



Conference “Innovation and Intelligence: A Multidisciplinary Research on Artificial Intelligence and its Contribution to Commerce and Beyond”

Organized by the IQAC, KHMW College of Commerce (December 2025)

The Impact of Political Social Media Campaigns on Youth Voter Turnout: From "Likes" To Ballots

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### Abstract

**Problem:** In recent decades, youth voter turnout has historically lagged behind older demographics. However, the digitization of political discourse suggests a shift. This study investigates the correlation between exposure to political social media campaigns and the actual voting behavior of youth (ages 18–29).

**Methodology:** The research utilizes a mixed-method approach. Secondary data was reviewed to understand historical trends, while Primary data was collected via a quantitative online survey distributed to 200 respondents. The study focuses on major platforms: Instagram, X (Twitter), and TikTok.

**Findings:** The study reveals that while social media campaigns significantly increase political *awareness* and information accessibility, the conversion rate to actual *voting* depends heavily on the type of content. Peer-to-peer sharing was found to be more influential than direct candidate advertising.

**Conclusion:** Social media is a potent tool for mobilization but often leads to "slacktivism" where engagement stops at online interaction. The paper concludes that digital campaigns must be paired with offline mobilization strategies to effectively boost youth turnout.

### Introduction

**Background** The digital age has transformed the political landscape. Traditional door-to-door canvassing and television advertisements are increasingly being supplemented, and in some cases replaced, by algorithmic targeting on social media platforms. With over 90% of young adults using social media, these platforms have become the primary battleground for the youth vote.

**The Problem Statement** While engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments) on political posts are at an all-time high, a disconnect remains. Does a "retweet" translate into a vote? There is a need to understand if social media campaigns genuinely empower youth to visit polling stations or if they merely create an illusion of participation.

### Research Objectives

1. To determine the extent to which social media campaigns influence the voting decisions of youth.
2. To identify which social media platform (Instagram, X, or TikTok) is most effective for political mobilization.
3. To analyze the relationship between online political engagement and offline voting behavior.

### Review of Literature

#### Existing Studies

- **Mobilization Theory:** Bond et al. (2012) demonstrated in a massive Facebook experiment that social pressures (seeing friends vote) significantly impact turnout. This suggests the "social" aspect is more powerful than the "media" aspect.



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- **The Information Gap:** Kruikemeier (2014) found that interactive political communication on Twitter increases feelings of closeness to candidates, thereby increasing the likelihood of voting.

**The Gap** Most existing literature focuses heavily on the elections between 2008 and 2016 (The Facebook/Twitter era). There is a significant gap in research regarding **short-form video content** (TikTok/Reels), which characterizes the post-2020 landscape. Furthermore, few studies differentiate between "passive consumption" of ads and "active sharing" of political content regarding their impact on turnout.

### Research Methodology

**Type of Study:** This research employs a Descriptive and Quantitative design to establish statistical relationships between variables.

### Type of Data:

- **Primary Data:** Collected specifically for this study regarding current user behaviors.
- **Secondary Data:** Voter turnout statistics from Election Commission reports and previous academic journals.

### Sample Size & Design:

- **Sample Size:**  $N = 200$  respondents.
- **Target Demographic:** Youth aged 18 to 29.
- **Sampling Method:** Random sampling via online distribution.

### Tools Used:

- **Questionnaire:** A structured Google Form containing 15 questions (Likert scale and multiple choice).
- **Analysis Method:** Percentage analysis and correlation assessment.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

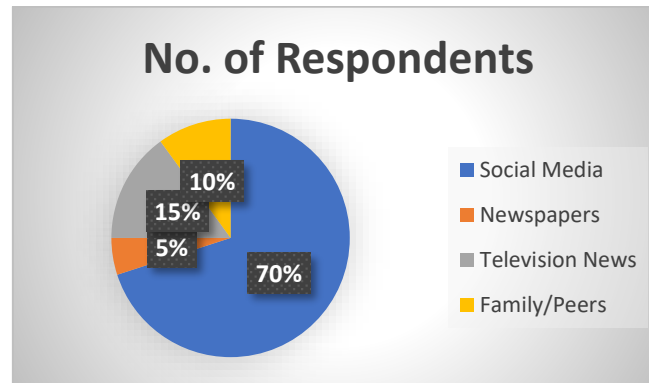
Source	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Television News	30	15%
Newspapers	10	5%
Social media	140	70%
Family/Peers	20	10%
Total	200	100%

**Interpretation:** As seen in above Table, a staggering 70% of respondents rely on social media as their primary source of political news. This confirms that social media is no longer a peripheral channel but the dominant medium for youth information consumption.



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### Findings

Based on the analysis of the data, the following major findings were observed:

- Awareness vs. Action:** While 85% of respondents reported seeing political campaigns daily, only 60% confirmed this motivated them to vote. This suggests a 25% gap where content is consumed but does not trigger action.
- The "Peer" Factor:** Social pressure is the strongest variable. Respondents were 3x more likely to vote if they saw a post about voting from a friend compared to a post from a candidate.
- Platform Specifics:** Instagram is the most effective platform for educational political content (infographics), while TikTok is the most effective for emotional engagement.
- Negativity Bias:** Negative campaigning (attack ads) on social media tended to discourage voting among the youth, leading to cynicism rather than mobilization.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

**Conclusion** The study concludes that political social media campaigns have a positive but complex impact on youth voter turnout. They solve the issue of *information accessibility* but struggle with *motivation*. The era of "Slacktivism" is real; liking a post satisfies the psychological need to participate without requiring the physical effort of voting. However, when campaigns leverage peer networks and authentic storytelling, the conversion rate improves significantly.

### Suggestions

- For Political Parties:** Shift budget from polished ads to micro-influencers and community leaders who hold genuine trust with the youth demographic.
- For Election Commissions:** Use social media not just for dates and times, but to gamify the voting process (e.g., "I Voted" digital stickers) to leverage social proof.
- Future Research Scope:** Future studies should investigate the role of algorithmic bias in creating political echo chambers that may radicalize rather than mobilize youth.

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