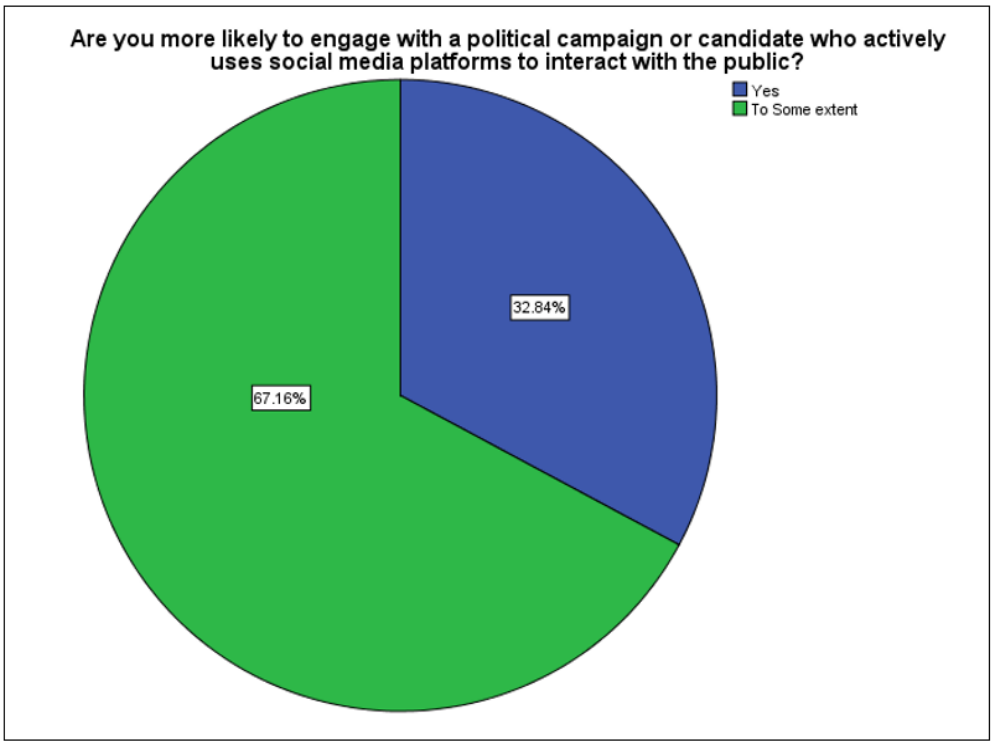
a. Never
b. Yes, to some extent
c. Yes Definitely

Frequency Table

Table No. 4.15

No (N)		Yes, to some extent(YE)		Yes (Y)	
F	%	F	%	F	%
-	-	227	66.4	111	32.5

Figure No. 4.8



Interpretation

The Total No. of Respondents was 342, among which 66.4 % responded that they would engage YES (YE) with a political campaign or candidate who actively uses social media platforms to interact and connect with them up to a certain extent, only .32.5% responded that they would CERTAINLY ENGAGE /YES.

Hence, it is concluded that most respondents found it likely to engage with political actors who are active on social media platforms and approach them in this way.

The question number Fourteen (14) was –

Perceptions of accessibility highlight social media's role in democratizing political participation. This question assesses whether youth feel campaigns are now easier to access and engage with, due to digital tools.

14. Do you believe social media has made political campaigns more accessible to the youth?

Respondents were asked to comment on whether social media has made political campaigns more accessible to them, the youth.

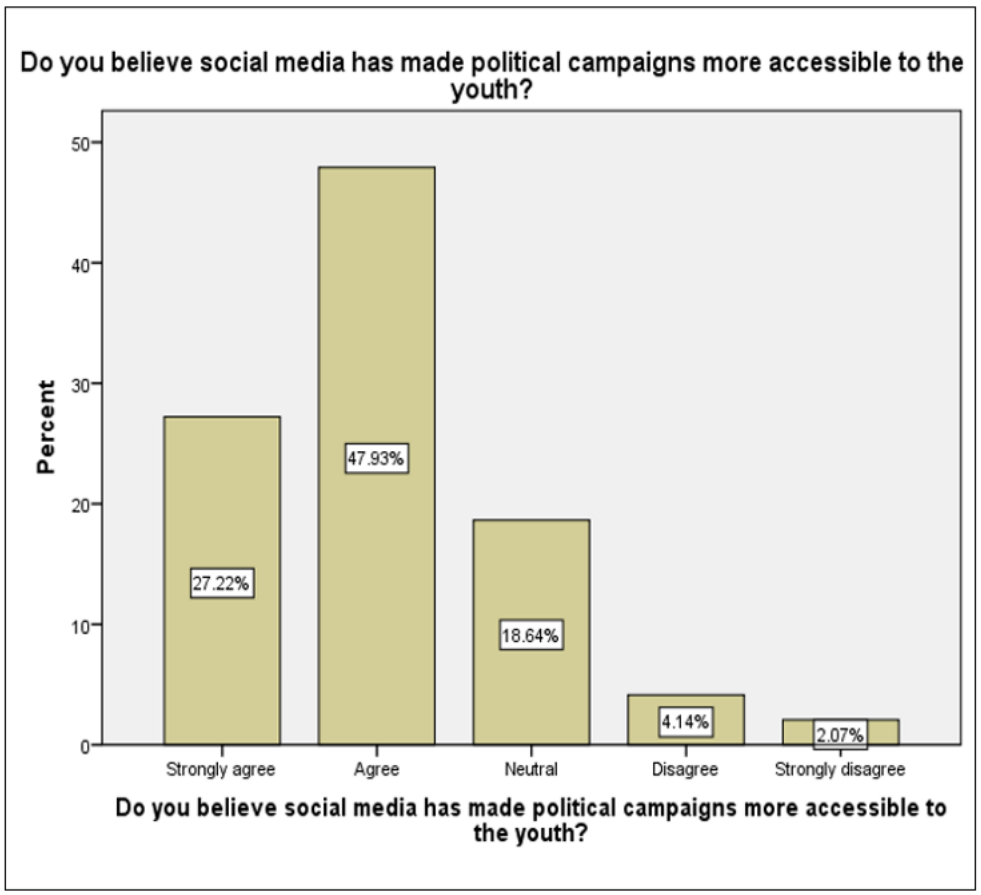
a. Strongly disagree
b. Disagree
c. Neutral
d. Agree
e. Strongly Agree

Frequency Table

Table No.4.16

Strongly (SD) Disagree		Disagree (DA)		Neither agree nor disagree (NAD)		Agree (AG)		Strongly agree (SA)	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
7	2.0	14	4.1	63	18.4	162	47.4	92	26.9

Figure No.4.9



Interpretation

The total number of respondents was 342, among whom 2.0% strongly disagreed (SD) that social media has made political campaigns more accessible to them, specifically the youth.4.1% DISAGREE, 18.4 % were NEUTRAL, 47.4 % AGREE that social media has made political campaigns more accessible to them, and 26.9% STRONGLY AGREE that social media has made political campaigns more accessible to them.

Hence, it is concluded that most respondents (47.4 + 26.9 =74.3%) found that social media has made political campaigns more accessible to them.

The question number Fifteen (15) was –

Assessing party-specific digital performance identifies which political entities are most successful in creative social media campaigning, offering insight into brand-building and youth outreach effectiveness**.**

15. According to you, which of the following Political parties displays their Social Media in the most dynamic & creative manner?

Respondents were asked to comment to identify the most creative and attractive social media political campaigns of a party.

a. Bhartiya Janta Party
b. Congress I
c. Samajawadi Party
d. Bahujan Samjwadi party
e. National Congress Party
f. Akali Dal
g. Aam Aadmi Party
h. Biju Janta Dal (BJD)
i. Shivsena
j. Trinamool Congress (TMC)
k. AIDMK
l. Any other

Frequency Table

Table No. 4.17

Bhartiya Janta Party(BJP)		Indian National Congress (INC)		Samajwadi Party(SP)		Bahujan Samjwadi party (BSP)		Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)		Akali Dal (AD)		Trinamool Congress (TMC)	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
260	51	80	15.7	34	6.7	9	1.8	35	6.9	7	1.4	7	1.4

Biju Janta Dal (BJD)		Shive Sena		AIDMK		National Congress Party (NCP)		Any other	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
5	1.0	14	2.7	3	0.6	25	4.9	133	35.7

Interpretation

Respondents were asked to comment on which of the political parties' creative strategy and execution on social media platforms they liked, and further, they were offered the option to respond from and asked to choose as many options applicable and multiple choices.

The Data is analyzed using the 'Multiple Analysis Response Option' in IBM SPSS 21.

Out of a total of 510 YES responses, 51 % accounted for Bhartiya Janta Party, 15.7 % for Indian National Congress I, 6.7 % for Samajwadi Party, 1.8 % for Bahujan Samajwadi party, 4.9% for National Congress Party, 1.4 % for Akali Dal, 6.9 % for Aam Aadmi Party, 1% for Biju Janta Dal (BJD), 2.7 % Shiv Sena, 1.4% for Trinamool Congress (TMC), 0.6% for AIDMK, 6.1% for others.

Hence, we can conclude that the youth respondents consider the top three popular Creative strategies, as well as the execution of the Bhartiya Janata Party, the Indian National Congress, and the Aam Aadmi Party.

The question number Sixteen (16) was –

Actual engagement with party social media pages reflects the depth of participation and exposure. Measuring visits and interactions complements data on overall campaign influence and reach.

16. Do you engage with or visit the social media platform of a political party?

Respondents were asked to comment on whether they visited or engaged with a political party's social media page.

a. Bhartiya Janta Party
b. Congress I
c. Samajawadi Party
d. Bahujan Samjwadi party
e. National Congress Party
f. Akali Dal
g. Aam Aadmi Party

h. Biju Janta Dal (BJD)

i. Shiv Sena J. Trinamool Congress (TMC)

k. AIDMK

l. Any other

Frequency Table

Table No. 4.18

Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP)		Indian National Congress (INC)		Samajawadi Party (SP)		Bahujan Samjwadi party (BSP)		Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)		Akali Dal (AD)		Trinamool Congress (TMC)	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
223	37.0	82	13.6	36	6.0	7	1.2	62	10.3	6	1 .0	5	0.8

Biju Janta Dal (BJD)		Shiv Sena		AIDMK		National Congress Party (NCP)		None		Others	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
9	1.5	51	8.5	3	0.6	21	3.5	79	13.1	19	13.2

Interpretation

Respondents were asked to comment on their presence on the social media pages of the political party or a candidate. Further, they were offered the options to respond from and asked to choose as many options as applicable and multiple choices.

The Data is analyzed using the ‘Multiple Analysis Response Option' in IBM SPSS 21.

Out of a total of 602 YES responses, 37 % accounted for Bhartiya Janta Party, 13.6 % for Indian National Congress, 6.0 % for Samajwadi Party, 1.2 % for Bahujan Samajwadi party, 3.5% for National Congress Party, 6.0 % for Akali Dal, 10.3 % for Aam Aadmi Party, 1.5% for Biju Janta Dal (BJD), 8.5 % Shiv

Sena, 0.8% for Trinamool Congress (TMC), 0.3% for AIDMK,13.1 % opted for NONE and 3.2% for others.

Hence, we can conclude that the top three popular political party pages visited and engaged by youth respondents are of the Bhartiya Janta Party, the Indian National Congress I, and the Aam Aadmi Party, respectively.

The question number Seventeen (17) was –

Responsiveness of political parties to youth queries on social media is an important indicator of dialogue quality and youth empowerment. This item evaluates feedback mechanisms and interaction levels.

17. How effectively do Political parties respond & engage with you with your messages, queries & grievances?

Respondents were asked to comment on whether the political parties actively engaged with or replied to their messages and addressed issues on their social media pages.

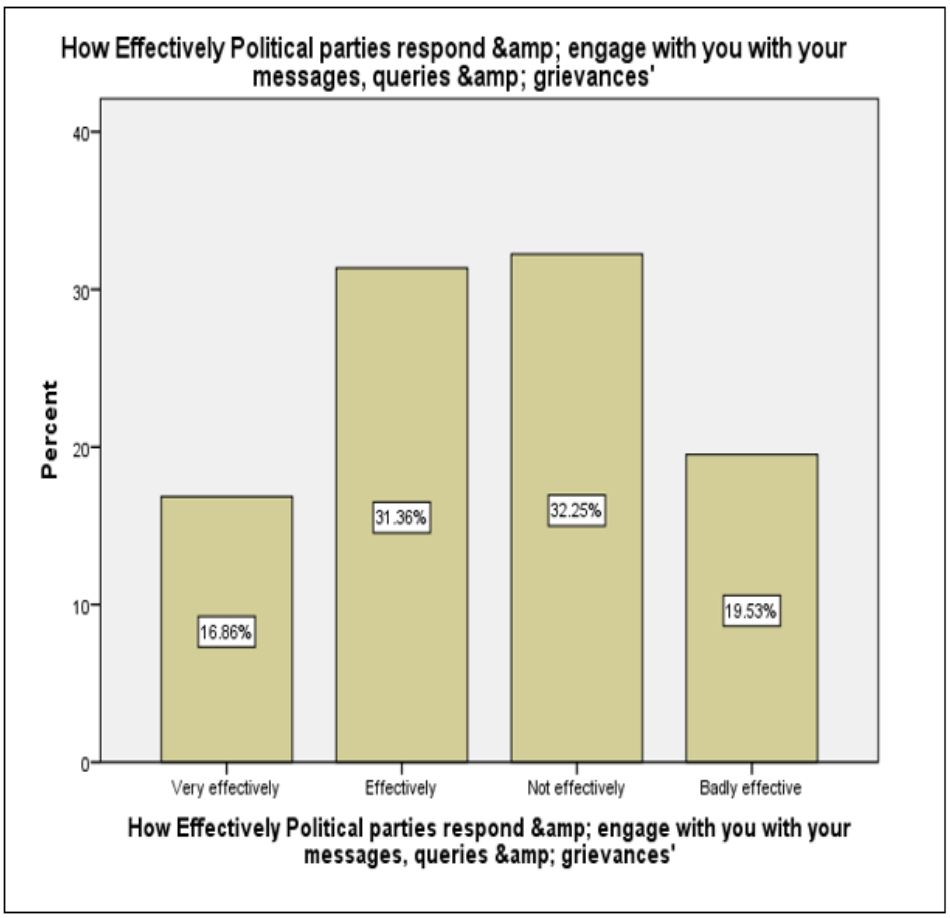
a. Ineffective
b. Not Effective
c. Effective
d. Very Effective

Frequency Table

Table No. 4.19

Ineffective (IE)		Not Effective (NE)		Effective (E)		Very Effectively (VE)	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
66	19.3	109	31.9	106	31.0	57	16.7

Figure No. 4.10



Interpretation

The total number of respondents was 342, among which 19.3 % found it INEFFECTIVE (IE) that the political parties actively engaged or replied to their messages and addressed issues on their social media pages. Social media has made political campaigns more accessible to the youth. 31.9% found it NOT EFFECTIVE, 31.0 % were EFFECTIVE, and 16.7 % found it VERY EFFECTIVE.

Hence, it is concluded that most respondents (31.0 + 16.7 =47.7%) found that the political parties actively engaged or replied to their messages and addressed issues on their social media pages.

The question number Eighteen (18) was –

The timing and consistency of party activity on social media are relevant to campaign strategy and authenticity. This question exposes whether youth perceive parties as only election-focused or engaged year-round.

18. Do you think Political parties only become active on social media during the Elections?

Respondents were asked whether the political parties became active on their social media pages only during elections.

a. Not Sure
b. Disagree
c. Agree

T-Test

Notes

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Comments		
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	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	342
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics for each analysis are based on the cases with no missing or out-of-range data for any variable in the analysis.
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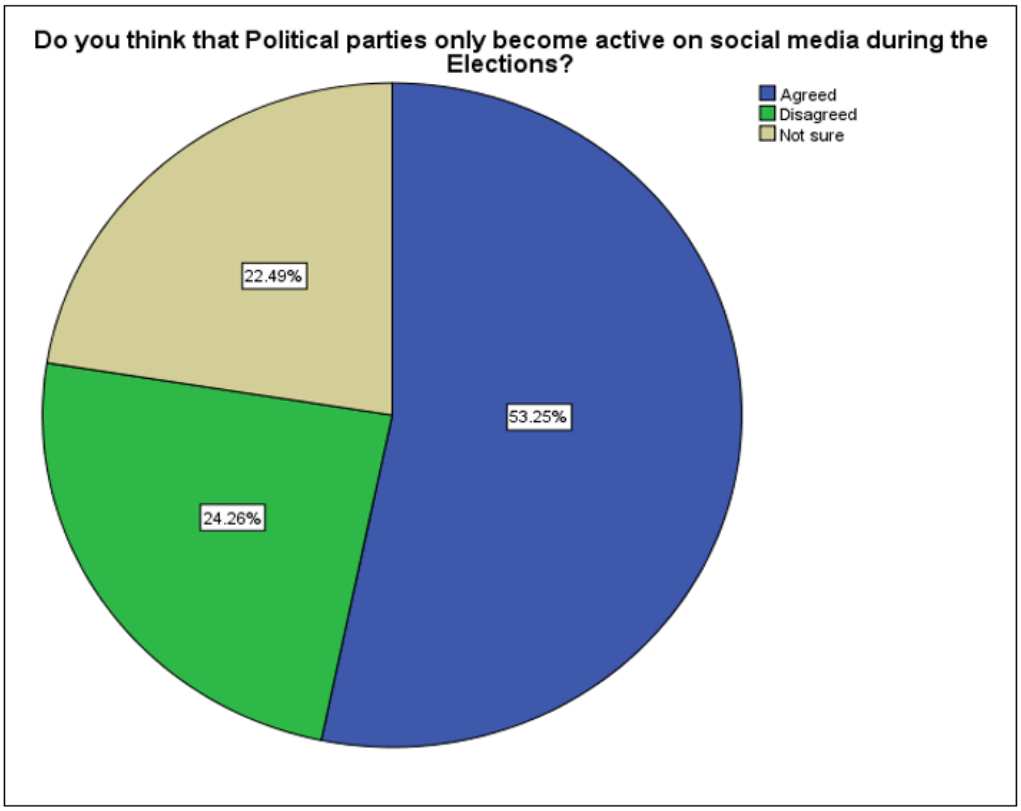
FREQUENCIES VARIABLES=DoyouthinkthatPoliticalpartiesonlybecomeactiveonsocialmediadurin /PIECHART PERCENT/ORDER=ANALYSIS.

Do you think that Political parties only become active on social media during elections?

Table No. 4.20

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	180	52.6	53.3	53.3
	Disagree	82	24.0	24.3	77.5
	Not sure	76	22.2	22.5	100.0
	Total	338	98.8	100.0	
Missing	System	4	1.2		
Total		342	100.0		

Figure No. 4.11



Interpretation

The total number of respondents was 342, among whom 22.49% were unsure whether the political parties became active on their social media pages only during elections. 24.26 % DISAGREED, and 53.25% AGREED that political parties only became active on their social media pages only during elections Hence, it is concluded that most respondents found that the political parties became active on their social media pages only during elections.

4.5 Research Question, Hypothesis, Its Testing and Analysis

Research Question: "What are the changing trends in political communication and the evolving socio-political marketing environment in India, particularly regarding the engagement of youth through social media platforms?"

1. Hypothesis 1:

Social media platforms significantly influence voting choices and opinion formation.

2. Hypothesis 2:

Social media provides a significant platform for youth to engage in political discourse.

3. Hypothesis 3:

Males and females differ significantly in their perception of the influence of political campaigns on social media.

4. Hypothesis 4:

The perceived impact of social media political campaigns varies significantly with the frequency of social media use.

5. Hypothesis 5:

The perceived impact of social media political campaigns is influenced by youth preferences for specific social media platforms.

4.6 Explanation of the Hypothesis

H1: Social media platforms significantly influence voting choices and opinion formation

This hypothesis posits that political marketing communication campaigns and activities conducted on various social media platforms influence the political opinions and eventual voting decisions of youth meaningfully. It also professes that these social media platforms are not only channels for information, but they also act as active agents of persuasion and opinion formation.

These platforms act not just as channels for information dissemination but as active spaces where voters, especially youth, encounter targeted political content, engage in discussions, and form or adjust their political attitudes.

Theoretical / Conceptual Rationale and Relevance

The proposition is grounded in contemporary political communication literature, which increasingly recognizes **digital platforms as powerful tools for agenda-setting, attitude shaping, and voter mobilization**.

For youth voters in particular, the immediacy, multimedia appeal, and participatory nature of platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and X (Twitter) make them especially influential.

This influence emerges through mechanisms such as exposure of the youth to tailored campaign advertisements, peer sharing of political messages, and interactive engagement that traditional media cannot replicate as dynamically.

This aligns directly with this study's research objective of assessing how social media impacts youth political opinion and behaviour in modern India, a country where the youth demographic forms a significant voting bloc with high digital connectivity.

Variables and Questionnaire Mapping

- **Independent Variable:** Exposure to political campaigns/content on social media platforms.
- **Dependent Variable:** Perceived influence of such campaigns on voting choices/opinions.
- **Data Source:** Responses to the following **Questions** of the youth survey:
- "How influential do you find political campaigns on social media in moulding your opinions or decisions as a voter?"
- "Social media platforms are an effective tool for shaping voting choices".
- Response options measure perceived influence across a scale from Not Influential to Very Influential, providing direct insight into the campaign's persuasive effect.

Expected Relationship or Effect

It is anticipated that **a majority of respondents will acknowledge that political campaigns on social media have influenced their political attitudes and/or voting choices**.

The expectation is based on:

- **Repeated exposure to political content** in daily feeds.
- **Peer reinforcement**, where friends or influencers share/endorse messages.
- **Personalised political targeting**, making content more relevant and persuasive to youth concerns.
- This implies a positive relationship between political message exposure on social media and perceived opinion/vote influence.

Link to Research Objective and Study Framework

This hypothesis is situated within the study's broader aim to evaluate the **role of social media in contemporary political engagement among Indian youth**.

Testing it helps determine:

- Whether social media functions primarily as information delivery, or also as an **opinion-shaping, voter-influencing environment**.
- How mechanisms such as **personalization, emotional narratives, credibility through networked sharing, and interactive dialogue** translate into tangible shifts in political attitudes.

The findings that emerged from this hypothesis thus directly informed the assessment of social media's persuasive capacity within the context of modern Indian electoral politics.

In essence, this hypothesis aims to confirm that social media's pervasive reach and interactive features make it a powerful medium for political persuasion, mobilization, and opinion formation among the electorate, thus reshaping contemporary democratic processes in India and similar contexts.

Hypothesis 2: Social media provides a significant platform for youth to engage in political discourse.

This hypothesis proposes that social media functions as an active and participatory space where youth can discuss, debate, and share opinions on political issues, candidates, policies, and campaigns.
It assumes that these platforms go beyond passive information delivery to enable two-way communication and interaction, thereby fostering meaningful political discourse among young citizens.

2. Theoretical / Conceptual Rationale and Relevance

The idea behind this hypothesis is rooted in deliberative democracy theory and the concept of the public sphere (Habermas), which suggests that a healthy democracy thrives when citizens have accessible spaces to exchange views and engage in debate.

Social media platforms — such as Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), WhatsApp, and YouTube — have transformed political communication by removing gatekeeping barriers and enabling real-time, peer-to-peer exchanges.
For youth, these networks:

- Offer instantaneous access to political content.
- Provide interactive features such as comments, polls, and live sessions.
- Create community spaces where political ideas are shaped collaboratively.

In the Indian context — with a large, tech-active youth electorate — such engagement is particularly important for broadening political participation and democratizing discourse.

Variables and Questionnaire Mapping

Variables Examined:

Independent Variable: Access to and use of social media platforms for political content.

Dependent Variable: Extent to which youth engage in political discourse (discussion, opinion-shaping, participation).

Relevant Questionnaire Items:

- Q10 – How influential do you find political campaigns on social media in moulding your opinions or decisions as a voter?
- Q14 – Likelihood of engaging with a political campaign/candidate active on social media.
- Q15 – Perception that social media has made political campaigns more accessible to youth.

Together, these items measure not only perceived influence but also readiness to engage and the perceived openness of platforms as venues for political conversation.

Expected Relationship or Effect

It is expected that:

- A significant proportion of youth will report that political campaigns and discussions encountered on social media have influenced their perspectives (Q10),
- They are more likely to engage with candidates or campaigns that are active online and responsive (Q14), and
- They agree that social media has removed barriers and increased access to political content/campaigns (Q15).

In other words, the hypothesis anticipates a positive association between youth social media use and their participation in political discourse, both in terms of expressing themselves and interacting with political stakeholders.

5. Link to Research Objective and Study Framework

This hypothesis directly addresses the second core research objective — to examine how social media enables youth engagement and dialogue in the political process. Its relevance lies in:

- Identifying social media's role in democratizing access to political debates.
- Understanding whether youth see these platforms as legitimate arenas for expressing their views.
- Assessing the bridge function of social media between passive exposure to political messages and active discourse/interaction with political content.

The findings in this study contributed to clarifying whether digital platforms had fostered deliberative participation among youth or had primarily functioned as one-directional promotional channels for political actors.

Explanation of the Hypothesis

H3: Males and females differ significantly in their perception of the influence of political campaigns on social media.

The hypothesis proposes that the criterion of gender is critical in shaping the perception of individuals and impacts the influence of political campaigns disseminated via social media platforms. It presumes that male and female respondents may respond differently in terms of the extent to which they believe such social media-mediated marketing campaigns help shape and mould their political opinions and voting decisions.

The core idea is that while social media is widely accessible to all, irrespective of any gender-based differences in media consumption patterns, political engagement styles, and susceptibility to persuasion, this could further lead to distinct perception levels. These differences might occur from the varied interests in political issues, trust in online political communication, or differences in exposure to and interaction with political content.

Theoretical / Conceptual Rationale and Relevance

This proposition draws on research in political communication and gender studies, which has observed that demographic characteristics — including gender — influence patterns of political engagement, issue prioritisation, and susceptibility to message framing.

While social media provides a common information environment, numerous studies show that men and women often consume political content differently and may differ in their responsiveness to online campaigns. For example:

Women may be more influenced by emotive narratives or community-oriented political messaging.

Men may place more emphasis on policy-centric or debate-driven content.

In the contemporary Indian milieu, both men and women are increasingly active online, yet they differ in their sociocultural experiences. It is hence relevant to explore whether these differences translate into distinct perceptions about the influence of political campaigns on social media.

This rationale fits within the study's broader aim to examine how personal demographic variables mediate the persuasive capacity of political communication among Indian youth.

Variables and Questionnaire Mapping

Independent Variable: Respondent gender (Male / Female).

Dependent Variable: Perceived influence of political campaigns on social media on their voting opinions/decisions.

Data Source: Responses to the survey question:

"How influential do you find political campaigns on social media in moulding your opinions or decisions as a voter?"

The responses will be measured on a Likert-type scale (e.g., Not Influential to Very Influential), enabling comparative statistical analysis between male and female subgroups.

Expected Relationship or Effect

It is expected that there will be a measurable difference between male and female respondents in their perception of the influence of political campaigns on social media.

Possible explanations for the anticipated difference include:

Distinct patterns of political interest and engagement by gender.

Gendered variations in the types of content engaged with — visual/emotive vs. analytical/issue-based.

Differences in trust levels towards political communication mediated through digital platforms.

Such expectations align with prior studies that have found demographic attributes to be important moderators in political persuasion. This suggests that gender may not only affect access and exposure but also the subjective reception of political messages.

Link to Research Objective and Study Framework

This hypothesis is tested to serve the following identified purposes :

Understanding whether gender acts as a demographic moderator in the impact of social media–based political communication.

Providing nuanced insights into which sections of the youth electorate are more responsive to online political campaigns.

The inferences from this hypothesis aim to directly contribute to the study's framework by informing the marketing communication, political communication, and social media campaign strategists about the need for gender-targeted, specific digital outreach strategies. Moreover, confirming or refuting this difference helps to assess the degree to which political communication effects are universally felt versus socially differentiated within the Indian youth population.

To summarize, the aforementioned hypothesis aims to identify whether the young male and female voters in India perceive the persuasive role of political campaigns on social media differently, thus enriching the understanding of demographic dynamics in digital-era electoral politics.

Explanation of the Hypothesis

H4: The perceived impact of social media political campaigns varies significantly with the frequency of social media use.

Hypothesis number four proposes that the degree to which individuals perceive political campaigns on social media as influential is affected by **how frequently they use these platforms**. It suggests that heavier users of social media — those who spend more time and engage more frequently with digital content — are more likely to perceive political campaigns as influencing their opinions and voting decisions than infrequent users.

The substantiation is that **repeated and sustained exposure** to political messages, discussions, and visual content in feeds can enhance message salience, stimulate familiarity, and increase the probability of persuasion. In contrast, those who rarely use social media may have limited exposure to such content, which leads to a lessened perception of its impact.

Theoretical / Conceptual Rationale and Relevance

This proposition aligns with **media effects theories** such as exposure theory and the uses and gratifications approach, which posit that the frequency and intensity of media use influence not only the amount of information an audience receives but also the potential for attitudinal change.

In political communication literature, higher usage frequency is often linked with **greater exposure to political advertisements, influencer endorsements, peer-shared messages, and ongoing debates** — all of which can intensify perceptions of influence.

In the present Indian context, amongst the youth, especially, smartphone penetration and social media access are widespread. The frequency of engagement with platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter) may dictate the visibility and perceived relevance of political campaigns.

Thus, examining this relationship helps determine whether influence is a function of **message quality alone** or is significantly modulated by **exposure frequency**.

Variables and Mapping of the Questionnaire

- **Independent Variable:** Frequency of social media use (measured in categories, e.g., Daily for several hours, Daily for less than an hour, Few times a week, Rarely).
- **Dependent Variable:** Perceived influence of social media political campaigns on voting opinions/decisions.
- **Data Source:** Combination of responses to two survey questions:

1."How often do you use social media platforms?"

2."How influential do you find political campaigns on social media in molding your opinions or decisions as a voter?"

The perceived influence will be measured on a Likert-type scale (Not Influential to Very Influential), enabling cross-tabulation and correlation analysis with usage frequency data.

Expected Relationship or Effect

It is expected that **individuals who use social media more frequently will report a higher perceived influence** of political campaigns compared to those who are infrequent and are light users.

This anticipation is rooted in:

- **Repeated exposure effect** — frequent users encounter more political content, enhancing message retention and influence.
- **Participatory immersion** — higher usage increases chances of engaging in discussions, polls, or hashtag campaigns.
- **Personalised targeting** — algorithms refine content delivery for heavy users, aligning political messaging with their interests and increasing perceived relevance.

The likely outcome is a **positive association** between the frequency of social media use and the perceived persuasive effect of political campaigns.

Link to Research Objective and the Study's Framework

Assessing this hypothesis provides insight into whether **the frequency of engagement is a prime driver of perceived influence** in digital political communication or not.

It addresses the study's broader objective of understanding the means and approaches through which social media impacts political attitudes among Indian youth.

Testing this hypothesis will further help to determine if the influence of political campaigns is **proportional to the amount of exposure volume. It will further extend help to marketing communication experts and** campaign strategists to consider whether targeting frequent social media users yields stronger persuasive effects.

It further clarifies whether casual users require different strategies (e.g., highly emotive or viral content) to perceive similar levels of influence or not.

Explanation of the Hypothesis

H5: The perceived impact of social media political campaigns is influenced by youth preferences for specific social media platforms.

This hypothesis proposes that the perceived influence of political campaigns on social media among youth varies according to their preferred social media platforms. It suggests that different social media platforms—such as Instagram, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), or YouTube—may have distinct persuasive effects based on their unique content formats, user engagement styles, and algorithmic personalization, which align differently with the preferences of youth.

The underlying idea is that youth who favor specific platforms may perceive political campaigns on those platforms as more impactful, due to factors such as platform-specific content delivery, social interaction modes, and the trust or

credibility associated with each platform. Hence, platform preference becomes a significant determinant in how young voters interpret and are influenced by political messaging.

Theoretical and Conceptual Relevance

This hypothesized nature of social media platforms builds upon a long history of research on digital media effects and political communication, much of which has recognized that these various platforms represent anything but monoliths — social media sites differ in terms of communicative affordances, user demographics, and normative patterns of interactivity. Studies have found that certain platform-specific features, such as TikTok's emphasis on short videos and Twitter's real-time text-based conversations, encourage distinct types of political discussions.

For instance:

- Visual-centric platforms like Instagram and Facebook may amplify emotional and viral political content.
- X (Formerly) Twitter may cater more to debate-oriented, issue-specific political communication.
- Facebook often facilitates community-level campaign mobilization and peer sharing.

In the Indian youth context, where digital connectivity and platform diversity are rapidly expanding, understanding how preferences for a particular social media platform influence the perceived effectiveness of political campaigns helps clarify which social media channels are most effective for the wider reach of political messages, constituent relations, and mobilization.

This aligns with the study's objective of clarifying how disparate social media ecosystems shape political influence and voter mobilization among different factions of youth.

Variables and Questionnaire Mapping

- **Independent Variable:** Youth preference for specific social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube).
- **Dependent Variable:** Perceived influence of political campaigns on social media on voting opinions/decisions.
- **Data Source:** Survey questions:
- "Which social media platform do you prefer for political news and discussions?"
- "How influential do you find political campaigns on social media in shaping your opinions or decisions as a voter?"

Responses on platform preference will be categorical, while perceived influence will be measured on a Likert-type scale (Not Influential to Very Influential), permitting comparisons across platform user groups.

Expected Relationship or Effect

It is anticipated that the perceived influence of political campaigns will **significantly differ** based on youth preferences for social media platforms.

Possible explanations include:

- Content styles that only resonate with users from certain platforms and engagement features that some users are more likely to respond to.
- Algorithms that adjust political content to account for platform mechanics and take user behavior into account.
- Youth users' platform-specific attributions of credibility and trust exhibit significant variability.

Henceforth, a **divergent pattern of perceived influence** is expected, which highlights the nuanced role of platform choices in political communication effectiveness.

Research Objective and Study Framework

By examining this question, we build a more precise picture of how different social media platforms matter in shaping the political views among the youth, so as to call forth a theoretical contribution.

This complements one of the goals of this study to look for pathways in which digital political campaigns exert influence, given different types of platform ecosystems and youth media behaviours.

The results will probably help marketing communication experts, political strategists, and

- Designing platform-specific campaign content tailored to youth preferences.
- Allocating resources efficiently across platforms for maximum influence.
- Recognizing that political persuasion is not uniform but mediated by the dynamics of varied social media platforms and user inclinations.

This hypothesis aims to highlight, by demonstrating how youth social media choices modulate the impact of political campaigns, reflecting the complex interplay between technology, communication, and voter psychology in contemporary Indian electoral politics.

4.7 Statistical Analysis and Interpretations

Hypothesis 1:

H1: Social media platforms significantly influence voting choices and opinion formation.

Statistical Test: Binomial Test

To test the above hypothesis, the respondents were asked whether they are impacted by social media or not. Using the Dichotomous scale (1=Y,2=N)

Null hypothesis (H_0): The proportion of "Yes" responses is $\leq$ **0.50**

Alternative hypothesis (H1): The proportion of "Yes" responses is > **0.50**

Table No.4.21

Question	Group 1	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Exact Sig. (2-tailed)
1 Social media platforms are an effective tool for shaping voting choices	Yes	214	0.63	0.50	P<0.001
	No	128	0.37		
2 How influential do you find political campaigns on social media in moulding your opinions or decisions as a voter?	Yes	202	0.60	0.50	P<0.001
	No	136	0.40		

Question 1: Are social media platforms an effective tool for shaping voting choices?

Observed proportion: 63% said **Yes**.

P-value (Exact Sig.): (P<0.001)— this means the probability of getting 63% or more **Yes** just by chance, if the actual proportion were 50%, is **extremely low**.

Interpretation: There is **strong evidence** to reject the null hypothesis. **Significantly more people agree that social media shapes voting choices.**

Question 2: How influential are political campaigns on social media in moulding opinions?

Null hypothesis (H_0): The proportion of "Yes" responses is ≤ **0.50**

Alternative hypothesis (H1): The proportion of "Yes" responses is > **0.50**

Observed proportion: 60% said **Yes**.

P-value: (P<0.001)— again, the chance of observing 60% "Yes" if the true proportion were 50% is **very low**.

Interpretation: There is **strong evidence** that more people find political campaigns on social media influential than would be expected by chance.

For **both questions**, the p-value is **less than 0.05** — so the difference is **statistically significant**.

The respondents significantly lean towards **agreeing** that:

- Social media shapes voting choices.
- Political campaigns on social media influence their opinions or decisions.

A binomial test was conducted to determine whether the proportion of respondents agreeing that social media platforms are an effective tool for shaping voting choices differed significantly from a hypothesized proportion of 0.50. The test indicated that 63% of respondents agreed ($p < .001$), demonstrating a significant majority. Similarly, 60% of respondents agreed that political campaigns on social media are influential in moulding their opinions or decisions as voters ($p < .001$). These results suggest that respondents perceive social media and related political campaigns as influential factors in the voting process.

The findings of the binomial test reveal that a significant majority of respondents believe that social media platforms play an effective role in shaping voting choices and that political campaigns on social media have considerable influence on voters' opinions and decisions. This aligns with prior research suggesting that digital media increasingly shapes political perceptions and behavior. The result highlights the growing importance of online platforms as channels for political messaging and voter persuasion. It also suggests that stakeholders — including policymakers, campaign managers, and social media companies — should acknowledge and address the influence these platforms exert on democratic processes.

Overall, the study demonstrates that social media and political campaigns conducted through these platforms are perceived as powerful tools for shaping voters' choices and opinions. This significant perception among respondents underlines the need for further investigation into the ethical, regulatory, and

social implications of online political campaigning. Future research could explore how specific types of content, targeted advertising, or misinformation campaigns impact voters' decision-making processes.

Hypothesis 2: Social media provides a significant platform for youth to engage in political discourse.

Statistical Test

The statistical test conducted to test this hypothesis is :

One-sample t-test

The one-sample t-test is a statistical procedure used to determine whether a sample of observations could have been generated by a process with a specific mean. It's also known as a single-sample t-test. A one-sample t-test is a statistical hypothesis test that compares the mean of a sample to a known or hypothesized population mean.

The test is appropriate when:

a. Data is collected on one variable for a single population. There's no comparison between groups
b. The mean value is to be compared to a fixed and defined number
c. The data is a random sample from a normal population. The test can be used in several situations, such as:
d. Surveys: Determining if survey results are statistically significant
e. Quality control: Determining if products differ significantly from an industry standard

Table No.4.22

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Social media provides a platform for youth to engage in political discourse	338	**3.2899**	1.03297	0.05619

	Test Value	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% CI of the Difference
Social media provides a platform for youth to engage in political discourse	3	**5.160**	337	**.000**	**0.28994**	0.1794 to 0.4005

The mean is 3.2899 — so the average response is slightly more **positive** (toward "Agree").

Null hypothesis (H_0): The true mean = 3 (neutral point).

Alternative hypothesis (H1): The true mean > 3 (More than three).

Sample mean = **3.2899** — so respondents lean slightly toward **agreement**.

T-statistic = **5.160** — this is large enough to suggest the mean is far from the test value, given the sample size.

Degrees of freedom (df) = 337.

P-value (Sig. 2-tailed) = (P<0.001)— this is **less than 0.05**, so the result is **statistically significant**.

Mean Difference = 0.28994 — on average, the score is about **0.29 points above neutral**.

95% CI = [0.1794, 0.4005] — the confidence interval does **not include zero**, so the difference is real.

Interpretation

- The average response is **significantly higher** than neutral.
- Respondents **tend to agree** that social media provides a platform for youth to engage in political discourse.
- The agreement is **not huge** (mean difference ~0.29 on a 5-point scale) — but it's statistically significant.

A one-sample t-test was conducted to determine whether the mean response to the statement "Social media provides a platform for youth to engage in political discourse" differed significantly from the neutral value of 3. The mean score ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.03$) was significantly higher than 3, $t(337) = 5.16$, $p < .001$. This indicates that respondents, on average, slightly agreed that social media facilitates youth political discourse.

The results indicate that the respondents perceive social media as a meaningful platform for youth to engage in political discourse. Although the level of agreement is moderate, the difference from the neutral point is statistically significant, suggesting a positive perception among the respondents. This finding aligns with studies that highlight the role of social media in encouraging political participation and dialogue among young people. It implies that digital platforms can serve as valuable spaces for youth to express opinions, debate, and engage with political content. However, the moderate mean score also suggests there may be barriers — such as political apathy, online harassment, or digital divides — that limit broader engagement, which future research should explore.

Overall, the significant positive mean indicates that the sampled youth recognize social media as an important tool for political discourse. Policymakers, educators, and activists could leverage this perception to design initiatives that strengthen meaningful youth participation and civic engagement online.

Hypothesis 3: Males and females differ significantly in their perception of the influence of political campaigns on social media.

Statistical Test

The statistical test conducted to test this hypothesis is :

One-sample t-test

Research question: Whether males and females differ in their perception of how influential they find political campaigns on social media.

H_0: Males and females do not differ in perception of how influential they find political campaigns on social media.

H1: Males and females differ in their perception of how influential they find political campaigns on social media.

Table No.4.23

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Female	100	2.17	1.61467	0.16147
Male	242	4.06	1.44209	0.09270

Mean scores: Females: Average score = 2.17, Males: Average score = 4.06. So, on average, males rate political campaigns as more influential than females do.

To know if the difference is statistically significant, an Independent Samples Test is performed.

Table No.4.24: Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

Test	F	Sig.
Levene's	4.513	**0.034**

Whether the variances of the two groups are equal. Decision rule:

If Sig. > 0.05, assume equal variances.

If Sig. ≤ 0.05, do NOT assume equal variances.

Sig. = 0.034, which is less than 0.05, so we do NOT assume equal variances. So we'll read the "Equal variances not assumed" row for the t-test result.

t-test for Equality of Means

(Equal variances NOT assumed row):

t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	95% CI
-10.140	167.541	**P< 0.001**	-1.88785	[-2.25542, -1.52028]

Sig. (2-tailed) = (P< 0.001), which is less than 0.05, so the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that the difference is statistically significant.

Interpreting the mean difference: Mean Difference: -1.88785. This means that Females score lower than Males by about 1.89 points (because the difference is Female minus Male, so it's negative). **Males find political campaigns on social media significantly more influential than females do.**

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare how influential voters find political campaigns on social media for males and females. Levene's test indicated unequal variances (p = .034), so the unequal variances row was used. There was a significant difference in scores: males (M = 4.06, SD = 1.44) rated campaigns as more influential than females (M = 2.17, SD = 1.61), t(167.541) = -10.14, p < .001."
There is a significant difference **— Males rate political campaigns as more influential than females.**

Hypothesis 4:

The perceived impact of social media political campaigns varies significantly with the frequency of social media use.

Statistical Test: One-way ANOVA

One-way ANOVA is a statistical technique, and it is used to compare the means or average values of three or more independent groups. This picks whether there is any difference in the means of different groups or not. It indicates that one or

more of the groups is different if the variation between groups is larger than what would happen by chance.

It is used here to determine whether platform preference is associated with different levels of perceived campaign influence among youth, providing a formal test of Hypothesis 4's stated relationship.

It is used here to determine whether platform preference is associated with different levels of perceived campaign influence among youth, providing a formal test of Hypothesis 4's stated relationship.

Table no.4.25

Frequency of Use	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)	Min	Max
Multiple times a day	270	3.59	1.85	0.113	3.37	3.81	1	5
Once a day	45	3.56	0.99	0.148	3.26	3.85	1	5
A few times a week	12	2.83	0.58	0.167	2.47	3.20	1	3
Rarely	15	2.40	1.06	0.273	1.82	2.98	2	5
Total	342	3.51	1.72	0.093	3.32	3.69	1	5

H_0: True Means are equal

H1: One of the mean values is different from the rest.

- Heaviest users ("Multiple times a day" and "Once a day") have **higher means** (~3.56–3.59).
- Light/moderate users ("Few times a week" and "Rarely") have **lower means** (~2.40–2.83).

The **95% confidence intervals** show:

- For heavy users, the lower bound is well above 3 → more agreement that campaigns are influential.
- For rare users, the upper bound is below the heavy users' lower bound → suggesting there's likely a real difference.

Standard deviations:

- "Multiple times a day" group has higher variation (SD = 1.85).
- Small groups like "Few times a week" (N = 12) have lower variation

Table no.4.26

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	25.744	3	8.581	2.942	**.033**
Within Groups	985.744	338	2.916		
Total	1011.488	341			

Between Groups:

- The variance **explained by the differences** between your 4 frequency groups.
- Sum of Squares = 25.744 → how much total variation is due to the difference in group means.

Within Groups:

- The variance **within each group** (natural spread of scores within each category).
- Sum of Squares = 985.744 → The larger part of the total variation comes from individual differences.

F-statistic =2.942

p-value (Sig.):

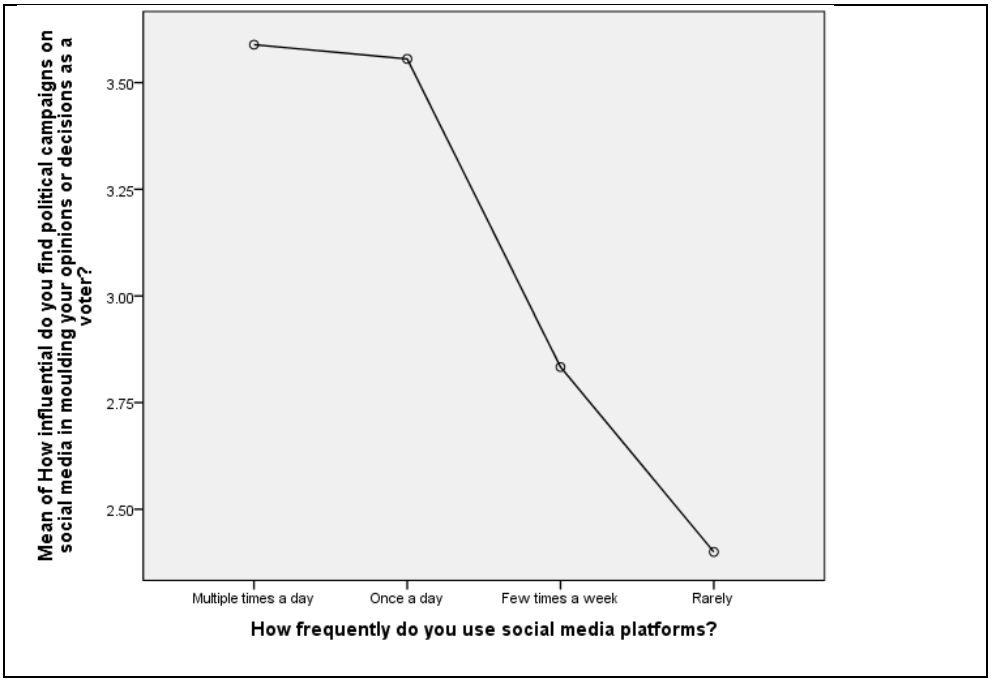
- **p = .033** → this is **less than .05**, so the test is statistically significant.

The null hypothesis is rejected. There **is a statistically significant difference** in how influential people find political campaigns on social media **depending on how frequently they use social media**.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of social media usage frequency on how influential respondents find political campaigns on social media. There was a statistically significant difference between groups, $F(3, 338) = 2.94$, $p = .033$. Post hoc tests are needed to determine which usage groups differ significantly from each other.

The results indicate that the frequency of social media use significantly affects how respondents perceive the influence of political campaigns. Frequent users tend to rate the influence higher than rare users, suggesting that greater exposure to social media increases the perceived impact of political messaging. This finding aligns with research highlighting the role of repeated exposure in shaping political opinions online. Future research or targeted post hoc analysis could clarify exactly which usage levels differ most strongly.

Figure No. 4.12



X-axis: Frequency of social media use (4 groups: Multiple times a day, Once a day, Few times a week, Rarely).

Y-axis: Mean score for "How influential do you find political campaigns on social media in moulding your opinions or decisions as a voter?" (Higher mean = more perceived influence)

The line connects the mean values for each group.

Clear downward trend:

- The more frequently people use social media, the higher they rate the influence of political campaigns.
- The mean score drops steadily from "Multiple times a day" (~3.59) → "Once a day" (~3.56) → "Few times a week" (~2.83) → "Rarely" (~2.40).

Visual evidence matches ANOVA:

- The plot visually confirms what the ANOVA found: **there is a difference in means**, especially between the frequent users and infrequent users.

Where the biggest drop happens:

- The steepest decline is between "Once a day" and "Few times a week".
- This suggests that daily users perceive political campaigns as more influential than those who only use social media a few times a week or rarely.

  As shown in Figure 4.12, there is a clear downward trend, indicating that the perceived influence of political campaigns on social media decreases as the frequency of social media use decreases. Respondents who use social media multiple times a day or once a day reported higher influence scores, while those who use social media less frequently ("Few times a week" or "Rarely") perceived significantly less influence. This supports the ANOVA results, which indicated that the differences in mean scores between groups are statistically significant.

Table No. 4.27 Tukey HSD output

Comparison	Mean Difference (I–J)	Sig.	Significant?
Multiple times a day vs. Once a day	+0.033	0.999	No
Multiple times a day vs. A few times a week	+0.756	0.439	No
Multiple times a day vs. Rarely	**+1.189**	**0.045**	**Yes**
Once a day vs. A few times a week	+0.722	0.562	No
Once a day vs. Rarely	+1.156	0.107	No
A few times a week vs. rarely	+0.433	0.914	No

The **only significant pair** (at 0.05 level) is:

- **"Multiple times a day" vs. "Rarely"** → Mean difference = **1.189**, p = **0.045**
- The 95% CI (0.0193 to 2.3585) does not include zero.

All other pairwise differences are **not statistically significant** — they do differ numerically, but not enough to be statistically confident.

So, the **main significant finding** is:

- People who use social media **multiple times a day** perceive political campaigns as **significantly more influential** than people who **rarely** use social media.

  Other intermediate groups ("Once a day", "Few times a week") are **not significantly different** from each other or from the heavy or rare users.

Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for respondents who use social media multiple times a day (M = 3.59) was significantly higher than for those who rarely use social media (M = 2.40),

with a mean difference of 1.19 (p = .045). No other pairwise differences were statistically significant.

The post hoc results show that only the heaviest social media users perceive political campaigns on social media as significantly more influential than those who rarely use social media. This suggests that frequent exposure may reinforce perceptions of the impact of political messaging online, while infrequent users remain less affected. The lack of significant differences among intermediate frequency groups implies that only substantial differences in usage lead to meaningful differences in perceived influence. This highlights the potential importance of targeting highly active social media users in political communication strategies.

Overall, the results indicate that the perceived influence of political campaigns on social media differs significantly only between the most frequent and least frequent users. This suggests that while social media remains an important channel for political messaging, its perceived impact is strongest among those who are consistently and heavily engaged online.

Hypothesis 5:

The perceived impact of social media political campaigns is influenced by youth preferences for specific social media platforms.

Statistical Test

The statistical test conducted to test this hypothesis is :

One-Way ANOVA

Table No.4.28

Platform	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Min	Max
Facebook	99	4.6970	0.826	0.083	4.532	4.862	1	5
YouTube	73	4.5753	0.705	0.083	4.411	4.740	1	5

Platform	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Min	Max
Instagram	17	4.1176	1.269	0.308	3.465	4.770	1	5
Twitter/X	30	2.4333	1.357	0.248	1.927	2.940	1	5
LinkedIn	74	1.6757	1.346	0.156	1.364	1.988	1	5
Telegram	16	2.6250	1.746	0.437	1.694	3.556	1	5
TikTok	15	2.1333	1.807	0.467	1.132	3.134	1	5
Others	7	1.8571	1.464	0.553	0.503	3.211	1	5
Total	331	3.4834	1.733	0.095	3.296	3.671	1	5

H_0: True Means are equal

H1: One of the mean values is different from the rest.

- **Facebook** (M = 4.70) and **YouTube** (M = 4.58) have the **highest means** — users strongly agree that political campaigns are influential on these platforms.
- **Instagram** is lower at 4.12 but still above neutral.
- **Twitter/X**, **Telegram**, **TikTok**, **LinkedIn**, and **Others** are **much lower**:
- **LinkedIn** is the lowest at 1.68 → people perceive political campaigns there as the least influential.
- **TikTok** and **Twitter/X** also score low (2.13 and 2.43).

Confidence intervals

- The 95% CIs for Facebook and YouTube are high and **do not overlap much** with the lowest means (LinkedIn, Others).
- This suggests that the mean differences are likely **statistically significant**
- People strongly associate Facebook and YouTube with political influence.

- “Professional” or less politically driven spaces like LinkedIn score very low.
- Short-form or private apps (Telegram, TikTok) fall in the middle/low range.

The descriptive statistics show clear differences in the perceived influence of political campaigns across platforms. Facebook (M = 4.70, SD = 0.83) and YouTube (M = 4.58, SD = 0.71) are perceived as the most influential platforms for shaping opinions and decisions as a voter, while LinkedIn (M = 1.68, SD = 1.35) is perceived as the least influential. Instagram shows moderate influence (M = 4.12, SD = 1.27), whereas Twitter/X, Telegram, TikTok, and Others fall well below the overall mean.

Table No. 4.29 -ANOVA output

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	572.226	7	81.747	63.102	P<0.001
Within Groups	418.433	323	1.295		
Total	990.659	330			

Between Groups

- Sum of Squares (SS) = **572.226**
- df = 7 (8 groups – 1).
- Mean Square Between = 81.747

Within Groups

- Sum of Squares = **418.433**

This is the variation **within each platform group** (individual differences).

df = 323

- Mean Square Within = 1.295

F-ratio = 63.102

p-value

- Sig. = **.000** (meaning **p < .001**) → highly significant.

F-test is highly significant: There **is a statistically significant difference** in the perceived influence of political campaigns **across different social media platforms**.

So we reject the null hypothesis that all platform means are equal.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether the perceived influence of political campaigns differed across social media platforms. There was a statistically significant difference in mean scores, F(7, 323) = 63.10, p < .001, indicating that the perceived influence varied by platform. Post hoc tests were conducted to identify which platforms differed significantly.

Table:4.30

Subset 1	**Mean**
LinkedIn	1.68
Others	1.86
TikTok	2.13
Twitter/X	2.43
Telegram	2.63
Subset 2	**Mean**
Instagram	4.12
YouTube	4.58
Facebook	4.70

Tukey HSD result

The table shows "homogeneous subsets" — these group platforms that **do not differ significantly from each other** at the 0.05 level.

- **Sig. for Subset 1:** 0.148 → means platforms inside Subset 1 don't differ significantly from each other.
- **Sig. for Subset 2:** 0.746 → means platforms inside Subset 2 don't differ significantly from each other.
- But **Subset 1 and Subset 2 do not overlap**, so there **is a significant difference** between these clusters.

Low Influence Platforms (Subset 1)

- LinkedIn, Others, TikTok, Twitter/X, Telegram
- These platforms cluster together with **lower mean scores** (1.68 to 2.63).

High Influence Platforms (Subset 2)

- Instagram, YouTube, Facebook
- These have **much higher mean scores** (4.12 to 4.70).

Facebook and YouTube (and to some extent Instagram) are perceived as **significantly more influential** for political campaigns than the other platforms.

Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that respondents perceived significant differences in the influence of political campaigns across platforms. Facebook (M = 4.70), YouTube (M = 4.58), and Instagram (M = 4.12) formed a homogeneous subset with significantly higher mean influence scores compared to LinkedIn (M = 1.68), TikTok (M = 2.13), Twitter/X (M = 2.43), Telegram (M = 2.63), and Others (M = 1.86). There were no significant differences within each subset.

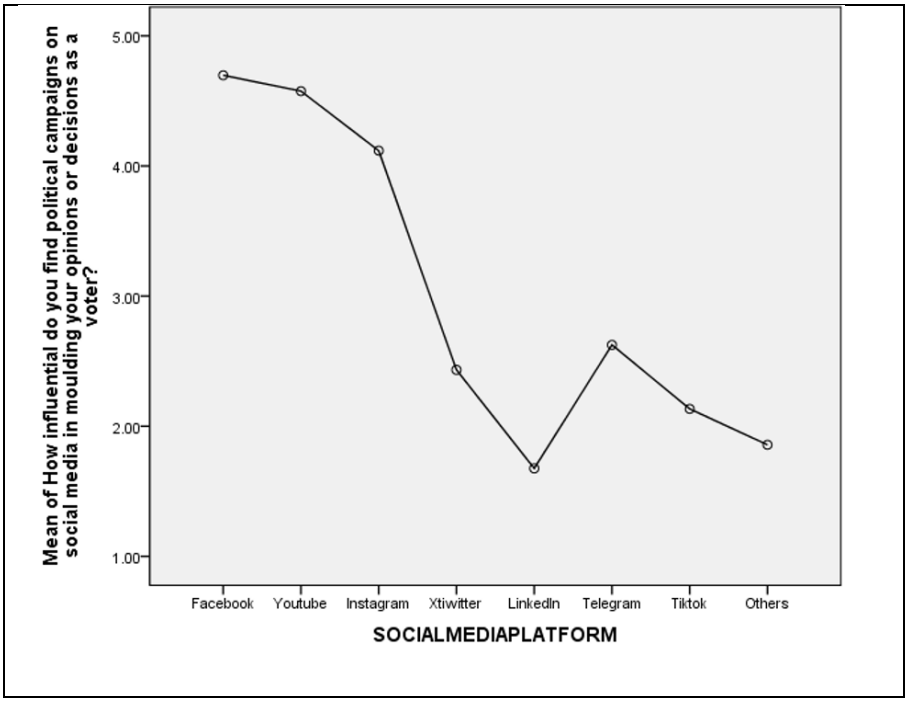
The results suggest that respondents view Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram as the most influential platforms for shaping political opinions and voting decisions, while platforms like LinkedIn, TikTok, Twitter/X, Telegram, and others are perceived as significantly less influential. This may reflect the dominant role of Facebook and YouTube as major channels for political content

distribution and engagement. Instagram, while more entertainment-focused, also appears influential among its users. In contrast, platforms such as LinkedIn, which focus on professional networking, and Telegram or TikTok, which often emphasize non-political or private content, are seen as less impactful for political discourse.

Overall, the findings highlight clear differences in how social media platforms are perceived as channels for political influence.

The results emphasize the strategic importance of Facebook and YouTube for political campaigns targeting young voters, while also indicating that other platforms may play a secondary or niche role.

Figure No.4.13



- **X-axis:** Different **social media platforms** (Facebook → Others).
- **Y-axis:** Mean score for "How influential do you find political campaigns on social media in moulding your opinions or decisions as a voter?"
- The **line connects the mean influence scores** across platforms.

Strong descending trend:

- **Facebook** and **YouTube** are the **highest**, both around ~4.6–4.7.
- **Instagram** drops slightly to ~4.1 — still high.
- Then there's a sharp **drop** to **Twitter/X** (~2.4) and **LinkedIn** (~1.7).
- **Telegram**, **TikTok**, and **Others** hover between ~1.8–2.6.

This pattern **visually confirms** the **Tukey subsets**:

- **Facebook, YouTube, Instagram → high perceived influence**
- **All other platforms → low perceived influence**

The steep **cliff** between Instagram and Twitter/X /X/X shows **where the big gap occurs**.

- This supports why Tukey grouped them into **two distinct clusters**.

Figure X shows the mean perceived influence of political campaigns on different social media platforms. The plot illustrates a clear separation, with Facebook (M ≈ 4.7), YouTube (M ≈ 4.6), and Instagram (M ≈ 4.1) rated as highly influential, while Twitter/X /X/X/X, LinkedIn, Telegram, TikTok, and Others are rated significantly lower, between approximately 1.7 and 2.6. The sharp decline between Instagram and Twitter/X /X/X/X/X visually supports the post hoc test results, indicating a significant difference between these two groups of platforms.

Figure X. Mean perceived influence of political campaigns across social media platforms. The plot clearly distinguishes high-influence platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram) from lower-influence platforms (Twitter, LinkedIn, Telegram, TikTok, and Others).

4.8 Qualitative Data Presentation, Interpretation, and Analysis for Research Question.

Research Question:

What are the changing trends in political communication and the evolving socio-political marketing environment in India, particularly regarding the engagement of youth through social media platforms?

The growing complexity of societal problems has resulted in a greater appreciation of the need to consider the diverse views of experts from multidisciplinary fields within the recent past. The qualitative content analysis of questions posed to a broad panel of experts constitutes the focus of this section of the thesis, aimed at determining the themes, trends, and messages conveyed by the panel of experts.

Thus, by the content analysis of these questions, the hierarchy of the interests and issues that define expert communication becomes more apparent.

Choosing a diverse panel is important because it ensures that different disciplinary perspectives, experiences, and approaches are provided, leading to a wide range of views. This variety not only enhances the quality of the discussion but also introduces cross-cutting issues, which are essential because multidimensional problems require such approaches. In the course of this qualitative content analysis, we can also track which themes and which respondents' views appear and which do not, showing us the rankings among the themes and how they relate to society at large.

This section provides Insights into the broader discussion on interdisciplinary collaboration designs about the contemporary complex and evolving political campaigning scenario. By addressing the connections between and the contribution of the expertise areas, this research aims to identify and discuss the changing trends in Indian political campaigning with special reference to the youth.

4.9 Introduction to Expert Panel Respondents

The expert panel of respondents for this study comprises a diverse group of respondents, each bringing unique expertise and experience from various fields, including academicians and practitioners from the domains of political science, Journalism, Political Analysts, Digital Marketing, and Artificial Intelligence.

This multidisciplinary approach was deliberately chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of India's changing trends in political campaigning.

Academicians in political science have theoretical Insights and contextual analyses that ground the study in established frameworks. Journalists offer firsthand perspectives on media dynamics, grassroots experience, and understanding of voter engagement, while political analysts provide critical evaluations of campaign strategies and their effectiveness. Digital marketers bring valuable knowledge about the role of online platforms in shaping political narratives, and the inclusion of an AI firm founder highlights the growing influence of technology and data analytics in modern campaigning.

Despite the varied backgrounds, all panelists responded to the same questionnaire, ensuring their Insights could be systematically compared and analyzed.

This collective expertise enables a more nuanced exploration of how various disciplines intersect to inform and adapt to the complexities of contemporary political communication in India. By leveraging their diverse perspectives, this research aims to illuminate the multifaceted nature of political campaigning and its evolution in response to societal changes.

Expert Interview Process and Rationale

To enrich the qualitative content analysis of this study, interviews were conducted with ten experts, professionals involved in political communication, digital campaigning, and youth engagement. Experts were purposively selected to ensure diversity in perspectives, representing roles such as political party social media heads, digital marketing specialists, political analysts, journalists, academics, artificial intelligence (AI) experts in political analytics, and youth influencers or activists.

This cross-section provided a broad and credible understanding of the dynamic interplay between social media and political communication targeting urban youth.

Interviews were conducted following semi-structured guidelines, consisting of eleven open-ended questions tailored to each expert's area of knowledge. Depending on logistical feasibility and expert preference, interviews were held either virtually (e.g., via Zoom, Skype, or telephonically) or in person, with each

session lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. All interviews were conducted between January and April 2024, during the pre-election phase of 2024, and were recorded with informed consent for further content analysis.

A Strict order of confidentiality was maintained by assigning unique codes (Expert 1, Expert 2, etc.) to each participant, and any identifying information was removed or anonymized in reporting. Experts were informed of the study's objectives, and consent was obtained from all participants in accordance with ethical research practices.

The insights obtained from these interviews were crucial for generating in-depth findings, offering nuanced, practice-based, and theoretical perspectives on the changing trends of political campaigning and digital engagement among youth in India.

Table No.4.31: Details of Expert Interviewees

Interviewee Code	Role/Designation	Affiliation / Organization	Location	Mode of Interview	Key Focus Area / Expertise
Expert 1	Vice Chancellor & Journalist	A Central University	New Delhi	Online	Politics, Youth & New Media
Expert 2	Political Analyst and TV Panelist	National News Channel	New Delhi	Online	Politics and New Media
Expert 3	Founder and AI expert	Media Production company	Rajasthan	Online	Deepfake, AI, Political Consulting
Expert 4	Social Media Coordinator	National Party	Rajasthan	Face-to-Face	Social Media & Technology ,

Expert 5	Social Media Coordinator	National Party	Rajasthan	Face-to-Face	Social Media and Politics
Expert 6	Social Media Coordinator	National Party	Uttar Pradesh	Face-to-Face	Social Media and Politics
Expert 7	Associate Professor/Political Science	A Central University	Gujrat	Online	Political Development and Evolving Dynamics
Expert 8	Founder and Digital Marketing Strategist	Digital Marketing Agency	Maharashtra	Face-to-Face	Social Media, Digital Marketing, Online Reputation
Expert 9	Political Research Analyst	Leading Political Consulting Firm	Maharashtra	Face-to-Face	Image Consulting and Strategy Consulting
Expert 10	Political Consultant	Political Consulting Firm	New Delhi	Online	Digital and Strategy consulting

4.10 Content Analysis

This content analysis synthesizes the perspectives of ten specialists from various domains, including political science, journalism, political analysis, digital promotion, and artificial intelligence, regarding the impact of social media on the political views of young voters in India.

The information obtained sheds light on the complex effects of social media on political participation and behavior, especially among the youth demographic.

4.10.1 Qualitative Analysis – Discourse Perspectives on Political Campaigning Trends in India

Introduction

The evolution of political campaigning in India reflects a seismic shift driven by the rise of digital platforms, social media ecosystems, and data-driven communication strategies. These transformations have not only redefined political outreach and voter mobilization but have also fundamentally altered the nature of political discourse, particularly among the youth demographic.

To systematically understand this transition, this study draws on insights from ten expert interviews, including those with campaign managers, communication strategists, political analysts, and digital media professionals. Their reflections offer a valuable entry point into examining how political messaging is crafted, circulated, and contested in the digital public sphere.

This analysis adopts a dual-method approach by integrating Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA) to interpret the expert responses:

- Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), grounded in the work of Norman Fairclough, helps interrogate how language and communication reinforce power dynamics, ideological constructs, and social inequalities. It reveals how political narratives are not neutral but shaped by institutional interests and discursive authority.
- Michel Foucault's perspective on discourse as a site of power and knowledge further frames how digital tools and platforms are employed to govern opinion, influence perception, and construct political realities.
- In parallel, Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action and the public sphere provides a democratic lens through which to evaluate the deliberative quality of political engagement on social media—particularly whether youth interactions online represent genuine dialogue or are constrained by algorithmic logics and narrative framing.

On the other hand, Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA) allows for a systematic coding and categorization of dominant themes, recurring patterns, and sentiment flows across the data. This includes youth engagement, platform-specific strategies, voter mobilization, personalization of messages, challenges of misinformation, and the role of influencers and AI.

In the following paragraphs, each of the ten interview questions is presented sequentially and examined through both CDA and TDA lenses. For each question, the structure is as follows: Question, Summary of Expert Responses, Illustrative Quotes, CDA Results and Interpretation, TDA Results and Interpretation. This layered approach aims not only to highlight the discursive mechanisms of political communication in the digital era but also to map the strategic shifts in outreach and perception management in Indian electoral politics from 2009 to 2024.

Question No. 1

How do you perceive the role of social media in shaping political narratives among youth voters in India?

Summary of Expert Responses

All ten respondents acknowledged the pivotal role of social media in shaping political narratives for youth voters in India. They emphasized its influence on awareness, engagement, transparency, narrative-building, and both the benefits and risks of personalization through algorithms. Concerns around misinformation and the emotional connection with youth voters were also repeatedly highlighted.

Representative Quotes from Respondents

1. “Social media serves as a widely used platform for engaging youth voters.”-Expert1
2. “Approximately 50% of first-time voters receive political messages through social media.”-Expert 4
3. “Political parties now realize that engaging the youth through these platforms is essential for building awareness, trust, and eventually, support.”-Expert6

4. “Social media allows for unfiltered communication, enabling emotional and personal connections between leaders and voters.”-Expert 9
5. “Hashtags, challenges, and memes have made political discourse participatory, giving youth a sense of ownership.”-Expert 2
6. “Social media empowers youth beyond local politics, sparking national-level interest.”-Expert15
7. “The ‘Turning 18’ campaign is an example of how institutions leverage platforms to target first-time voters.”Expert 7
8. “Misinformation is a serious concern—youth are vulnerable to echo chambers and misleading narratives.”-Expert 8
9. “AI and data analytics help tailor narratives but may risk reinforcing biases.”-Expert 3
10. “The Election Commission’s ‘Verify Before You Amplify’ campaign is a counter to this risk.”Expert10

Table No.4.32 : Results: Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA)

Theme	Sub-Themes	Key Patterns (TDA Focus)
Youth Engagement	Awareness, Participation	Youth are active consumers and contributors to political discourse through social media.
Narrative Formation	Personalization, Emotional Connect	Parties use social media to humanize leaders and shape targeted messaging.
Political Education	First-Time Voter Mobilization	EC campaigns and hyper-local language help inform and engage young voters.
Media Shift	Traditional to Digital	The transition to digital is reflected in strategy, tone, and immediacy of message delivery.

Theme	Sub-Themes	Key Patterns (TDA Focus)
Risks & Challenges	Misinformation, Echo Chambers	AI-curated content enhances personalization but leads to Algorithmic bias and potential disengagement.

Table No. 4.33 : Results: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Discourse Element	Critical Questions Explored	CDA Observations
Power and Control	Who shapes the political narrative online?	Political parties and platforms act as gatekeepers by controlling content visibility through algorithms.
Ideological Influence	What ideologies are promoted, and how are youth being influenced?	Emotional engagement, youth-oriented narratives, and hyper-local language are used to align youth with party values.
Representation & Authenticity	Are youth being genuinely engaged or manipulated through curated narratives?	Respondents note that authenticity is demanded by youth but also that parties use emotionally persuasive tactics, blurring authenticity with strategy.
Knowledge Access & Inequality	Are all youth equally informed and engaged?	First-time voters are influenced via social campaigns like “Turning 18,” but misinformation and echo chambers create disparity in access to accurate political content.
Resistance & Response	How do youth and institutions resist misinformation and bias?	The EC’s campaigns, such as “Verify Before You Amplify,” represent institutional counter-narratives and corrective mechanisms.

Interpretation: Synthesizing TDA and CDA Insights

- TDA reveals that social media is a primary tool for youth political engagement, not just in content consumption but in shaping and owning the political discourse. The two-way interaction gives youth a voice and agency.
- CDA uncovers the deeper power dynamics, ideological framing, and risks of manipulation via hyper-personalized content. It highlights the tension between transparency and control—youth demand authenticity, yet they are exposed to curated, sometimes misleading, narratives.

Social media acts as a double-edged sword: a platform for empowerment and political participation, but also a mechanism of control and ideological influence. TDA highlights how youth interact with political narratives; CDA exposes who controls these narratives, what power relations they reflect, and how truth and authenticity are negotiated within them.

Question No. 2

What are the key differences you've observed in political campaigning strategies before the year 2009 and after the acceleration of social media?

Summary of Expert Responses

All ten respondents observed a paradigm shift in political campaigning strategies, especially after 2009. The shift was marked by a movement from traditional, one-way, media-heavy campaigns (TV, print, rallies) to digitally enabled, interactive, and data-driven strategies utilizing social media, AI, and analytics. Youth-centric messaging, real-time engagement, cost-effectiveness, and immersive technologies were reported as significant differences post-2009.

Representative Quotes from Respondents

1. "All of the ten respondents noted a significant shift from traditional campaigning methods to digital platforms after 2009."

2. “Campaigns pre-2009 heavily relied on TV ads, newspapers, and public rallies—largely one-way communication.”-Expert1 1
3. “With Facebook and Twitter, campaigns became more interactive and allowed micro-targeting.”-Expert 6
4. “Youth were targeted with messages about education and jobs; older voters with healthcare and pensions.”-Expert 5
5. “Feedback is now instant—likes, shares, comments inform real-time strategy.”Expert 2
6. “Printed collateral use has reduced; budgets now favor cost-effective digital outreach.” -Expert 4
7. “Now voters can scan QR codes and click selfies with candidates—this creates immersion and proximity.” -Expert 3
8. “The Sangathan Reporting and Analysis App (SARAL) revolutionized outreach.”-Expert 5
9. “AI was used to generate a posthumous video of M. Karunanidhi to appeal to voters—something unimaginable pre-2009 -Expert 7

Table No.4.34 : Results: Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA)

Theme	Sub-Themes	Observed Patterns
Campaigning Medium	Traditional vs. Digital	One-way print and TV → two-way interactive social media.
Youth-Centric Engagement	Direct, Personalized Messaging	Age-specific and interest-driven targeting using data analytics.
Technological Disruption	AI, Apps, QR Codes	Campaigning now includes mobile apps, AI-generated videos, digital designs, and interactive tools.

Theme	Sub-Themes	Observed Patterns
Feedback and Flexibility	Real-Time Strategy Shift	Campaign effectiveness gauged instantly through engagement metrics.
Cost and Reach Optimization	Budget Reallocation	Reduced print material, more expansive digital outreach—especially cost-effective for large voter bases.
Immersive Campaigning	Experiential Tools	Technologies (QR code selfies, holograms, videos) foster emotional connection and visual immersion.

Table No. 4.35 : Results: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Discourse Element	Critical Questions Explored	CDA Observations
Power & Representation	Who controls campaign narratives, and how have power dynamics shifted?	Shift from party-controlled messaging to more interactive and decentralized spaces (social media), yet still influenced by party strategy and funding.
Access and Inclusion	Has digitization made campaigning more inclusive or exclusive?	Urban youth are more easily engaged; rural voters may still face a digital divide, even with high mobile usage.

Discourse Element	Critical Questions Explored	CDA Observations
Authenticity vs. Spectacle	Are immersive tools building real relationships or staging illusions?	Tools like QR selfies, AI-generated leaders blur the line between real political engagement and performative loyalty creation.
Commercialization of Politics	How has technology changed the business of elections?	The rise of strategy consultancies, professional content production, and influencer collaboration indicates the corporatization of political outreach.
Ideological Framing	Are values still central to messaging, or has strategy become purely data-driven?	Messaging is now highly tailored, possibly diluting ideological clarity in favor of voter preference alignment.

Interpretation: Synthesizing TDA and CDA Insights

- TDA shows that political campaigning has become more data-rich, tech-enabled, and demographically customized after 2009. Campaigns today are flexible, engaging, and immersive, especially for youth audiences.
- CDA reveals a more complex transformation: digitization has shifted control, enabled commercial strategies, and introduced ethical concerns (like AI-generated posthumous messages). It also raises issues about the authenticity of political connections and access to equity in digitally led campaigns.

The transition post-2009 has redefined Indian political campaigning—from hierarchical messaging to digitally driven, segmented storytelling. While this

change has empowered campaigns to be smarter and faster, it also brings risks of misinformation, hyper-personalization, and superficial engagement.

Question No. 3

What challenges do you think political parties face in effectively reaching young voters through social media?

Summary of Expert Responses

The respondents highlighted multiple interlinked challenges in reaching youth through social media. These include:

- Platform volatility: Youth preferences change quickly.
- Leadership resistance: Many political leaders lack digital literacy or trust in social media.
- Rural-urban digital divide: Candidates in rural areas often lack understanding or capacity for digital engagement.
- Authenticity deficit: Young users easily detect inauthentic or scripted content.
- Content saturation: A flood of digital messages from various sources dilutes political visibility.
- Misinformation: Misleading content erodes trust and disengages young voters.
- Resource inequality: Smaller or older parties lack the tools and expertise for digital campaigning.

Representative Quotes from Respondents

1. “Reaching young voters through social media presents several challenges... especially the constantly shifting nature of youth preferences.”-Expert 1
2. “Leaders still resist going digital... social media is treated as a Use-and-Throw tool.”-Expert 7
3. “Rural candidates don’t understand how to leverage social media... and most politics still happens in rural areas.”-Expert 9

4. “What was once Facebook is now Instagram or Snapchat… campaigns must adapt.”-Expert 4
5. “Youth felt that the candidate's post was overly scripted and detached from their real concerns.”-Expert 6
6. “It’s hard to stand out when youth are bombarded with content from brands, influencers, and media.”-Expert 8
7. “False information spreads easily and undermines trust.”-Expert 2
8. “Older political parties don’t have the finances or skillset to compete digitally.”-Expert 10

Table No. 4.36 : Results: Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA)

Theme	Sub-Themes	Observed Patterns
Platform Volatility	Shifting Preferences	Youth move quickly across platforms; campaigns must remain agile.
Leadership Resistance	Digital Reluctance	Older leaders still mistrust or underutilize social media tools.
Rural Digital Gap	Ground-Level Disconnect	Most political action happens in rural India, but digital knowledge there is minimal.
Authenticity Issues	Relatability	Scripted, generic content fails to connect with savvy young audiences.
Message Oversaturation	Visibility Crisis	Political messages are drowned in an ocean of digital noise and influencers.

Theme	Sub-Themes	Observed Patterns
Misinformation Threat	Credibility Erosion	False narratives confuse and demotivate first-time and young voters.
Resource Disparity	Inequality in Tools & Talent	Smaller and traditional parties lack the means to produce competitive content.

Table No. 4.37 : Results: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Discourse Element	CDA Focus	Insights
Access and Inequality	Who is excluded from effective digital outreach?	Rural candidates and older party structures face systemic exclusion due to a lack of training, tools, or budget.
Power and Dominance	Who dominates the digital landscape and why?	Bigger parties and digitally-savvy campaign teams dominate, pushing out smaller players and creating asymmetrical access to digital voters.
Trust and Authenticity	What undermines the trust of young voters?	Scripted content and misinformation create a trust deficit, where youth become skeptical of political communication altogether.
Democratization vs. Manipulation	Is social media enabling political participation or commodifying attention?	Platforms empower youth engagement, but also commodify voter behavior, making campaigns dependent on engagement tactics rather than democratic discourse.

Discourse Element	CDA Focus	Insights
Institutional Readiness	Are political institutions equipped for this shift?	Many parties remain structurally unprepared, lacking digital cells, media literacy, or influencer networks to keep up with tech-savvy voter bases.

Interpretation: Synthesizing TDA and CDA Insights

- TDA reveals multiple structural and content-related challenges in engaging youth, ranging from misaligned platforms to ineffective messaging strategies.
- CDA uncovers deeper power asymmetries and systemic limitations, highlighting that despite the promise of social media, its impact is uneven, often reinforcing existing inequities and silencing smaller political voices.
- The insights suggest that youth engagement through digital platforms is not merely a technological problem, but one deeply embedded in organizational culture, generational divides, and media politics.

Political parties must undergo a strategic, cultural, and technological transformation to connect with youth voters authentically. Overcoming these challenges requires not just better content, but institutional investments in media literacy, inclusion, and trust-building.

Question No. 4

How do you assess the influence of social media on voter turnout among youth in recent elections held in 2019 and 2024?

Summary of Expert Responses

All ten expert respondents agreed that social media significantly influenced youth voter turnout in both the 2019 and 2024 general elections. This influence was seen in:

- Use of platform-specific strategies (e.g., Twitter/Instagram in 2019; Snapchat/YouTube/WhatsApp/Facebook in 2024).
- Rise of gamified and influencer-led content, creating viral participation.
- Integration of live streams, reminders, and interactive content to drive real-time engagement.
- Increased peer influence, social pressure, and community building via social media.
- Persistent information gaps and misinformation risks were acknowledged but seen as manageable.
- Notable ideological mobilization by major political parties (e.g., BJP and later INC) through grassroots digital strategy.

Representative Quotes from Respondents

1. "The #YouthForChange campaign went viral and significantly increased youth registration."-Expert 5
2. "Live streams and podcasts kept youth informed and interested in 2024."-Expert 4
3. "Voting reminders via WhatsApp made casting a ballot feel like a social event."-Expert 7
4. "The BJP used digital strategy since 2012 to build ideological unity, especially among the NRI diaspora."-Expert1
5. "Social media turned voting into a social norm—people shared it like a festival."-Expert 6
6. "Although there are still information gaps, social media helps fill them rapidly."-Expert 2
7. "The narrative 'Samvidhan Khatre Mein Hai' gained mass traction in 2024 through social platforms."-Expert 3

Table No.4.38 :Results: Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA)

Theme	Sub-Themes	Observed Patterns
Platform-Specific Influence	Election-Year Media Usage	Shift from Twitter/Instagram (2019) to Snapchat/YouTube/WhatsApp (2024)
Youth Mobilization	Gamification & Trend Creation	Quizzes, memes, and # campaigns made voting “trendy”
Peer-Based Engagement	Social Norm Activation	Youth are encouraged by peers to participate, reinforcing a sense of civic duty.
Influencer Participation	Micro-Influencers & Celebrity Outreach	Campaigns leveraged influencers for credibility and reach
Real-Time Participation	Voting Day Reminders, Live Content	WhatsApp stories and Facebook Live were used to nudge turnout on the day of voting.
Ideological Digital Strategy	Early BJP Mobilization & INC Adoption	Parties adapted social media to create coordinated national narratives
Misinformation & Gaps	Persistent Challenges	Despite influence, lack of political literacy and misinformation still concern experts
Community and Urgency	Emotional/Collective Framing	Voting is framed as a collective, urgent act of civic responsibility

Table No. 4.39 : Results: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Discourse Element	CDA Focus	Insights
Power Through Influence	Who sets the political tone online?	Influencers and algorithmic content help political parties bypass traditional gatekeepers of public opinion.
Digital Inclusion vs. Inequality	Who benefits or is left out in this new model?	Digitally literate youth benefit from better information, but digitally excluded populations remain unaware or misinformed.
Narrative Control	Are narratives top-down or participatory?	Social media makes narratives participatory (through memes and hashtags), but they are often seeded or amplified by party-funded campaigns.
Emotional Mobilization	How are emotions used in turnout strategies?	Social media fosters urgency, belonging, and peer pressure, creating a more emotionally charged political engagement among youth.
Media as Political Infrastructure	How has the media ecosystem evolved?	Social platforms now operate as parallel political institutions—shaping discourse, turnout, and voter education on a mass scale.

Interpretation: Synthesizing TDA and CDA Insights

- TDA underscores how youth engagement through social media is structured, timely, and emotionally resonant—especially via influencers, gamification, and real-time reminders.
- CDA reveals how power relations, ideological messaging, and algorithmic amplification shape political behavior, blurring the lines between civic participation and engineered persuasion.

- The digital voter is not just informed but influenced—not only by campaigns but also by peers, influencers, and content ecosystems that reward sensationalism.
- While voter turnout has improved, concerns over misinformation and unequal access to digital tools threaten the inclusiveness and integrity of this form of participation.

Social media has become a primary infrastructure for political engagement, especially among first-time and youth voters. From 2019 to 2024, its influence has intensified—turning voting into a shared digital experience and making it a performative, peer-driven act. However, ensuring balanced access, informed choices, and authentic discourse remains critical for strengthening electoral democracy.

Question No. 5

How important is it for political campaigns to create content specifically tailored for youth audiences on social media?

Summary of Expert Responses

All ten expert respondents emphatically emphasized the importance of creating youth-targeted content for political campaigns on social media. They agreed that:

- Youth today are not influenced by traditional messaging; they expect relevance, interactivity, and authenticity.
- Political campaigns must customize content formats (e.g., videos, memes, reels) to match youth-centric digital behavior.
- Social media campaigns influence political leanings and can shift election outcomes, as observed in states with strong youth engagement.
- Content should resonate with youth-specific issues (e.g., unemployment, inflation, climate change) and offer a participatory tone.

Representative Quotes from Respondents

1. “We created short videos on climate change, gender equality, and entrepreneurship—those went viral and shifted youth perception in our favor.”-Expert 10
2. “Polls and quizzes work better than speeches; they make youth feel part of the process.”-Expert 5
3. “Youth voting patterns define election outcomes. If youth support the BJP in Gujarat, they win; in Haryana, where youth are dissatisfied, they lose.”-

   Expert 2
4. “TikTok needs snappy, creative videos; Instagram needs visual flair—each platform demands its own approach.”-Expert 4
5. “Authenticity wins. Youth can spot staged content from a mile away.”-Expert7
6. “Youth engagement builds urgency and belonging—content must tap into that.”-Expert 6

Table No.4.40 : Results: Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA)

Theme	Sub-Themes	Key Observations
Content Strategy	Tailored Messaging	Youth-centric messaging is essential to resonate with digital-savvy, values-driven voters.
Engagement Tools	Interactive Features	Polls, quizzes, and videos foster participatory behavior and increase emotional investment.
Platform-Specific Design	Customization for Formats	Platform behavior (TikTok, Instagram) demands content design adaptation

Theme	Sub-Themes	Key Observations
Political Impact	State-Level Influence	Youth-driven sentiment (e.g., Mehangai/Berojgari narratives) shifts electoral outcomes.
Trust and Authenticity	Real Issues, Real Voices	Authentic, relatable content is more effective than polished PR campaigns
Emotional Resonance	Urgency and Community	Campaigns succeed when content builds collective emotion and urgency

Table No.4.41 : Results: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Discourse Element	CDA Focus	Insights
Audience-Centric Politics	Whose values shape the campaign?	Youth concerns (jobs, climate, gender) shape content; old political scripts no longer work.
Agency and Participation	Are youth passive recipients or active participants?	Content that allows for two-way interaction empowers youth and integrates them into the democratic process.
Platform Power	How do digital environments influence message framing?	Algorithms and platform norms dictate form and tone—content is shaped as much by media as by message.
Narrative Politics	How are youth issues transformed into political capital?	Campaigns adopt youth concerns into narratives (“Bahut Berojgari hai”) and amplify them to gain electoral mileage.

Discourse Element	CDA Focus	Insights
Media Literacy & Authenticity	What are the new standards for trust?	Youth scrutinize content authenticity—performative or staged content is counterproductive.
Identity Construction	How do campaigns construct the political identity of youth?	Youth are framed as progressive, alert, participatory citizens who demand transparency, not merely numbers in turnout.

Interpretation: Synthesizing TDA and CDA

- TDA reveals that tailored content is not just a communication tactic but a necessary campaign strategy. Engaging tools and platform-specific design increase youth outreach and participation.
- CDA underscores how political campaigns are being reoriented around youth consciousness, turning them into powerful ideological gatekeepers of election discourse.
- Content is no longer just informational—it is emotional, cultural, and performative. The 'shareable story' replaces the static manifesto.
- Youth today seek identity validation, authenticity, and action. Campaigns that deliver on these expectations mobilize votes and sentiment effectively.

Creating content specifically tailored for youth is no longer optional—it is fundamental to successful political communication. Such content must be: Authentic in tone, Relevant in issue selection, Interactive in format, and Platform-sensitive in design.

Campaigns that fail to localize and personalize messaging for youth risk alienation, while those that understand youth behavior and values stand to gain not just votes, but long-term political loyalty.

Here is a detailed CDA vs. TDA analysis for Question No. 6, presented in a structured academic format for dissertation inclusion:

Question No. 6

How do you foresee the Future of political campaigning evolving with advancements in technology and changes in youth behavior?

Summary of Expert Responses

All ten expert respondents agree that political campaigning in India is undergoing a technological transformation, shaped by both rapid innovation and evolving youth behavior. They predict:

- Increased use of AI for hyper-personalized voter engagement—through AI-generated videos, personalized letters, and voice messages.
- Rise of generative AI for crafting micro-targeted political messaging based on real-time data analytics.
- Integration of immersive technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) to deepen voter engagement.
- Strategic collaboration with micro-influencers, especially to build trust with specific youth subgroups.
- Ethical concerns over deepfakes and AI misuse, which could mislead youth and fracture political discourse.
- Emergence of Hybrid Campaigning Models combining digital strategies with traditional grassroots efforts for more inclusive outreach

Representative Quotes from Respondents

1. "AI-generated voices and personalized videos are already influencing how voters receive appeals—it's a game-changer."- Expert 7
2. "Deepfakes are a major threat. Youth can be misled if digital ethics are not established."-Expert 8
3. "In future, campaigns will use data to predict not just how you'll vote—but when you'll be most open to persuasion."-Expert10

4. “AR and VR will allow immersive political experiences—campaigns will be more sensory and emotional.”-Expert 3
5. “Hybrid campaigning will be the norm—one foot in the digital world, one in the grassroots.”-Expert 9
6. “Micro-influencers will hold more sway than national celebrities—they’re trusted and local.”-Expert 2

Table No. 4.42 : Results: Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA)

Theme	Sub-Themes	Key Observations
AI-Driven Personalization	Generative AI and Data Analytics	Campaigns will increasingly rely on AI to craft hyper-targeted, emotionally intelligent messages.
Immersive Technologies	AR/VR in Campaigning	Virtual rallies, interactive holograms, and immersive storytelling will enhance engagement.
Influencer Ecosystem	Micro-Influencers and Trust	Campaigns will decentralize messaging through relatable, localized influencers.
Ethical Digital Practices	Deepfake Risks and Digital Misuse	Experts flagged rising concerns over misinformation and voter manipulation.
Hybrid Strategy	Digital + Ground-Level Engagement	Future campaigns must blend online presence with traditional face-to-face outreach.
Youth Behavioral Adaptation	Platform-Specific Targeting	Evolving youth habits (short videos, platform migration)

Theme	Sub-Themes	Key Observations
		will drive campaign innovation.

Table No.4.43 : Results: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Discourse Element	CDA Focus	Insights
Algorithmic Power	Who shapes youth political exposure and how?	Algorithms are becoming the new gatekeepers of political discourse—reinforcing echo chambers or selective persuasion tactics.
Agency of Technology	Is technology a neutral tool or a political actor?	Technology is not passive—it actively constructs political reality, particularly via generative content.
Truth vs. Virality	What is the cost of persuasive innovation?	Deepfakes and AI-generated avatars blur lines between real and synthetic leaders—raising epistemic concerns.
Affective Politics	How is emotional engagement engineered?	Future campaigns aim to stimulate emotion and loyalty via immersive technologies and influencer-led narratives.
Digital Inequity	Who benefits from technological evolution?	Well-resourced parties may disproportionately benefit from AR, AI, and data infrastructure, widening gaps in campaign equity.
Youth as Hybrid Subjects	How is the political identity of youth being transformed?	Youth are recast as data points, content producers, and hyperconnected decision-makers.

Interpretation: Synthesizing TDA and CDA

- TDA reveals that technology will continue to personalize, gamify, and localize campaign strategies, keeping pace with evolving youth behaviors.

- CDA uncovers the deeper ideological implications: campaigns are not just about messaging, but about engineering perception—raising fundamental concerns over agency, manipulation, and digital citizenship.
- The future youth voter is framed as both a targeted consumer and an amplifier of campaign messages, situated at the crossroads of datafication and democratic engagement.
- Emerging practices will blur public-private boundaries, as personal data will increasingly inform public persuasion.

The future of political campaigning is poised to be:

- Data-driven, using AI to predict, persuade, and personalize.
- Immersive, utilizing AR/VR for storytelling and voter interaction.
- Ethically precarious, with the rising use of deepfakes and synthetic messaging.
- Influencer-mediated, relying on trust-based local messengers.
- Hybrid in structure, combining tech sophistication with human-grounded connection.

Political actors must evolve not only their tools but also their ethical frameworks, or risk alienating the very youth whose trust they seek to earn.

Question No. 7

In what ways, according to you, does social media facilitate political engagement among first-time voters?

Summary of Expert Responses

All ten respondents affirmed that social media plays a critical role in enabling political engagement among first-time voters. It bridges gaps in political awareness, normalizes participation, and enhances interactive communication. Respondents noted the following key dynamics:

- Fast, direct access to political information (candidates, policies, voting procedures).

- Social normalization of voting behavior through features like Facebook's "I Voted" badge.
- Peer-based political mobilization, where friends influence each other to participate.
- Platform-based microtargeting via data analytics for youth-tailored messaging.
- Interactive content (e.g., quizzes, polls) increases emotional and cognitive engagement.
- Influencer involvement encourages participation by reducing intimidation around voting.
- Misinformation remains a major concern, potentially discouraging or confusing new voters.

Representative Quotes from Respondents

1. "Youth often lack foundational political knowledge. Social media helps fill that gap where traditional methods fail."-Expert 7
2. "Voting becomes a trend—like sharing a selfie. That's how social reinforcement works today." Expert 5
3. "When your friends are posting political opinions and voting experiences, you feel the need to be part of it."- Expert1
4. "Targeted campaigns using user data make the content relatable—it speaks their language." Expert 8
5. "Influencers create comfort zones. First-time voters trust people they follow daily, not party ads." Expert10
6. "Misinformation is still a threat. One false post can ruin months of voter education." Expert 9

Table No.4.44 : Results: Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA)

Theme	Sub-Themes	Insights
Information Accessibility	Digital Literacy and Awareness	Social media offers a first entry point to political understanding for uninformed first-time voters.
Social Normalization	Peer Behavior and Trend Setting	Voting becomes socially validated; visibility encourages imitation.
Community Building	Dialogue, Support, Assurance	Platforms enable discussion, reducing political alienation.
Interactive Communication	Polls, Quizzes, Participatory Content	Young users prefer engaging formats over one-sided information streams.
Targeted Messaging	Platform-Specific and Data-Based Content	Microtargeted, visually optimized content resonates more with Gen Z and millennials.
Influencer Mediation	Relatable Role Models	Known figures guide and model voting behavior in ways parties often can't.
Risks of Disengagement	Misinformation and Disillusionment	Exposure to fake news may alienate or confuse youth, weakening turnout potential.

Table No. 4.45: Results: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Discourse Element	CDA Focus	Insights
Youth Identity Formation	How is the political identity of first-time voters shaped?	Youth political identity emerges not from civic education, but from peer dynamics and platform culture.
Platform Logic and Agency	Who controls the flow of credible vs. misleading information?	Social media platforms act as quasi-political actors, prioritizing viral over verified content.
Trust & Representation	Why do influencers succeed where political ads fail?	Trust is built through daily digital presence, not institutional affiliation—shifting the site of political authority.
Participation as Performance	Is voting a civic duty or a performative act?	Voting is becoming symbolically visible through stories, selfies, and posts—engagement now includes aesthetic expression.
Digital Exclusion	Who is left out of this participatory framework?	Youth without smartphones, literacy, or stable internet access are still excluded—creating engagement asymmetries.

Interpretation: Synthesizing TDA and CDA

- From TDA, we see that social media fosters information access, social validation, and peer mobilization, making it a powerful enabler of first-time youth political participation.
- CDA, however, reveals that this engagement is shaped by platform dynamics, peer surveillance, and algorithmic filters, raising questions of agency, authenticity, and exclusion.

- First-time voting becomes a performative and community-based event, where youth act not only as citizens but also as content creators and digital participants.
- Trust is reoriented—from institutions to influencers, from manifestos to memes—creating new hierarchies of credibility.
- The structural risks—like misinformation and digital disenfranchisement—must be addressed if political engagement is to remain inclusive and informed.

Social media has emerged as the primary gateway to political engagement for first-time youth voters in India. It not only educates and informs but also:

- Socializes voting as a peer norm
- Simplifies the electoral process through personalized content
- Amplifies emotional resonance via influencers and formats
- Facilitates community validation and civic action

However, this influence also brings platform-driven distortions, risks of performativity, and information fragility—all of which call for ethically designed digital political ecosystems to truly democratize first-time voter engagement.

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Question No. 8

What are the differentiating features you have observed in social media content from traditional communication forms and the changes in social media content strategy from 2009 to 2024 in the political communication context?

Summary of Expert Responses

All ten experts concurred that social media content in political communication has evolved significantly since 2009 and is fundamentally different from traditional media. The key distinctions include hyper-personalization, interactivity, visual orientation, and algorithmic influence.

They emphasized a shift in strategy, where political parties have moved from broadcast-style messaging to targeted, two-way digital narratives. Data analytics, influencer culture, visual content (memes, reels), and instant communication now dominate political discourse.

Experts also raised concerns about algorithm-driven echo chambers, misinformation, and polarization, contrasting it with traditional media's slower, more curated and editorially balanced approach.

Representative Quotes from Respondents

1. "Today's political marketing is deeply personal—tailored to issues that matter to individuals."- Expert 5
2. "Social media speaks with the voter; traditional media speaks at the voter."- Expert 6
3. "You post, comment, share—you're a participant now, not just an audience."- Expert 4
4. "Algorithms push what excites, not what's accurate."- Expert 8
5. "Traditional media had editorial filters—social media has emotional triggers."- Expert 2
6. "Visual content wins—no one reads long manifestos anymore."- Expert 4
7. "Echo chambers are dangerous. Voters now live in curated bubbles."- Expert 7
8. "Misinformation is faster, easier, and more damaging on digital platforms."- Expert1

Table No. 4.46 :Results: Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA)

Theme	Sub-Themes	Insights
Content Personalization	Hyper-targeted messaging	Use of AI and data analytics to deliver voter-specific content (issues, tone, format).
Visual Orientation	Short-form videos, memes, infographics	Preference for easily consumable, emotionally resonant visual formats.
User Interactivity	Likes, shares, comments, UGC	Transforms citizens from passive receivers to active participants and co-creators.
Immediacy of Communication	Instant updates and engagement	Unlike traditional media, digital allows real-time reactions and strategy shifts.
Algorithmic Shaping	Prioritization of engagement over truth	Content visibility is governed by engagement metrics rather than accuracy or civic value.
Influencer Mediation	Trust-building and relatability	Influencers are used as intermediaries between parties and youth voters.
Misinformation & Fact-Checking	Need for digital literacy and verification.	The rise of fake news prompted corrective efforts such as fact-checking initiatives.
Echo Chambers & Polarization	Filter bubbles suppress diverse views.	Algorithms reinforce existing biases, reducing cross-ideological exposure.

Table No. 4.47 : Results: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Discourse Element	CDA Focus	Insights
Reframing of Political Identity	How voters relate to political actors and messages	Voter identity is now shaped by digital interaction, personal affinity, and network behavior.
Power Dynamics	Who controls visibility and discourse framing?	Algorithms and platforms, not just political parties, now control which narratives dominate.
Credibility and Truth	What determines trust in content	Trust has shifted from institutional credibility (editors/journalists) to emotional relatability.
Fragmentation of the Public Sphere	Is there a shared political space?	Shared public forums are giving way to ideologically siloed micro-communities, eroding consensus.
Civic Responsibility	How are voters' roles redefined?	Voters are expected to be creators, fact-checkers, and amplifiers, not just informed citizens.

Interpretation: Synthesizing TDA and CDA

- From TDA, we learn that political social media content has strategically evolved to maximize engagement through personalization, visual formats, and interactivity.
- From CDA, we uncover the underlying structural shifts: power over discourse has moved from traditional institutions to digital platforms and influencers, reshaping who gets heard and what gets believed.

Table No. 4.48: Key Contrasts with Traditional Communication:

Aspect	Traditional Media	Social Media (Post-2009 to 2024)
Message Structure	One-way, generalized	Two-way, hyper-personalized
Content Creation	Party/Journalist-driven	User-generated and influencer-mediated
Pace of Dissemination	Delayed, editorial	Real-time, viral
Credibility Framework	Institutional credibility	Social proof and algorithmic visibility
Engagement Style	Passive consumption	Interactive participation
Visual Strategy	Text-heavy	Visual-first (memes, reels, infographics)
Control of Narrative	Centralized (TV/Newspapers)	Decentralized, platform-governed
Risk Factors	Slower misinformation spread	High-speed echo chambers and deepfake threats

Between 2009 and 2024, political social media content in India has transformed from traditional broadcasting to a dynamic, participatory, and algorithmically optimized model. While it empowers youth, customizes outreach, and widens participation, it also raises concerns of misinformation, fragmentation, and digital manipulation.

To sustain a healthy digital democracy, political actors must balance engagement strategies with ethical content design, platform accountability, and voter education.

Question No. 9

What changes have you observed in the political campaigning strategies of Indian political parties in recent years?

Summary of Expert Responses

All ten expert respondents agreed that Indian political parties have undergone a dramatic transformation in campaigning strategies in the last decade, particularly with the rise of digital platforms, data analytics, and influencer-driven outreach.

The key trends include:

- Shift from traditional media to digital-first strategies.
- Use of data analytics for micro-targeting and message personalization.
- Influencer engagement to connect with youth.
- Hybrid campaigning models combining online and offline methods.
- Rise of professional political consultancy and institutionalized strategy management (e.g., IPAC).

Representative Quotes from Respondents

1. “Everyone's on mobile, so campaigns have followed voters onto their screens.”- Expert1
2. “Targeted messaging today isn’t just smart—it’s expected. Analytics tell you exactly who to speak to and how.” Expert 4
3. “Influencers are the new campaigners—they speak the youth’s language better than politicians do.” Expert6
4. “Hybrid campaigning is the new normal—WhatsApp in the morning, foot rallies in the evening.” Expert 8
5. “Political consultancy has made campaigning more professional, data-driven, and goal-oriented.” Expert10

Table No.4.49 : Results: Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA)

Theme	Sub-Themes	Insights
Digital Transformation	Mobile-first outreach, social media shift	Political parties prioritize digital platforms for broader, real-time reach.
Data-Driven Campaigning	Micro-targeting, voter profiling	Data analytics help in tailoring content to demographics (e.g., youth, seniors, rural).
Influencer Engagement	Youth-centric communication	Influencers make political messaging more relatable and accessible.
Hybrid Campaigning	Offline + online integration	Combining rallies, door-to-door outreach, and digital narratives for comprehensive coverage.
Professionalization	Consultancy firms like IPAC	Rise of full-scale political strategy firms leading structured, research-backed campaigning.

Table No.4.50 : Results: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Discourse Element	CDA Focus	Insights
Reconstruction of Political Strategy	Campaigning has become a techno-political exercise, blending human connection with data science.	Traditional charisma is now supplemented (or replaced) by digital dashboards and segmented narratives.
Democratization or Digital Divide?	Greater reach does not mean equal access.	Rural and smaller parties may lack the capacity for high-tech campaigning, exacerbating disparities.
Centralization of Narrative Control	Through data and consultants, messaging is more centralized and scripted.	Although outreach feels personal, the strategic architecture is tightly controlled.
Commodification of Influence	Social legitimacy is outsourced to influencers.	Influencer participation redefines political endorsement into a commercial-like brand association.
Strategic Rationalization	Decision-making in campaigning is now performance-metric driven.	Winning has become more of a science: optimized, quantified, and benchmarked by firms and AI tools.

Interpretation: Synthesizing TDA and CDA

- From TDA, we identify that political campaigning has become more personalized, tech-integrated, and influencer-amplified, combining both strategic sophistication and visual engagement.
- From CDA, we understand that this shift also brings power asymmetries, centralized control of narrative, and potential ethical concerns. The rising dependence on external consultancies and platforms reconfigures power within political organizations.

Table No.4 51: Key Transformative Shifts in Campaign Strategy

Before (Pre-2010)	After (2024 and Beyond)
Door-to-door campaigns	Geo-tagged micro-campaigns via apps
TV & Newspaper ads	Influencer-led reels, memes, and podcasts
Slogans and rallies	Algorithm-optimized, platform-specific narratives
Candidate-driven narratives	Data-driven content managed by consultancies
Mass public speeches	Interactive live streams and hyper-local WhatsApp messaging

Indian political campaigning is no longer just about mass mobilization and slogans—it is about micro-targeting, digital storytelling, influencer integration, and real-time feedback loops. While these innovations boost strategic efficiency and engagement, they also raise critical questions about data ethics, transparency, and the hollowing of grassroots spontaneity.

Question No. 10

Which is the most prominent evolving political campaigning trend in your opinion?

Summary of Expert Responses

The responses from ten experts reveal a convergence on several major evolving trends in political campaigning. While digital technology and data analytics top the list, there is considerable emphasis on influencer engagement, multimedia communication formats, and the growing centrality of authenticity and narrative control.

Key responses:

- 6 experts prioritized digital tech and data-driven campaigning as the most prominent.
- 7 experts highlighted the rise of influencers and celebrity endorsements.
- 5 experts pointed to narrative-setting, particularly for manipulating or framing issues.
- 6 experts emphasized the power of multimedia formats (videos, visuals, memes).
- 5 experts identified authenticity as a rising standard of campaign effectiveness.
- 4 experts forecasted the growing use of AI, VR, and AR as immersive campaign tools

Representative Quotes

1. "Data is the new battleground—parties win not with slogans but with segmentation." Expert 4
2. "In 2024, we saw influencers replacing spokespeople. Their video narratives shaped public emotion." Expert 6
3. "Narrative warfare is a reality. Every party now aims to set the national conversation." Expert 3
4. "Young voters don’t read manifestos—they watch reels. Multimedia isn’t optional—it’s essential." Expert 5

5. "The most effective campaigns feel authentic. Anything that feels fake will instantly be rejected." Expert10

Table No. 4.52 : Results: Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA)

Evolving Trend	Details
Data-Driven Campaigning	Micro-targeting, predictive modeling, personalized outreach
Influencer & Celebrity Endorsements	Reaching youth via trusted digital figures
Narrative Construction	Framing issues, controlling discourse, and symbolic messaging
Multimedia Formats	Use of reels, memes, shorts, podcasts, and visual storytelling
Authenticity as a Metric	Emphasis on relatable and genuine communication
Immersive Tech (AI, VR, AR)	Use of generative content, holograms, and AR experiences

Table No. 4.53: Results: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Discourse Element	CDA Focus
Technopolitical Shift	Political discourse is increasingly managed by algorithms, dashboards, and audience modeling tools.

Discourse Element	CDA Focus
Influencer-driven Engagement	Legitimacy transferred from party figures to third-party personalities, disrupting traditional hierarchies.
Mediatization of Campaigning	Politics becomes content—designed for consumption, not debate.
Narrative Weaponization	Control over the narrative equals control over emotional and cognitive framing.
Authenticity Paradox	While authenticity is demanded, it's often strategically manufactured.
Virtualization of Presence	Immersive tech simulates proximity—politicians can ‘appear’ everywhere without actually arriving.

Interpretation: Synthesizing TDA and CDA

From TDA, we see that the future of political campaigning lies in technological immersion, micro-targeted messaging, and influencer strategy. The use of emotionally resonant formats and the strategic packaging of content for youth audiences is now central.

From CDA, we note the power realignments: political parties are outsourcing legitimacy to influencers, narratives are often constructed rather than organic, and digital authenticity is increasingly manufactured, raising ethical concerns.

Table No.: 4.54 Comparative Insights Table

Trend	Frequency	Strategic Function	Risks / Concerns
Digital Tech & Data Analytics	6	Personalization, efficiency	Over-targeting, privacy erosion
Influencer Engagement	7	Youth outreach, emotional trust	Loss of institutional voice, manipulation
Narrative Setting	5	Agenda control, emotional framing	Echo chambers, misinformation
Multimedia Communication	6	Format-driven engagement	Oversimplification, performative content
Authenticity in Messaging	5	Builds trust, counters skepticism	Strategic 'Fake authenticity'
AI/VR/AR Integration	4	Immersion, innovation	Ethical gray areas, deepfake misuse

The most prominent evolving trend is not a single tactic, but a convergence of technological immersion, influencer legitimacy, narrative control, and personalization. Campaigns are becoming:

- Smarter (via data),
- More immersive (via tech),
- More performative (via multimedia), and
- More personal (via influencers and authenticity narratives).

However, the democratization of engagement is not without risks of manipulation, distortion, and ethical compromise.

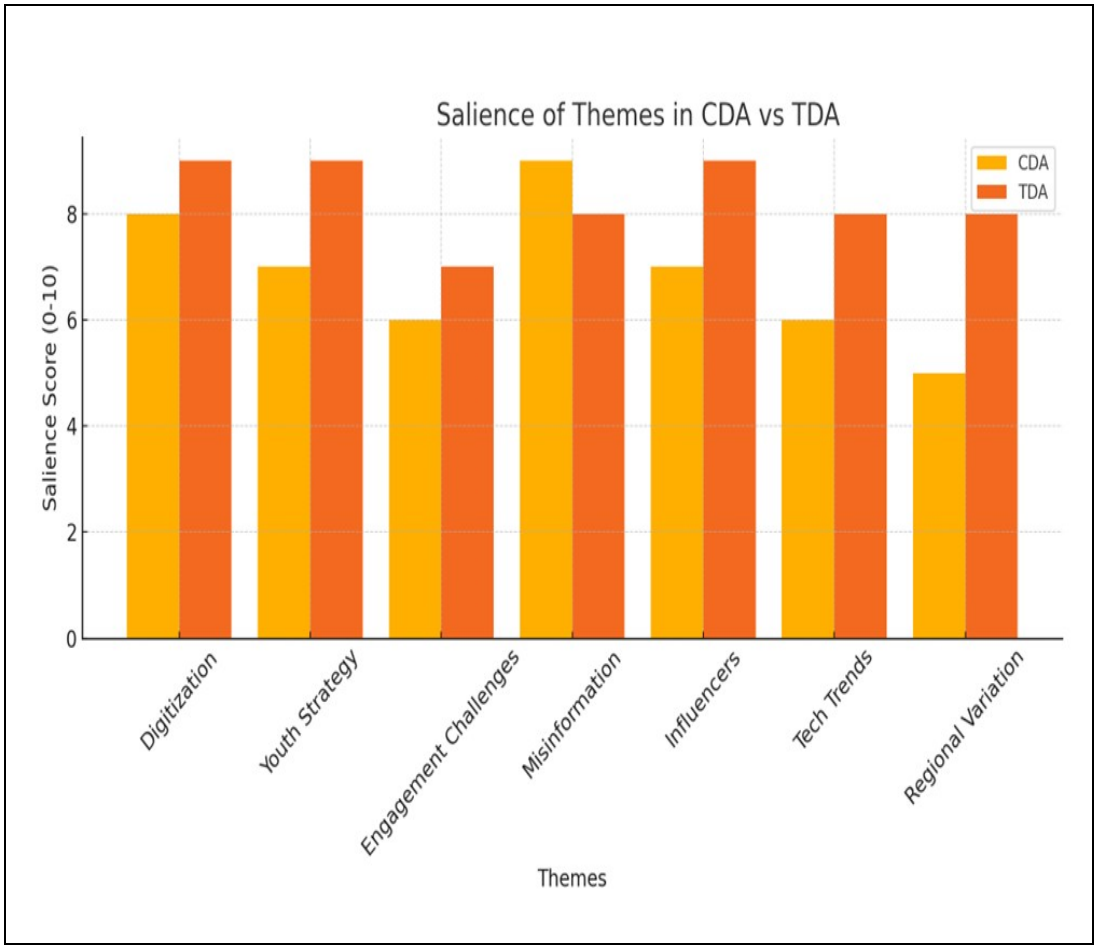
Table No: 4.55: Discourse Analysis Matrix

Theme	Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)	Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA)
Digitization of Political Campaigning	Real-time interaction and power asymmetry	Hybrid strategies dominate; apps and AI are used widely
Youth-Centric Content Strategy	Performative authenticity and visual hegemony	Gamified, interactive formats win youth attention
Challenges in Engaging Youth	Skepticism and discourse resistance	Fatigue, authenticity issues, education gaps challenge outreach
Misinformation and Ethical Concerns	Manipulation and narrative control	Disinformation threatens trust and civic participation
Influencers and UGC	Decentralized authority, disruption of traditional power	Virality driven by peer relatability and organic sharing
Tech Innovations & Trends	Technological spectacle and immersive control	AR/VR and predictive analytics lead hyper-personalized narratives
Regional & Demographic Variations	Localized discourse and linguistic identity	Hyper localization, dialect use, and tailored targeting succeed

The above s table presents a side-by-side comparison of key themes using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA) to highlight how youth political engagement is shaped in India's digital landscape.

CDA uncovers deeper power dynamics, showing how technology reinforces inequalities, influencers disrupt traditional authority, and political language manipulates narratives. In contrast, TDA reveals practical trends—such as the rise of hybrid campaigns, interactive content, peer-driven virality, and region-specific strategies—emphasizing how political outreach adapts to youth behavior and platform use. Together, the table demonstrates that while CDA critiques the ideological and structural implications, TDA captures the everyday forms of engagement, offering a holistic understanding of how digital political campaigning operates across both discourse and practice.

Figure No. 4.15 : Salience of Themes in CDA Vs.TDA



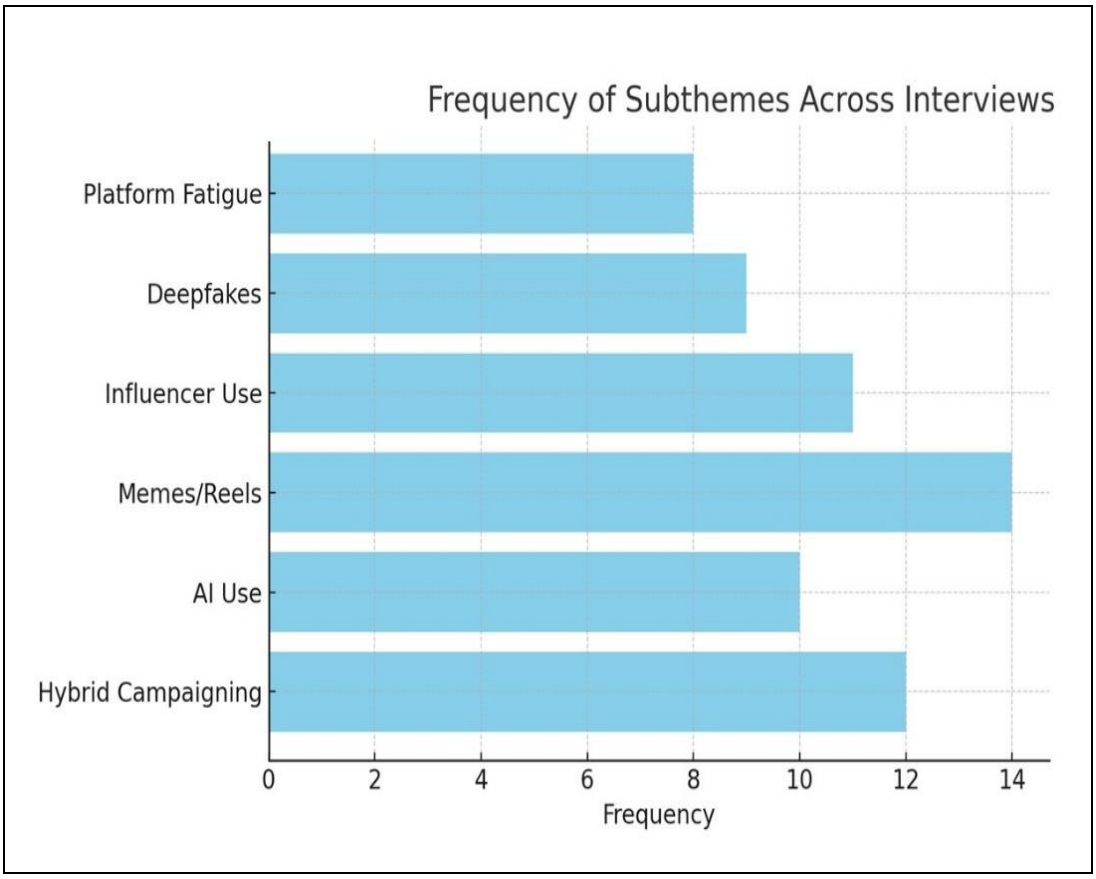
This bar chart compares the salience of themes across two qualitative frameworks—Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA)—based on a 0–10 scale.

Each bar pair represents how prominently a particular theme was emphasized in each approach:

- Digitization, Youth Strategy, and Misinformation appear as highly salient in both CDA and TDA, though slightly more so in TDA, suggesting these topics were both structurally significant and frequently discussed in interviews.
- Engagement Challenges and Tech Trends show relatively balanced salience, though again TDA scores slightly higher—indicating these were more practically observed phenomena than ideologically critiqued topics.
- Influencers scored highest in TDA, highlighting the pragmatic importance of peer-driven content, while CDA also acknowledges their role in disrupting traditional power hierarchies.
- Regional Variation was more salient in TDA than in CDA, showing that local dialects and demographic targeting were discussed in practice, but were less critiqued in terms of power or discourse.

Basically, this chart underscores that while TDA focuses more on observed patterns of behavior and strategy, CDA brings out the ideological and power-laden dimensions of the same themes—offering a complementary analytical view of youth political engagement in the digital era.

Figure No. 4.16 :"Frequency of Subthemes Across Interviews"



This horizontal bar chart titled **"Frequency of Subthemes Across Interviews"** illustrates how often specific subthemes appeared across the expert interviews conducted for the study. This chart emphasizes the centrality of digital formats and technologies in modern political campaigning, while also acknowledging growing concerns over misinformation and audience disengagement.

Key observations include:

- "Memes/Reels" is the most frequently cited subtheme, appearing in 14 instances, indicating that short-form visual content is a dominant strategy in youth-targeted political communication.
- "Hybrid Campaigning" (12 mentions) and "AI Use" (11 mentions) also score highly, reflecting the strong emphasis on combining digital and on-ground methods, and the integration of AI tools like chatbots and personalized messaging.

- "Influencer Use" (11 mentions) shows the growing importance of leveraging social media personalities for authenticity and outreach, especially among youth audiences.
- "Deepfakes" (9 mentions) and "Platform Fatigue" (8 mentions) highlight emerging ethical and behavioral challenges, such as misinformation risks and diminishing engagement due to content overload or distrust.

Table No. 4.56 : Expert Interview Themes Summary

Interviewee	Key Themes Identified
Expert 1 & 7	Digitization, Misinformation, Engagement Fatigue
Expert 2& 9	Youth-Centric Strategy, Influencer Impact
Expert 3 & 6	Platform Fragmentation, Deepfake Risk
Expert 4,10	Regional Messaging, Civic Literacy
Expert 5 & 8	Hybrid Campaigning, Algorithmic Targeting

4.11 Discussion and Implications

The intersection of technology and discourse forms the crux of contemporary political campaigning, where tools of communication are no longer passive conduits but active shapers of power, perception, and participation. Modern political campaigns leverage artificial intelligence (AI), social media platforms, influencers, augmented/virtual reality (AR/VR), and data analytics not just to communicate messages but to strategically construct voter identities, curate emotional narratives, and drive youth mobilization on an unprecedented scale. This technological integration has enabled hyper-personalized, real-time interactions with the electorate, making political communication more dynamic and responsive. Young voters are increasingly drawn into participatory spaces through engaging formats like memes, challenges, reels, and live sessions—formats that foster a sense of ownership and relevance in the democratic process.

However, these advances also bring significant risks and limitations. The same algorithms that personalize content also create echo chambers, intensifying polarization and limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints. The rise of AI-generated content and deepfakes challenges the very nature of political truth and accountability, while resource disparities mean that smaller parties or rural constituencies may lack the digital infrastructure to compete equally. This duality—where technology simultaneously democratizes and disciplines—underscores the ambivalent role of digital discourse in shaping political realities.

Given this context, several real-world implications emerge. From a policy standpoint, there is an urgent need for clear and enforceable frameworks that govern the ethical use of AI, data, and digital campaigning tools, especially during election periods. Regulations must address transparency, consent, misinformation control, and accountability in digital political content. In terms of campaign strategy, political actors must move beyond superficial digital spectacles and invest in authentic, inclusive narratives that resonate with youth not just visually, but ideologically. This also requires tackling youth mistrust and disengagement, which often stems from scripted messaging and manipulative tactics.

Equally critical is the domain of media literacy. Young voters must be equipped with the analytical skills to discern credible information, challenge disinformation, and engage constructively in online political spaces. Schools, civil society, and election commissions must play a proactive role in embedding digital citizenship education in public discourse. Finally, if wielded responsibly, interactive technologies can become catalysts for participatory democracy—deepening civic responsibility, enabling dialogue across divides, and amplifying marginalized voices. However, this potential will only be realized if digital spaces are regulated, inclusive, and rooted in ethical communication practices.

4.12 Linkages to Literature and Theory

The present study draws on three foundational theorists—Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, and Manuel Castells—to contextualize the intersection of youth political engagement, social media campaigning, and digital discourse within a broader theoretical landscape.

1. **Jürgen Habermas – Public Sphere Theory**

   Habermas's notion of the public sphere as a space for rational, inclusive, and deliberative debate finds both relevance and contradiction in the context of social media. While platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube have arguably democratized access and given youth a voice in political discourse, they have also fostered fragmented echo chambers where algorithmic filtering prioritizes engagement over reasoned dialogue. Campaigns often become spectacles of performance—relying on memes, influencers, and emotionally charged content—that weaken the deliberative quality of political participation. In essence, the digital public sphere risks becoming performative and polarizing, rather than discursive and integrative.

2. **Michel Foucault – Discourse and Power**

   Foucault's emphasis on discourse as a mechanism of power offers a critical lens through which to examine how digital campaigning controls knowledge, visibility, and truth production. In the age of AI-driven messaging, curated influencer narratives, and algorithmic content curation, power is not only exercised through what is said but through what is shown, repeated, and allowed to trend. Technologies such as deepfakes, targeted advertisements, and synthetic campaign avatars act as technologies of control, subtly shaping political perception and agency. Youth engagement, while appearing autonomous, is often situated within discursively structured fields that guide their choices and beliefs.

3. **Manuel Castells – Network Society**

   Castells's concept of the network society aligns well with the decentralized and hyper-personalized nature of youth political engagement seen in this study. Social media enables young individuals to form fluid political identities, engage in cause-based activism, and mobilize through peer-to-peer sharing rather than top-down mobilization. Political campaigns now function through horizontal networks rather than traditional vertical hierarchies, relying on data-driven strategies, user-generated content, and real-time interaction. This evolution reflects Castells' vision of a society where information flows and digital connectivity shape both individual consciousness and collective action.

Together, these theories enrich the analytical framework by linking empirical findings with critical reflections on the changing dynamics of power, participation, and communication in the digital age.

Key Terms and Definitions

1. **Virtual Rallies**: An online rally is a modern-day rally organized by political parties or candidates to reach out to voters who are mainly through the internet or live streaming platforms, which helps to reach an even bigger audience. This includes communication during the rallies, with participants able to ask and answer questions and express their views, therefore creating a feeling of togetherness and participation even when everyone is miles apart.
2. **Hybrid Campaign:** From a political perspective, a hybrid campaign is an approach where a combination of conventional campaigning techniques, such as meetings and advertisements, is used alongside digital social techniques like posts and adverts on the Internet. This is because political parties are able to reach different groups of people with ease, encourage engagement, and, most importantly, shift with the changing trends in the way elections are communicated.
3. **Accidental Influencers:** Influencers are people who impact social media positively by sharing information that is mostly about their personal lives or content that they don't necessarily gain anything from posting. This helps them build an audience that eventually transforms into paying sponsors because their authenticity is appreciated among the users.
4. **Algorithmic Influence:** The term algorithmic influence denotes the ability of algorithms to shape decisions and behaviors of individuals, especially in the digital context. Is it by creating and suggesting certain types of content that determines the opinions and behaviors of people, more often than not, encouraging participation but discouraging individual and rational thinking.
5. **Platform Fatigue :**Platform fatigue, especially when it comes to social media, is a state of mental and emotional exhaustion that comes from overuse and information overload, and can result in one feeling completely overwhelmed and spent.

6. **Strategic 'Fake authenticity':** Strategic 'Fake authenticity' is when brands or people pretend to be more authentic and relatable to build trust or engagement, rather than actually being authentic.

7. **Echo Chamber :** Echo chambers are social environments where individuals only encounter information that reinforces their existing beliefs, leading to increased polarization.

Abbreviations

1. SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

2. AI: Artificial Intelligence

3. VR: Virtual Reality

4. AR: Augmented Reality

5.**CDA:** Critical Discourse Analysis

6.TDA : Thematic Discourse Analysis

Chapter 5

Findings, Suggestions, Conclusion, and Recommendations

5.1 Summary Observation

The Present study 'Changing Trends in Indian Political Communication Through the Use of social media and its Effectiveness, with Special Reference to Youth Voters' has studied, analyzed, and illuminated the profound impact of social media on political engagement among the youth in India and the changing and emerging new trends in the Indian political communication campaigning since last few years mainly from the year 2009 to 2024.

As political communication has become increasingly dependent on social media and its marketing tools, it has influenced how political messages are transmitted and received, thereby ushering in an era of political communication practice based on direct interaction between political actors and citizens.

The overall findings from the present study's quantitative and qualitative research reflect that social media serves as a tool for information dissemination, facilitates political mobilization, enhances political awareness, and encourages active participation among young voters. Moreover, there has been a significant shift from traditional political campaigning methods to tech-mediated campaigning methods.

This research combined quantitative survey data from 342 urban youth respondents across Pune, Nashik, and Kanpur with qualitative insights from a multidisciplinary panel of expert interviews. Together, these methods captured both the measurable trends in youth political engagement through social media and the nuanced interpretive perspectives on strategic, ethical, and technological shifts in Indian political campaigns.

Nevertheless, the present study also underscores critical challenges such as the spread of misinformation, the risks of societal polarization, and the pressing need to enhance digital literacy among youth.

In conclusion, social media has emerged as a vital tool in political communication, which offers both opportunities and threats. However, it is

instrumental in enhancing democratic engagement, empowering youth, and mobilizing them. Most importantly, it helps sway voters and influence their decisions.

The recommendations provided in the study aim to address these challenges and harness the full potential of social media in fostering informed and engaged citizenship among youth voters.

5.2 Findings on the role of social media, technology, and Political campaigning in India (2009–2024)

The Influence of Social Media on Political Awareness:

Social media has enhanced political awareness among young people, with many respondents indicating that they rely on these platforms for news and updates about political events, candidates, and policies. This shift in information consumption patterns affects how political messages are crafted and delivered.

Changes in Political Campaigning Methods:

There has been a considerable change in campaigning methods in India between 2009 and 2024. This is attributed to two major factors changing over time: technology and the demographics of the voters.

In 2009, a lot of campaigns were based on print and electronic media such as television. Hence, the parties concentrated on grassroots-level outreach with the constituents.

However, within five years, i.e., in 2014, Facebook and Twitter turned out to be leading players in political battlegrounds in the representation of young voters through active digital campaigns. The use of data analytics also came into place, which helped in targeting particular groups in the population, and this was mostly evident during the 2019 general elections.

Moreover, the recently held 2024 Lok Sabha elections saw the rise of Political management consulting firms that are increasingly engaged in developing more complex and appealing narratives, while enhancing the use of technology to drive voter participation.

In this context, the evolution from application-based traditional forms of campaigning to practice-based, data- and digitally-driven approaches signals a shift in political communication strategies in India, making them more engaging and dynamic.

Technology-driven solutions predominate the Political Campaigning Scenario :

In India, the political scenario has drastically changed due to technology-based solutions in political campaigning between 2009 and 2024 onwards.

5.3 The new dynamics of political communication: AI, Deepfakes, and the New Role of Political Communication Strategies

One of the main findings from the expert interviews and the case studies in the 2024 election pertains to the rise of AI and deepfakes in today's political communication. Nevertheless, experts have consistently warned that while AI-enabled tools are making it more effective than ever for campaigns to target young voters, they have also brought with them severe threats to democratic integrity in the form of deepfakes, super-personalized persuasion, and unregulated algorithmic campaigning.

AI-Driven Personalization and Voter Targeting

With the application of digital campaigning in 2014 and the concentration of big data analytics in the 2019 election in India, the 2024 general elections saw the complete assimilation of AI algorithms into Indian campaigns.

AI-driven voter segmentation enabled major parties to target profiled lists of urban youth by socio-economic concerns (jobs, education, climate anxiety, and unemployment) and serve them micro-targeted advertising across platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

Political consultants interviewed for this study highlighted that "AI-backed predictive models" were used to determine **which type of content persuaded**

first-time voters the most—whether short reels, memes, motivational appeals, or regional-language narratives.

A senior expert noted, *"In 2024, campaigns no longer guessed; they knew which districts would respond to a jobs-promise reel at 8 p.m. or a caste-based mobilization video at 9 a.m."*

These algorithmic personalization capabilities have made political communication no longer a mass-broadcast rhetoric but a micro-tailored persuasion strategy, which has deepened youth outreach but engendered ethical issues surrounding manipulation.

AI-Powered Campaigning -Chatbots and Mobile Applications

AI also enabled round-the-clock engagement with voters through **specialized applications and bots**. The **NaMo App** and **Jansuraaj App**, frequently cited by the experts, integrated **chatbots and volunteer management dashboards**. This ensured that digitally active youth could, at any hour,

- Interact with automated campaign assistants,
- Register for rallies,
- Receive instant fact sheets, or
- Even chat in regional languages with AI-powered interpreters such as *Bhashini*.

AI-enabled mobile apps and Chatbots were heavily used by the major political parties in the Indian general elections 2024 for voter outreach and campaign management:

FEATURES: The NaMo app underwent a massive revamp under the BJP, utilizing the most advanced technology services available, including AI-enabled chatbots that conversed simultaneously in various regional languages. These bots let voters inquire about candidates, polling places, and government schemes.

Linguistic and Chatbot Innovations

India's linguistic diversity necessitated advanced linguistic AI tools, so Bhashini, an AI platform developed through a Public-Private-Partnership model between the government and private tech companies, played a key role in AI-powered real-time translation and transcription. This provided parties with the ability to create region-specific campaign content and chatbots that could chat in local languages, including Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, and Kannada.

The **Indian National Congress (INC)** utilized the **Vijay Sankalp app**, enhanced by AI analytics to track volunteer activities, micro-target campaigns, and personalize messages based on user data. Their chatbot, named **"Sankalp Mitra,"** answered voter queries on the party manifesto and facilitated registration for campaign events with dynamic real-time updates.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) implemented the **"Parivartan Mitra"** app with chatbots. This uses AI-powered conversational agents to influence first-time millennial voters by utilizing interactive quizzes, surveys, and feedback to analyze their concerns and tailor campaign messaging to hit closer to home.

Leveraging Big Data analytics, natural language processing (NLP), and machine learning algorithms, these AI-powered apps facilitated proactive 24/7 voter engagement to multiply the campaign's reach and turned political communication more interactive and accessible for tech-savvy youth.

These new media platforms enhanced the feeling of accessibility to and engagement with political leaders among the young voting population, reflecting survey results that 98.9% of youths would be interested in candidates who used social media.

Voice Bots

AI-driven chatbots and voice cloning tools were widely used at scale to automate voter interaction. These robots gave instant, multilingual replies to questions from voters and transmitted tailored political messages. The robotexts, which used A.I.-generated voices that sounded human, represented a way to scale personalized outreach, especially to first-time and rural voters.

Yet experts warn that the increasingly heavy movement towards automation runs the risk of alienating the young voters, as, when authentic human interaction is replaced by responses from a script-reliant chatbot, the call by young and – increasingly – other age brackets, for authenticity as well as merely slick narratives, is all the more pressing.

5.4 Deepfakes and their emerging role in evolving Political Campaigning :

Although AI technologies brought innovation to campaigning, the 2024 elections also marked a sharp rise in the misuse of **deepfake videos**—hyper-realistic AI-manipulated videos that depicted prominent political figures saying or doing things they never actually did.

Dozens of deepfake videos, thousands of times across platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram, remained online in the days leading up to voting. Fake news, or 'Deep Fakes,' A widely shared fake video, for instance, depicted a front-running opposition candidate making motormouthed, insulting comments about a large religious community that were later revealed to be a deep fake, used to stoke communal tensions.

Another deepfake targeted the youth vote, with a young, popular youth leader speaking passionately in favor of controversial policies that ran strongly counter to his publicly stated positions, while several first-time voters who had much exposure to short-form video content on social media content-sharing platforms like YouTube or Instagram, swayed by the video, discussed its veracity with suspicion.

These deepfakes uncovered deep linguistic diversity and regional variability, often with dubs or subtitles in local languages to reach different linguistic groups, and capitalizing on patterns of youth engagement with visual vernacular content.

Experts have noted that such deepfakes **exacerbate polarization and misinformation**, undermining the authenticity and trust that young people place in social media as a source of political information. Given the youth

demographic's preference for **short, engaging audiovisual content**, deepfakes pose a profound risk to the political socialization process.

5.4.1 Use of Deepfake Technology in the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections in India

Now, deepfake technology, which involves the use of AI systems to create hyperrealistic manipulated videos, has been increasingly weaponized in India to influence the country's critical 2024 Lok Sabha elections, producing videos of political figures saying or doing things they never actually did. The deepfake videos were spread to try to change voters' views, specifically focusing on the digitally obsessed youth demographic.

Fake Videos of Bollywood Celebrities

One such was a deepfake video of popular Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh that went viral on chat platforms like WhatsApp as well as image-blogging site Instagram. The edited video features Ranveer apparently speaking against the BJP government and supporting the opposition Congress party. This video had misrepresented his true views; he had previously been a proponent of Narendra Modi. The actor’s office publicly denounced the video and issued complaints that effectively underscore how deepfakes can be deployed to poison both political discourse and celebrity image. Other deepfake videos featured celebrities such as Aamir Khan endorsing political parties or politicians, who were also fake and later exposed.

Artificial Resurrection of Political Leaders

In India, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party in Tamil Nadu has approved the use of an AI-generated hologram of their late leader, Muthuvel Karunanidhi, who passed away in 2018. A deepfake rendering of his speech addressing current political challenges during the 2024 campaign. This act, though controversial, was framed as a homage, a hope to draw young voters and bring the historical party narratives to the foreground for current politics.

Communal and Inflammatory Deepfakes

Several deepfake videos emerged depicting politicians uttering incendiary communal remarks that they never made. For example, videos went viral in the United States that showed BJP ministers or opposition leaders accused of making provocative statements aimed at fanning communal resentment. These videos were released during the crucial pre-poll period, often circulated on WhatsApp groups and regional social media platforms, and aimed to influence rural and youth voters by capitalizing on social tensions.

Deepfakes Exploiting Youth's Video-Watching Behavior

The deepfakes they found had been produced in shorter video formats, such as Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts, with the intent of delivering a message suited to the volume and style in which young voters were consuming information. These videos were also sometimes dubbed or subtitled in local languages like Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, or Telugu, thereby amplifying their spread and credibility among youth from linguistic minorities. This increased viral spread served as misinformation at scale, obfuscating informed choice. Youtube.

Outside of one-off deepfake clips, political consultants deployed AI-generated junk at scale: deepfake videos for micro-targeting. While some used those technologies responsibly to connect with voters, bad actors also used them ferociously to weaponize fake truths against opponents. The dual-purpose AI deepfakes are particularly problematic for election integrity and democratic confidence.

Implications for Political Communication

The use of deepfake videos in the 2024 election campaign demonstrates the following AI developments:

On the plus side, AI improves customized voter outreach and engagement — especially among the youth voting bloc that is used to videos.

On the downside, deepfakes undermine the trustworthiness of political information, increase polarization, and offer a conduit for disinformation campaigns that can unfairly change voter behavior.

Urgent imperatives to address this have been called for by experts and electoral watchdogs in the form of tighter regulatory frameworks, improved media literacy, and disclosures from political parties on the use of AI.

This specific framing, grounded in actual occurrences and expert fears, will add an element to your thesis chapter by depicting the real-world consequences that deepfake technology has in a modern and pivotal electoral space.

Challenges of Deepfakes and the Trust Crisis

One of the most horrifying developments outlined by the experts concerned deepfakes during the 2024 campaign. Although deepfake technology had been disseminated in a more limited fashion during past state elections, in the 2024 general election, there were several viral examples of AI-altered videos imitating rival leaders.

One expert on digital ethics observed, *"In at least half a dozen constituencies, deepfake videos went viral on WhatsApp groups in the final week of polling. Each falsely portrayed leaders making inflammatory remarks—these were timed carefully to disrupt last-mile decision-making."*

These manipulations were aimed at **polarizing young voters, many of whom rely on short, shareable content via Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts**, and WhatsApp forwards.

Survey findings already indicated that **40.6% of youth consider social media more reliable than newspapers or television**. This high level of trust, coupled with the visual realism of deepfakes, created a perfect storm where many young voters carried misinformed beliefs into the **voting booths**.

Experts emphasized that deepfakes represent a **qualitatively new challenge** in political communication: unlike traditional misinformation (text or memes), deepfakes exploit the visual and intuitive trust of young audiences raised on **video-centric media consumption**.

5.5 Role of Political Consulting Firms Using AI in the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections

Political consulting firms changed the game entirely by using advanced AI-enabled tools in the campaign strategy in the Lok Sabha elections held in 2024. These companies utilized sentiment analysis, machine learning, and data analytics to improve the accuracy and effectiveness of political communications.

Real-Time Voter Mood Analysis

Analysts working for consultancies utilized sentiment analysis driven by artificial intelligence to sift through vast amounts of social media data, news, and digital forums. And because of that, they were able to encapsulate subtle voter feelings — happy, mad, or indifferent — across differences in demographic makeup and places to pitch it in real time. Campaign strategists were able to shape their message to what the electorate wanted to hear by appealing to the general mood of the public.

Micro-Targeting Based on Behavioral Profiling

Sophisticated machine learning models allowed agencies to micro-segment voters by age, gender, caste, religion, region, and past voting patterns. This behavioral tracking allowed campaigns to send highly personalized content through targeted digital advertising, WhatsApp-based campaigns, and their telephone outreach. For example, stories that address farmers' worries were tweaked to suit Uttar Pradesh seats, while youth-targeted messages on jobs and education found their echo in cities.

5.6 Impact and Interrelationship of AI and Youth

Among the different age groups, the youth relate more to visual and interactive political content, especially videos (18.1%) and reels (9.8%), according to the data of the study. That makes AI and deepfakes especially impactful on youth political behavior:

On one hand, AI tools deliver **youth-relevant, localized, and engaging content**, increasing political awareness and accessibility. On the other hand, deepfakes and AI-manipulated hyper-targeting erode trust, making young

people more vulnerable to manipulation during a critical stage of their democratic socialization.

A political consultant interviewed described it aptly: *"AI is like fire for campaigns—it can cook your food or burn your house. In 2024, some parties used it to connect youth with civic engagement apps, while others used deepfakes to poison the well of political trust."*

5.7 Strategic Implications for Campaigns

From the perspective of campaign strategy, the integration of AI and deepfakes creates several long-term challenges:

Escalation of a Campaign Arms Race – Parties that fail to adopt AI risk irrelevance, while those that adopt it without ethical safeguards risk delegitimizing democracy.

Redefining Credibility in Political Communication – With the growing presence of deepfakes, the traditional assumption that "seeing is believing" has collapsed, particularly among young people. Campaigns must therefore prioritize **transparency, fact-checking alliances, and media literacy**.

New Role of Regulatory Institutions – Experts strongly argued for the **Election Commission of India to introduce pre-election digital content verification protocols**, independent fact-checking partnerships, and mandatory **AI-disclosure norms** for political parties. Transparent labeling of AI-generated messages was considered essential for restoring credibility.

Demand for Ethical AI Use – Experts advised that parties should publicly commit to **AI ethics charters**, ensuring that tools like chatbots and recommendation engines are used for **education and engagement**, not fear-mongering or disinformation.

To conclude, the youth survey findings, coupled with the expert evidence from the 2024 general elections, reveal that the issue of AI and deep fakes has changed the trajectory of Indian political communications and political processes forever. For young voters, who drive the digital agenda, as both consumers and co-creators of content, AI is both a potential route to deeper

engagement and a menace to making informed decisions. This means we ought to see political campaigns evolve towards responsible innovation with AI: that is to say, leverage the efficiency of AI without risking its abuse. Unharnessed, deepfakes and manipulative targeting would undermine trust in electoral politics itself.

5.8 Ethical Considerations and Challenges

AI methods offered potent instruments for canvassing and campaign optimization, but the relationship between techniques to analyze data and shape sentiment prompted troubling questions about privacy, misinformation, and algorithmic bias. Analysts emphasize that codes of practice are necessary to ensure transparency and accountability in the future of AI-powered political advertising.

The key political consulting agencies working on the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections in India effectively utilized cutting-edge AI-based solutions, such as sentiment analysis, to inform their campaign strategies. Companies such as Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC), Leadtech, and Mindshare Analytics used big data analytics to gauge voter mood and tailor-make campaigns. They employed AI to instantly gauge the public mood across different demographic sections — age, gender, caste, region — and to micro-target political narratives on digital platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp. These companies utilized Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based technologies for voter profiling, predicting behavior, and personalizing content, enabling mass participation, especially among the youth. In addition, there were campaigns that used chatbots and AI-powered voice synthesizers for engaging with voters.

This algorithmic, data-oriented, and AI-driven approach was a turn to the professionalization of technology-driven campaigning, which has had its beneficial effects on political mobilization, but also raised ethical concerns about privacy, disinformation, and algorithmic discrimination, which require common regulations and interventions in digital literacy.

5.9 Key Findings- Discussion on Youth Engagement in Political Communication

Political communication by youth involves the active use, interaction, and attempt to manipulate media and political messages by young people in the process of democratization. Such engagement in the digital era is more and more facilitated by social media, which has now emerged as a vitally important site of political communication, debate, and mobilization.

Based on survey data from 342 urban youth in Pune, Nashik, and Kanpur, the study generates new insights into the ways in which young Indians engage with social media in the political domain: how, how much, and what effect these new digital environments had on their political attitudes and behaviors.

Social Media Usage Frequency and Platform Presence

Most youth (92.5%) report using social media at least daily, with almost 79% using multiple times a day (Table 4.5). Such a high level of user engagement imparts extensive exposure to political content and experience for interaction with digital media, which inculcates a strong base for political participation.

In reference to social media platforms, Facebook, YouTube, and Telegram stand out as the most often used among the responses of the young (Table 4.7). This platform preference is significant as it will influence the type of political content young people will see and how they engage with it. The dominance of Facebook and YouTube, in particular, explains why these platforms are perceived as highly influential in shaping political opinions (see Section 4.6 Hypothesis 5).

Media Trust and Information Sources

When asked about the most reliable media sources, 40.6% of respondents chose social media, followed by internet/websites (26.2%) and newspapers (15.1%) (Table 4.6). This indicates that social media is not just a place for casual information, but a trusted channel for political knowledge and updates among youth. This trust is significant, as it underlines the platform's role in opinion formation and voter education.

Political Content Engagement and Exposure

Data shows that 73.5% of respondents encounter political content weekly or more frequently on social media, with nearly 49% facing such content daily (Table 4.10). Further, 64% have come across political campaigns or advertisements on these platforms (Table 4.11). This continuous exposure suggests social media's saturation with political messaging targeted at youth, which likely contributes to their political awareness and mobilization.

Moreover, 98.9% of youth report being likely to engage with political campaigns or candidates who actively use social media (Table 4.15). This emphasizes the interactive and participatory expectations of young voters, who prefer political actors to be accessible and responsive via digital channels.

Types of Political Content Preferred

Videos (18.1%), user-generated short reels (9.8%), and articles (10.1%) are the top content formats engaging youth on social media (Table 4.7). This preference for audiovisual and interactive content reflects a shift away from traditional print or static political communication towards dynamic, relatable, and peer-influenced formats. The popularity of user-generated content particularly underscores the youth's desire for authenticity and participatory content.

Purpose and Satisfaction of Social Media Use

The leading reasons for youth using social media are entertainment (26.4%), social networking (18.6%), and news (18.2%), and political information accounts for 10.1% (see Table 4.8). Political is not the most popular use-case; however, the fact that a sizable fraction wants political info reflects the secondary nature of social media as a political education gateway, but not disproportionately powerful nonetheless.

Satisfaction with social media in fulfilling user purposes is reported by 69% of respondents (Table 4.9), indicating these platforms are largely successful in meeting diverse youth expectations, including political engagement.

Influence on Voting Behavior and Political Opinions

A slight **majority of respondents** (52%) believe that political campaigns on **social media are influential**, 30.4% believe they are somewhat influential, and 21.6% believe they are very influential (Table 4.12).

This is consistent with the results of hypothesis tests showing that **social media influences in making voting decisions (63% agreement)** and having political opinions (60% agreement) at significant levels ($p < 001$).

Gender differences were identified, **with males rating political campaign influence significantly higher than females** (mean difference ~1.89, $p < .001$). This prompts further inquiry into tailored campaign strategies that address gender-specific modes of political engagement.

Further, **frequent social media users (multiple times daily or once per day) perceive higher influence from political campaigns compared to infrequent users** ($p = 0.033$, ANOVA). This is consistent with exposure theory, suggesting that the frequency of such encounters with political content develops opportunity for attitude formation and change.

Accessibility and Campaign Responsiveness

A substantial majority (74.3%) believes that social media has made political campaigns more accessible to young people, reflecting the democratizing effect of digital tools (Table 4.16). Nearly half (47.7%) rated political parties as effective or very effective in responding to their messages and grievances (Table 4.19), indicating some level of interactive dialogue that enhances political empowerment.

However, 68.7% have never been directly approached or targeted by political parties (Table 4.14), suggesting room for improving personalized digital outreach to fully harness youth engagement potential.

Political Party Presence and Youth Engagement Online

The Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), Indian National Congress, and Aam Aadmi Party rank as the top three political parties whose social media campaigns youth find most dynamic and whose social media pages they

most frequently visit (Tables 4.17, 4.18). This reflects the online visibility and appeal of these parties among digital-savvy youth.

5.10 Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the study, the following recommendations emerge for political actors, policymakers, and civil society:

1. **Enhance Platform-Specific Strategies**
    - Focus resources on high-influence platforms (Facebook & YouTube) with parallel development for emerging formats (Instagram reels, WhatsApp broadcasts).
    - Optimize content for youth-preferred formats — short videos, interactive polls, memes.
2. **Invest in Personalized Digital Outreach**
    - Close the "visibility vs. personalization" gap by employing AI-driven segmentation ethically to send direct, relevant messages to youth audiences.
    - Integrate micro-influencers for localized credibility.
3. **Address Gender-Specific Engagement Patterns**
    - Develop campaign themes, narratives, and formats that resonate with both male and female voters, acknowledging statistically significant perception gaps.
4. **Strengthen Political Digital Literacy**
    - Train candidates and party workers — especially in rural constituencies — in effective and ethical use of digital tools.
    - Recognize that digital readiness varies by geography and party size.
5. **Embed Ethical Safeguards against AI Misuse & Deepfakes**
    - Introduce pre-election **digital content verification protocols** and collaborative monitoring with platforms.

- Maintain transparency about AI use in personalized campaigns.

6. **Integrate Hybrid Campaigning for Inclusion**
    - Balance sophisticated online targeting with grassroots physical engagement to avoid alienating digitally excluded youth.
7. **Promote Media Literacy for Voters**
    - Civil society and election commissions should implement programs, teaching youth how to verify sources and avoid echo-chamber entrapment.

Civil society and electoral commissions should develop outreach programs to combat misinformation, educate young people on the ways to verify sources, and avoid the trap of echo chambers.

A multi-platform strategy that tailors content to the unique characteristics of each platform.

Conclusion

The study *"Changing Trends in Indian Political Communication Through the Use of Social Media and its Effectiveness, with Special Reference to Youth Voters"* has illuminated a decisive shift in electoral strategies between 2009 and 2024. The findings confirm:

- **Social media is now the central arena** for political communication with youth, surpassing traditional media in trust, reach, and influence.
- **Youth engagement is interactive and participatory** — not merely passive consumption — but is conditioned by platform choice, usage frequency, and content authenticity.
- **Technological sophistication** (AI, analytics, immersive formats) offers unprecedented targeting and persuasion capabilities but introduces **ethical risks** related to misinformation, deepfakes, and privacy.
- **Engagement inequities** persist along party-resource and rural-urban divides, challenging the inclusivity of digital political participation.

The **quantitative evidence** demonstrates clear correlations between usage patterns, platform preferences, and political influence perception, while **qualitative insights** reveal underlying strategic, cultural, and ideological shifts in digital campaigning.

In essence, youth are at the epicenter of India's evolving digital political ecosystem both as targets and as active participants. The challenge ahead is to ensure that this transformation strengthens democratic participation without compromising **ethical integrity** by fostering transparency, authenticity, inclusivity, and informed civic engagement.

To sum, the present study finds that youth engagement through social media is transforming Indian political communication—making it more interactive, targeted, and technologically sophisticated, yet also more vulnerable to ethical risks. Political campaigns must evolve towards data-informed, ethically responsible, and youth-relevant digital strategies. Post-2009 trends show that those willing to strategically invest in digital innovation, authentic dialogue, and participatory content have a considerable advantage in mobilizing the youth vote.

Key Terms and Definitions

1. Microtargeting: Microtargeting is a data-driven approach where the audience is broken down into particular segments for specific messages. Such strategies are especially significant in political campaigns – individual voters or niches of very few voters are analyzed, and custom-made contents are delivered, hoping to raise the interest of the voters as well as persuade them via means of 'Social Media' networks or email marketing.

2. 'Social Media': 'Social Media' is the term used for activities and applications that help individuals create, exchange, and share information regarding content in the form of text, images, and even videos, and communicate with individuals. Sites like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram encourage instant collaboration and interaction, which are critical elements for socialization, advertising, and politics.

3. Political Advertising: Political advertising is the use of paid media channels, such as television, radio, print, and digital platforms, to promote political candidates, parties, or issues to influence public opinion and voter behavior. It aims to shape perceptions, highlight campaign messages, and mobilize voters, often employing targeted ads based on voter demographics and interests to maximize impact.

6. Political Discourse: Political discourse involves oral or written communication about politics, encompassing discussions, debates, and narrations of governance, policies, ideologies, and political actions. This involves how politicians, the media, and the public express views and frame issues of politics, shaping public opinion and establishing lines of influence over policy and decision-making. Political discourse may often occur across a variety of forums, such as speeches on Social Media, news, and public forums, often reflecting the broader social and cultural nuances of political engagement.

7. Public Opinion: Public opinion essentially refers to the attitude, beliefs, and opinions shared by the general public regarding a particular social, political, or economic issue. Public opinion may be affected by the dynamics of media, communication in politics, cultural values, or perhaps even personal experience.

Public opinion largely defines politics, policies, or even an election's outcomes, as most governments and politicians would take it into consideration while implementing policies or formulating strategies.

8. Misinformation/ Disinformation: Misinformation refers to false or inaccurate information that is shared, regardless of intent to deceive. It can result from misunderstanding, misinterpretation, or lack of fact-checking.

The other side is disinformation, an intentional spread of false information to manipulate, mislead, or deceive the audience. In politics, disinformation is often used with the intent to sway public opinion, create confusion, or undermine opponents. Misinformation and disinformation run quickly through Social Media and digital platforms, making it challenging to provide accurate information.

10. Real Time: Real-time refers to the process and communication of data or information exactly when it happens, usually without considerable delay. There are numerous contexts in which, by technology, communication, and analytics, real-time systems allow any user to instantly or almost instantly obtain access and send responses to information. For example, real-time updates in 'Social Media' enable the posts, comments, and interactions to be seen just as they occur. Other fields, such as finance or emergency response, require real-time data to make quick decisions based on current conditions.

11. Fact-Checking: The process of verification of information and truthfulness of information, statements, or claims is known as fact-checking, which is the system used in various areas, such as journalism, political discourse, or public statements.

Fact-checking implies researching and cross-checking sources, evidence, and data to determine whether the information given is factual or misleading. Fact-checking further promotes transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making processes by verifying correct information and tracing misinformation or disinformation. It is, therefore, an essential practice in this day when a lie goes without saying instantly, most especially through Social Media.

12. Artificial Intelligence: Artificial Intelligence refers to the creation of computer systems that perform tasks or functions similar to those that a human would perform. Such tasks include reasoning, problem-solving, understanding natural language, identifying patterns, and making decisions.

13. Augmented Reality (AR): Augmented reality (AR) is a technology that superimposes digital information on the physical environment, like images, sounds, or data, enhancing user perception of their surroundings

14. Virtual Reality (VR): Virtual Reality (VR) is immersive technology to create a simulated environment, equipping users to experience and interact with a three-dimensional digital space as if they were physically present within it. VR requires the use of specialized hardware, such as VR headsets and controllers, to engage the senses—sight, sound, and sometimes touch—creating a realistic experience.

15. Data Analytics: The term data analytics refers to the practice of systematically analyzing the data in hand in order to identify useful information, such as trends and patterns. The process entails collecting clean data, analyzing it, and interpreting it, among many statistical and analytical techniques employed to achieve this.

16. Digital Native: The term was coined by American writer and educationist Marc Prensky. A Digital Native is a person who is predominantly comfortable with using technology for communication and was born after the 1980s.

17. Digital Shift: A digital shift refers to the process of transitioning from traditional analog or physical methods to digital ones.

18. User-Generated Content: It is popularly called 'UGC.' This is the original content published on the Internet by the users and consumers of the Internet.

19. Filter Bubble: Filter bubbles refer to the algorithm-driven personalization of online content that limits exposure to diverse viewpoints.

20. Echo Chambers: Echo chambers are social environments where individuals only encounter information that reinforces their existing beliefs, leading to increased polarization.

22. Predictive Analytics: Predictive analytics is a type of data analysis that uses statistical models and machine learning algorithms to predict future trends and outcomes based on historical data. It is used to identify patterns and relationships in data that can be used to forecast future events.

23. Deepfakes: Deepfakes are highly realistic, artificially generated media content that can be used to manipulate or deceive people. They are created using deep learning techniques, which allow AI models to learn from large datasets of real images or videos and generate new content that is indistinguishable from the original.

Deepfakes can be used for malicious purposes, such as spreading misinformation, blackmail, or impersonating individuals.

24. Immersive Technologies: Immersive technologies create a sense of presence or immersion in a virtual or simulated environment. They are used in various industries, including gaming, education, healthcare, retail, and architecture.

26. Hyperlocal: This refers to information, services, or content that is specifically focused on a very small, well-defined geographical area, often addressing the unique needs and concerns of the local community. This term can apply to various contexts, including news, marketing, and service delivery.

27. Political Narratives: Political Narratives are structured stories used by political leaders to communicate their visions, values, and goals, shaping public opinion and influencing political behavior. They frame issues in relatable terms, fostering a sense of collective identity and mobilizing support for policies.

Abbreviations

1. **UGC – User Generated Content**
2. **SNS:** Social Networking Sites
3. **PIB:** Press Information Bureau
4. **SEM:** Search Engine Marketing
5. **AI-** Artificial Intelligence
6. **VR-** Virtual Reality
7. **EC-** Election Commission

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Chapter 1

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Chapter 2

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Chapter 3

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Covering Letter for Youth Survey Questionnaire

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a survey that aims to explore how political campaigns utilize social media and digital platforms to engage young voters in India.

This survey seeks to understand young people's perspectives on political campaigning strategies, their influence on political awareness, opinions, and voting behavior. Your responses will provide valuable insights into how youth engage with political content and the role of digital media in shaping political participation.

All information collected through this survey will be treated with strict confidentiality and used exclusively for academic research purposes. Your identity will remain anonymous and will not be disclosed in any reports, publications, or presentations derived from this study.

Please respond to each question thoughtfully and honestly, sharing any relevant experiences or opinions. Your participation is crucial to the success of this research, and your contributions are greatly appreciated.

Thank you for taking the time to assist with this important study.

Sincerely,
Researcher's Name
Institution
Contact Information

Background Information
Please provide the following details:

- Name (optional):

- Gender:

- Age Group:

- Educational Qualification:

- Occupation/Student Status:

- City/Region:

Appendix A

Questionnaire for the survey of the Youth respondents

Q1.How frequently do you use social media platforms?

a. Multiple times a day
b. Once a day
c. Few times a week
d. Rarely

Q2.Which media do you find most reliable from the following:

a. Newspapers
b. Television
c. Radio
d. Internet- websites
e. Social Media

Q3. On which of the following Social Media platforms are you present?

a. YouTube
b. Facebook
c. LinkedIn
d. Twitter
e. Instagram
f. Pinterest
g. Vimeo
h. Any Other

Q4 . What content present on Social Media engages you the most?

a. Audio Video content
b. News snippets
c. Online Contests
d. Compendium of Speeches
e. Live Programmes /Watch Party
f. Webinars
g. Any other

Q5. State the basic purpose for which you use Social Media.

a. Entertainment
b. News
c. Social Networking
d. Professional Networking
e. Political Information
f. Learning & Certification

Q6. Do you think that Social Media fulfills your purpose of using it .

a. Yes
b. No

c. Not Sure

Q 7. How often do you come across political content on social media?

a. Daily

b. Weekly

c. Occasionally

d. Rarely

Q8.Have you ever come across political campaigns or advertisements on social media platforms?

a. Yes
b. No
c. Not Sure

Q9.Who is using social media platforms most extensively? Please tick the checkboxes.

a. Business organizations
b. Celebrities
c. Political Parties
d. Non-government organizations
e. Central Government
f. State Government
g. Local Government
h. Any O

Q10.How influential do you find political campaigns on social media in molding your opinions or decisions as a voter?

a. Very influential

b. Somewhat influential

c. Neutral

d. Not influential

e. Not sure

Q11. Do you believe social media platforms provide unbiased information about political candidates?

a. Yes

b. No

c. Not sure

Q12.Have you ever been directly targeted or approached by political parties or candidates on social media platforms?

a. Yes

b. No

c. Not sure

Q13. If yes, how did you feel about being approached through social media?

a. Positive

b. Neutral

c. Negative

d. Not applicable (if answered "No" to the previous question)

Q14.Are you more likely to engage with a political campaign or candidate who actively uses social media platforms to interact with the public?

a. Yes, definitely

b. Yes, to some extent

c. No

Q15 Do you believe social media has made political campaigns more accessible to the youth?

a. Strongly agree

b. Agree

c. Neutral

d. Disagree

e. Strongly disagree

Q16 . Which of the following Political parties, according to you, displays its Social Media in the most dynamic & creative manner?

a. Bhartiya Janta Party

b. Congress I

c. Samajwadi Party

d. Bahujan Samajwadi Party

e. National Congress Party

f. Akali Dal

g. Aam Aadmi Party

h. Biju Janta Dal (BJD)

i. Shiv Sena

j. Trinamool Congress (TMC)

k. AIDMK

l. Any other

Q17.Do you engage with or visit the social media platform of a political party? Please tick of the following:

a. Bhartiya Janta Party

b. Congress I

c. Samajwadi Party

d. Bahujan Samajwadi Party

e. National Congress Party

f. Akali Dal

g. Aam Aadmi Party

h. Biju Janta Dal (BJD)

i. Shiv Sena

j. Trinamool Congress (TMC)

k. AIDMK

l. Any other

Q18. How effectively do Political parties respond to your queries and grievances?

a. Very effective

b. Effective

c. Not Effective

d. Ineffective

Q 19. Do you think that Political parties only become active on social media during the Elections

a. Agree

b. Disagree

c. Not

Q 20. What are your overall thoughts on the ways political campaigns use social media and digital platforms to reach young voters like you? Please share any experiences, opinions, or suggestions, or trends you have noted, and how these campaigns influence your political engagement or decisions.

Appendix B

Questionnaire 2 for the Interview of the Experts

Purpose of the Interview: This interview aims to gather expert insights on the evolving role of social media in political campaigning, particularly how it influences youth voter engagement in India.

The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of the strategies employed by political parties and the implications for future elections.

All responses will be kept confidential and used solely for academic research purposes. Participants' identities will not be disclosed in any reports, articles, or publications resulting from this study besides the thesis, and will be strictly used for academic purposes.

Please answer each question as thoroughly as possible, providing examples where applicable. Your insights are invaluable to this research, and I appreciate the time and expertise you have provided.

2. Background Information of the Expert Respondent

- **Name:**
- **Position:**
- **Organization:**
- **Years of Experience/ Field :**

Appendix B

Questionnaire 2 for the Interview of the Experts

Topic: "A Study of Changing Trends in Indian Political Campaigning Through Use of Social Media with Reference to Youth Voters."

Questionnaire - Open-Ended Questions

1. How do you perceive the role of social media in shaping political narratives among youth voters in India?
2. What are the key differences you've observed in political campaigning strategies before the year 2009 and after the acceleration of social media?
3. What challenges do you think political parties face in effectively reaching young voters through social media?
4. How do you assess the influence of social media on voter turnout among youth in recent elections held in the years 2019 and 2024?
5. How important is it for political campaigns to create content specifically tailored for youth audiences on social media?
6. How do you foresee the future of political campaigning evolving with advancements in technology and changes in youth behavior?
7. In what ways, according to you, does social media facilitate political engagement among first-time voters?
8. According to you, what are the prime changes you have observed in social media content in the context of political communication?
9. What changes have you observed in the political campaigning strategies of Indian political parties?
10. According to you, which is the most prominent evolving political campaigning trend?
11. If you can cite any particular examples of political campaigns that were technology-mediated or aligned with emerging political campaigning trends, please share them.

Please provide any extra information or insights that may be relevant to this study. For example, if there are specific case studies or personal experiences that illustrate your points, we would love to hear about them.

I value your feedback on this questionnaire and interview process. If you have suggestions for improvement or additional topics we should consider exploring, please share your thoughts. Thank you for your valuable input and participation!

“A Study of Changing Trends in Indian Political Campaigning Through Use of Social Media with Reference to Youth Voters”

A Thesis

SUBMITTED TO THE

TILAK MAHARASHTRA VIDYAPEETH, PUNE

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In Subject

Journalism & Mass Communication

Under the Board of Modern Sciences & Professional Skills Studies



DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION

September 2025

80_Recommendations

6.1 Suggestions

1. **Enhancing Digital Literacy**: Educational programs need to be undertaken at different levels to promote digital literacy among youth. These programs should focus on developing critical thinking skills, media literacy, and the ability to distinguish between accurate and inaccurate information, as well as identify credible information sources. By empowering young voters with these skills, they can emerge as more informed citizens, engage in responsible political decisions, and participate in discussions.

2. **Promoting Ethical Communication**: Political parties and candidates should establish ethical guidelines for social media use, emphasizing transparency and accountability. This includes disclosing funding sources for political advertisements and refraining from spreading misinformation. Ethical communication practices can build trust between political actors and constituents.

3. **Encouraging Diverse Engagement**: Political actors should adopt a multi-platform approach to engage youth effectively. Utilizing various social media platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter, allows for tailored messaging that resonates with different segments of the youth demographic. Engaging content that is visually appealing and interactive can enhance participation and interest.

4. **Combating Misinformation**: Strategies to combat misinformation should be prioritized. These include partnerships with fact-checking organizations, promoting credible sources of information, and encouraging users to verify information before sharing. Social media platforms can also play a role by implementing algorithms prioritizing credible content.

5. **Fostering Two-Way Communication**: Political communication should emphasize two-way dialogue between political actors and youth voters. Encouraging feedback, conducting polls, and hosting live Q&A sessions can create community and engagement, allowing young voters to feel heard and valued.

6. **Leveraging Influencer Collaborations**: Political parties should consider collaborating with social media influencers who resonate with youth to amplify their messages. Influencers can help bridge the gap between political actors and young voters, making political content more relatable and engaging.

7. **Monitoring and Evaluating Strategies**: Monitoring and evaluating social media strategies are crucial to understanding their effectiveness. Political actors should analyze engagement metrics, audience feedback, and changing trends to refine their approaches and ensure they remain relevant to youth voters.

8. **Imparting Specialized Training to Political Communication Experts:** A specialized training programme should be designed to train responsible political communication experts and strategists.

By implementing these suggestions, political actors can enhance the effectiveness of social media in political communication, fostering a more informed, engaged, and active youth electorate in India.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study on **Changing Trends in Indian Political Communication Through Use of Social Media & its Effectiveness with Special Reference to Youth Voters**, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the role of social media in political communication and engagement among youth:

Enhance Digital Literacy Programs

Implementation of Educational Initiatives: Governments, educational institutions, and civil society organizations should collaborate to develop and implement comprehensive digital literacy programs for youth. These programs should focus on critical thinking, media literacy, and the skills necessary to evaluate the credibility of information sources.

Workshops and Seminars: Regular workshops and seminars can be organized in schools and colleges to educate students about the responsible use

of social media, the importance of verifying information, and understanding the implications of misinformation.

Establish Ethical Guidelines for Political Communication

Develop a Code of Conduct: Political parties and candidates should establish a self-regulated code of conduct for social media use that emphasizes transparency, accountability, and ethical communication practices. This includes clear guidelines on the dissemination of information and the prohibition of misinformation.

Training for Political Communicators: Train political communicators on ethical, social media practices, including engaging with youth responsibly and effectively.

Adopt a Multi-Platform Engagement Strategy

Utilize Diverse Social Media Platforms: Political actors should diversify their presence across various social media platforms, such as Instagram, X, and YouTube, to reach different segments of the youth demographic. Tailoring content to the unique characteristics of each platform can enhance more active engagement.

- **Create Engaging Content**: Develop visually appealing and interactive content, such as infographics, videos, and live streams, to capture the attention of young voters and encourage their participation in political discussions.

Combat Misinformation Proactively

- **Partnerships with Fact-Checking Organizations**: Political parties and social media platforms should collaborate with fact-checking organizations to identify and address misinformation promptly. This can help promote credible information and reduce the spread of false narratives. In India, we already have a few like Fact-checking, Shakti, PIB, Boom, etc.

- **Promote Media Literacy Campaigns**: Launch media literacy campaigns encouraging users to verify information before sharing it. These campaigns can utilize social media to reach a broad audience effectively.

Foster Two-Way Communication

- **Encourage Feedback and Interaction**: Political actors should create opportunities for two-way communication by actively soliciting feedback from youth voters. This can be achieved through polls, surveys, and interactive sessions where young voters can voice their opinions and concerns.
- **Host Live Q&A Sessions**: Organize regular live Q&A sessions on social media platforms where political leaders can engage directly with youth, answer their questions, and address their concerns in real time.

Leverage Influencer Collaborations

- **Engage Influencers for Political Campaigns**: Political parties should collaborate with social media influencers who resonate with youth to amplify their messages. Influencers can help make political content more relatable and engaging, increasing youth participation. A strong monitoring of the content processed by Influencers is required.
- **Support Grassroots Movements**: Encourage and support grassroots movements led by youth leaders and influencers who can mobilize their peers around critical political issues.

Monitor and Evaluate Social Media Strategies

- **Data Analytics for Engagement Metrics**: Political parties should invest in data analytics tools to monitor engagement metrics and assess the effectiveness of their social media strategies. This data can inform future campaigns and help refine messaging.

  Regular Feedback Loops: Establish regular feedback loops to evaluate the impact of social media initiatives on youth engagement and political participation, allowing for continuous improvement in strategies.

Promote Civic Engagement Initiatives

Organize Civic Engagement Campaigns: Political parties and organizations should launch campaigns encouraging youth to participate in the

political process, such as voter registration drives and awareness programs about the importance of voting.

Create Incentives for Participation: Develop initiatives that recognize and reward youth for active participation in political activities, such as contests or recognition programs for those who engage in civic duties.

By implementing these recommendations, political actors can significantly enhance the effectiveness of social media as a tool for political communication, fostering greater engagement and participation among youth voters in India. These efforts will contribute to a more informed, active, and empowered electorate, ultimately strengthening the democratic process in the country.

6.3 Scope for further research

The scope for further research is extensive and has many dimensions. Future investigations could look into the sustained impacts of social media on youth participation in politics, considering how tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc., will influence young voters in the construction of political dynamics and mobilization strategies. There could also be research about the concern for ethics and the deceptiveness of the content, fueled by the algorithms of distribution, for instance, in politics. Other studies might look at the use of integrated campaigning, as in the use of both physical and virtual campaigning, and how this influences 'turnout' and 'engagement informs across age categories'. Moreover, a cross-country comparison where countries are trying to use social media for political campaigns will also help teach political parties in India in this electronics-based campaigning era. Overall, this area of research is most likely to advance our comprehension of the interplay between politics and technological innovations aimed at democratic engagement.

Research is a scientific procedure used to seek answers to unanswered questions related to a phenomenon, thereby contributing to the body of knowledge.

Proposed Model for Further Research

The researcher has proposed to study the interrelationship between the latent constructs for further research. A probable model could be created for further research that examines the interplay between four key latent constructs: Social

Media (SM), Political Communication Efforts (PCE), Persuasion Power (PP), and Voting Decisions (VD).

This interrelationship hypothesizes that Social Media positively influences both Political Communication Efforts and Persuasion Power, which in turn impact Voting Decisions. Additionally, it posits that Social Media has a direct effect on Voting Decisions. At the same time, Political Communication Efforts and Persuasion Power serve as parallel mediators in the relationship between Social Media and Voting Decisions.

This research could offer valuable insights into optimizing political strategies in an increasingly digital landscape, paving the way for more effective voter engagement techniques.

6.4 Conclusion

These observations collectively highlight the transformative role of social media in political communication among youth in India. While social media presents significant opportunities for enhancing political engagement and awareness, it also poses challenges that must be addressed to ensure a healthy democratic process. The insights gained from this study can inform future strategies for political communication, highlighting the importance of creativity, ethical practices, and a commitment to fostering informed and active participation among young voters.

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