

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE VOTING BEHAVIOUR OF THE PEOPLE OF TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT

Social media has emerged as a significant platform for political communication between the people, between the people and their leaders, and between the people and the government. It is an undeniable fact that, in recent years, social media has had a profound influence on the voting behaviour of the people, especially among youth and first-time voters, as evident from recent Assembly and Parliamentary elections. On the other hand, political leaders, by joining hands with political consultants, have reached both urban and rural masses through social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and LinkedIn, thereby significantly influencing voters in favour of their political parties. Further, social media platforms have become effective tools for disseminating political information, shaping public opinion, and enhancing voter participation during elections.

This targeted exposure not only affects how individuals perceive candidates and political issues but also influences their likelihood to vote and their choices in elections. Emotional appeals within social media campaigns are found to be highly effective in mobilizing support and influencing undecided voters. By analysing these digital dynamics, the study highlights how modern democracies are being transformed by online behaviour. Understanding the psychological effects of social media is becoming increasingly essential for political strategists, candidates, and voters navigating the rapidly evolving information environment. The present study seeks to investigate the increasing influence of social media on the voting behaviour of the people and its role in the entire electioneering process, with a particular focus on the behavioural processes that shape political perceptions and political decision-making during elections. Further, the study explores how social media contributes to the formation of echo chambers by reinforcing existing beliefs and filtering information through personalised content.

KEYWORDS: *Social Media, Voters Transformation, Electioneering, Digital Democracy.*

Article History

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INTRODUCTION

The history of social media began with the rise of internet for one to one digital communication. In 1970s the real application emerged as a services to share the messages, videos, photos, and blog writing. Social Media is about expanded the network beyond the content sharing. In 21st century the emergence of the internet creates a new essence of mass media substantially. Information can be exchanged at high speed, broader scope as a results people access extreme of opinion and consume bunch of notion. Social Media plays a vital role in transition of people's day to day life. It becomes a third hand of individual, from shopping, eating to official information, education and political conscience. Unlike the print media, the

emergence of social networking sites like Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter enhance the news, journalism, public opinion, corporate influences, political analyst. Basically, the accessible is less expensive and easy to relate with any category of the people also that expose anybody to publish and access the information.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The entertaining content is a term used to describe the planned integration of different culture, entertainment modalities and media dynamics by the politicians to improve their vote bank. The gap between political action and entertainment are faded away, which make it as “Politainment” – the combination of politics and entertainment. The transformation of political discourse into a political communication form (Zamora-Medina, 2023; Klinger, Kreiss, & Mutsvairo, 2023; Salazar, 2023; Cervi, Tejedor, & Blesa, 2023; Gonzalo, Medina, & Rebolledo de la Calle, 2021; Bosshart & Hellmüller, 2009). This brings wide area of impact of political communication.

This study is important because it can be used to develop ways to involve more young people in political process as well as improve democratic institutions during the current digital era. The study by Dmytrenko (2024) shows how countries with development and emerging democracy countries participate in politics through digital platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram. It formulates the kind of role play in the protests and movements that deliberately improves the public policy through the civil disobedience and forms of participatory democracy, it may be risk or opportunities. This study highlights the differences between developed countries and developing democratic countries on the digital engagement especially among the young people that how they focus on problems and take part in activities linked to social transnational movements as young people develop individually, politically also aware globally as well.

Conversely, the political content in social media brought out many challenges rather than opportunities. Besides providing a platform for people to share information easily, social media is the space enables misinformation and biased content being spread quickly, which could lead to fragmented public opinion and a loss in credibility towards reliable news sources. Also the algorithm of social media will most likely to generate an echo chamber where people are surrounded by views that matches their regular belief. The study of Olaniran (2020) says upon this issues, because the reliability of social media as a political tool will be considered when users cannot find the difference between reliable news and sensationalized stories.

The study of Alodat 2023, shows that social media highly involves political participation. Users frequently engages in digital activism, join petition, and attend rallies or protest as a results political material being used. Easy accessible encourages more participation, it allows people to give their opinion, concern on public matters and promotes decision making in favour of people.

According to Matthes (2022), social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have interactive features that encourage a sense of agency and inclusion that traditional media cannot match, allowing users to actively participate in political discourse.

However, the study of Sianturi, 2024 says that the social media creates nuance. The techonology makes information more widely, but facilitates the spread of misleading information and encourages echo chambers, where people are more likely to receive content that confirms their preconceived notions. Instead of bringing with viewpoints, it makes chaos over the information, this phenomenon can polarize individuals and reinforce preconception. Despite of these challenges, social media continues to significantly influence political knowledge and engagement by enabling real time

interaction with political events, and democratic participation. The social media fosters the engagement and education among youth, it navigates carefully to mitigate the risk of polarization and misinformation in political discourse.

Tucker et al. (2017) conducted a comprehensive analysis of how social media platforms were increasingly used to influence political behavior, particularly through the dissemination of misinformation. Their study explored the mechanisms by which **digital disinformation campaigns**—especially those originating in authoritarian regimes like Russia—shaped public opinion and electoral outcomes in democratic societies. The literature reviewed in their work highlights a growing body of evidence showing that social media serves as a powerful tool for manipulating voter preferences by **exploiting algorithmic targeting, echo chambers, and cognitive biases**. Research included in the review emphasizes how misinformation spreads faster and more broadly than factual content, particularly during politically charged moments such as elections.

Tucker et al. also drew upon case studies and empirical data to show how foreign actors strategically crafted messages to deepen polarization and distrust in democratic institutions. Their work underscores the role of bots, fake accounts, and coordinated networks in amplifying divisive content. The authors concluded that while the internet initially promised to democratize information, it has also become a conduit for state-sponsored propaganda and political manipulation. Overall, their literature review provided a **foundational understanding of the intersection between technology, misinformation, and democratic resilience**, urging further interdisciplinary research and policy responses.

Ekström and Östman (2015), in their two-wave panel survey of Swedish youths, distinguished among three types of online activity: information gathering, social interaction, and creative production. Creative production was found to have a direct effect on offline and online political participation, whereas the effects of information gathering and social interaction were indirect. The latter forms of online activity were both found to lead to greater engagement in online political discussion, which in turn led to greater online and offline political participation.

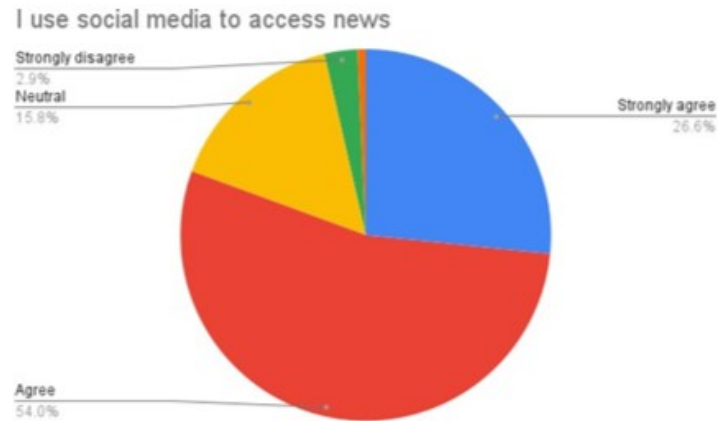
Lenhart (2015) found that 92% of teens (ages 13 to 17 years) go online every day, with 24% reporting being online almost constantly. Furthermore, the rate of social media use by 18- to 29-year-olds has grown precipitously, from 41% in 2006 to 90% in 2015 (Perrin, 2015).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

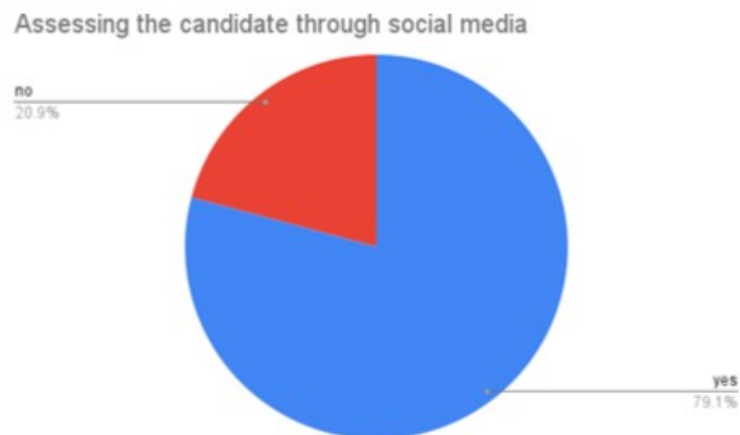
- To examine the influence of social media in political participation of youth
- To critically assess the role of social media exposure in shaping voting behaviour
- To investigate which social media platform is predominantly used and influence among political groups

METHODOLOGY

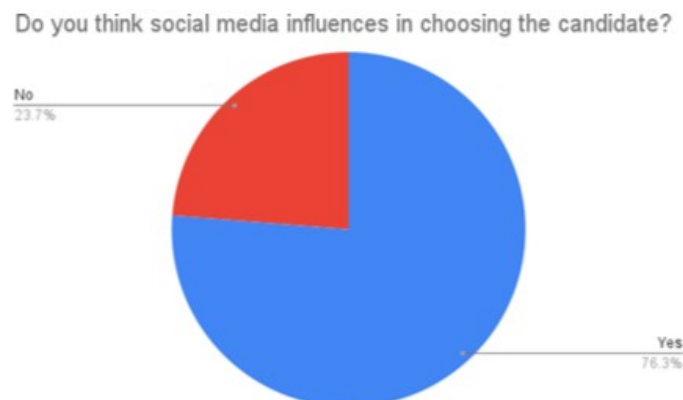
Survey method is a widely used research technique for systematically collecting data from a sample of individuals or groups by asking them questions, typically through questionnaires or interviews. It aims to gather information about specific characteristics, attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or experiences of the target population. The survey process generally involves several key steps: defining the population and sample, choosing the type of survey (e.g., online, mail, face-to-face), designing the survey questions, distributing the survey, collecting responses, analyzing the data, and reporting the findings. Surveys can be cross-sectional, collecting data at one point in time, or longitudinal, collecting data from the same subjects over multiple periods.

**Figure 3**

26.6% of the participants says that they have utilize the social media to follow up with the Political News. Large group of people with 54% also moderately agree it.

**Figure 4**

79% people are using social media for the assessment of the candidate of election, it shows that the common people are depending over the social media.

**Figure 5**

Seventy-nine percent of participants evaluate candidates through social media. Additionally, about 76.3% believe that social media influences people's choices in elections due to the campaigns run by political parties.

Interpretation

- The participants are highly influential by the social media.
- Regardless of whether the participants are intensively following the political parties' pages in social media or not, passively they get the trolls and memes related to politics.
- More than 75% above participants engage with the social media content to decide the activities of politics.
- The primary reason behind the voting are majority influences, caste consideration, and in the hope of betterment of society.
- Ironically 77% of the participants have not attend any of the political campaign.
- 86.3% have never been into the political rally.
- At last, 77% of the participants indicating that the social media influences in choosing the political candidates.

FINDINGS

Social media shapes how people choose the political candidates, and in many circumstances they ended up making choices with their social media feed and exposed easily to the content. Platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook have become major space for political discussion and campaigning. But rather than turning politics into serious debate, it moves towards entertainment. Reels, posts, videos are encouraging quick reactions instead of critical thinking. It also weakens trust and reduce the credibility of political discourse. However, the algorithm driven content exposure tends to similar opinions on their own.

CONCLUSION

The study emphasis a significant shift in political communication with young voters and their engagement, it shows that social media especially like WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram playing a major role in providing political content to them. Social media dominates the political world with the influence over the content also the algorithms flows the motive behind the unit. Through the memes, videos or reels youngsters started analysing the candidate. Whether there is trust or authenticated source is doubtful yet influenced by unverified content it randomly driven over voting behaviour. Even the people are not being part of politics also go through the political driven news in their echo chamber that reflects the process of choosing the candidate. The media literacy that promotes critical thinking is much needed, as political actors to restore confidence through genuine interaction with young people. Because, to maintain the balance between the digital politainment and the issue based voting. Political Socialization in the digital era needs to change by combining the power of social media with the critical knowledge to stabilize the democratic disclosure.

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