

Journal of Government & Civil Society

Journal of Government
and Civil Society

Volume 10

No. 2

Pages 169 - 403

October 2026

ISSN 2579-4396



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Political Party Engagement on Social Media: Trends, Challenges, and Dynamics of Digital Campaigns

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Submitted:

2 July 2026

Revised:

25 Sept 2026

Accepted:

30 Sept 2026

Abstract

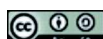
Over the past ten years, social media has become a hub of digital campaigning by political parties, affecting the electoral policy and interaction with the population on the global scale. The purpose of the study is to map the intellectual terrain of the global research on political party engagement using social media between 2015 and 2025. Based on a bibliometric methodology developed in PRISMA guidelines and the data published through the Scopus database, the present study examines 554 identified articles through VOSviewer to represent the co-authorship, co-keywords, and country-collaboration networks. The results demonstrate that there are five key thematic groups, such as campaign strategies, disinformation, polarization, methodological approaches and country-specific case studies. Findings indicate that Facebook and Twitter are leading in the use of platforms, and new platforms such as Tik Tok and WhatsApp are becoming more and more influential in the Global South. The United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and Spain become leading contributors, which represents epistemic centrality in digital political studies. Nevertheless, voices and case studies of the Southeast Asian region, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America are still underrepresented. The work will add to the digital democracy discussion by providing critical information on gaps in research, trends in collaboration across the world, and the dynamic character of the political campaigns in the digital world, thereby creating the way to more inclusive and interdisciplinary research in the future.

Keywords: Social media, political campaigns, digital communication

Abstrak

Selama satu dekade terakhir, media sosial telah menjadi pusat kampanye digital bagi partai politik, yang memengaruhi kebijakan elektoral serta interaksi dengan masyarakat dalam skala global. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memetakan lanskap intelektual riset global mengenai keterlibatan partai politik di media sosial antara tahun 2015 dan 2025. Dengan menggunakan metodologi bibliometrik yang mengacu pada pedoman PRISMA dan data dari basis data Scopus, studi ini menganalisis 554 artikel menggunakan perangkat lunak VOSviewer untuk memetakan jaringan kepenulisan bersama (*co-authorship*), kata kunci bersama (*co-keywords*), dan kolaborasi antarnegara. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya lima kelompok tematik utama, yaitu strategi kampanye, disinformasi, polarisasi, pendekatan metodologis, dan studi kasus spesifik negara. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Facebook dan Twitter

CITATION Habibullah, A., Laidey, N. M., Talabi, J. M., Cortes, S., & Putri, A. K. (2026). Political Party Engagement on Social Media: Trends, Challenges, and Dynamics of Digital Campaigns. *Journal of Government and Civil Society*, 10(2), 215–241.



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mendominasi penggunaan platform, sementara platform baru seperti TikTok dan WhatsApp semakin berpengaruh di wilayah Global Selatan. Amerika Serikat, Inggris, Jerman, dan Spanyol menjadi kontributor utama, yang mencerminkan sentralitas epistemik dalam studi politik digital. Kendati demikian, perspektif dan studi kasus dari kawasan Asia Tenggara, Afrika Sub-Sahara, dan Amerika Latin masih kurang terwakili. Studi ini berkontribusi pada diskursus demokrasi digital dengan menyajikan informasi penting mengenai kesenjangan penelitian, tren kolaborasi global, serta dinamika kampanye politik di dunia digital, sehingga membuka jalan bagi penelitian yang lebih inklusif dan bersifat lintas disiplin di masa depan.

Kata Kunci: Media sosial, kampanye politik, komunikasi digital

INTRODUCTION

The past two decades have witnessed a tremendous change in political communication and election campaigns across the world due to social media use. Social media applications (Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, WhatsApp, and Twitter now called X) have become the most important means of political parties and politicians to create their image in society, distribute policy messages, and mobilise supporters in real-time. Unlike the traditional media, these channels allow very personalized, immediate, interactive communication between citizens and political players, which suggests a major change in the way political campaigns are planned and implemented (Bentivegna & Rega, 2024; Widholm et al., 2024). On the other hand, research in Germany, Australia, and Nordic countries focuses on data-driven approaches, algorithmic targeting, and voter involvement in terms of quantifiable digital indicators (Ahmad et al., 2025a; Banerjee and Mitra, 2024; Budiana, 2024). These platforms are not only utilized by the political parties to promote the programs but also to influence the perceptions of the people using strategic framing and appeals to emotions (Aziz and Bischoff, 2025; Grantham, 2024a; Utilising et al., 2024). Political parties can use social media to communicate their political agenda and mobilize the masses by using strategic framing of issues and effective communication. The idea of issue-based campaigning (Hausler et al., 2024) and emotion-based interaction (Tonenesen et al., 2025). Digital campaign architectures are also sophisticated as evidenced by the inclusion of political influencers, buzzers, and even generative AI in campaigns (Musi et al., 2024). Although the growth has occurred, contemporary studies remain scattered, in various journals, procedures, and case studies. Those are those that are concerned with user interaction or media influence, whereas others are concerned with discourse or comparisons. That demonstrates that a more detailed, comprehensive picture of the global trends in digital political campaigns is required. (Daniel & Obholzer, 2025; Figeac et al., 2025). Another significant aspect is the role of social media in the development of digital democracy especially within the electoral politics. As an illustration, the analysis of TikTok use in Australia and Sweden indicates how the social

platform is being used strategically to attract young voters with the help of visual stories and humor (Grantham, 2024a; Widholm et al., 2024). At the same time, in some countries like Ghana and Zimbabwe, social media is also a contributor to watchdogism and monitoring of the political elite (Chibuwe, 2025; Tawiah, 2025a). Nevertheless, conversely, the disinformation effect, negative campaigns, and polarization of the digital environment are also growing with the growth of the digital space in politics (Martin-Gutierrez et al., 2024; Rossini et al., 2024). Consequently, political communication has increasingly become shaped by the logic of media in recent time. The mediatization of politics refers to the process through which political actors adapt their strategies, messages, and interactions to the operational and communicative logics of media environments. In the context of social media, this process becomes particularly significant because political parties are no longer communicating only through established media institutions but increasingly operate within digital environments characterized by immediacy, interactivity, personalization, and continuous audience feedback. The article is based on bibliometric analysis to investigate global studies on the topic of political party campaigns via social media between the years 2015 and 2025.

Conceptually, this study approaches political party engagement on social media through the interconnected processes of mediatization, platformization, platform power, and platform affordances. Mediatization explains how political actors adapt their communication practices to the changing logics of media, while platformization extends this process by highlighting the increasing dependence of political communication on privately operated digital infrastructures. Within platformized political communication, platform power becomes relevant because visibility, interaction, and circulation of political messages are partly conditioned by platform architectures, recommendation systems, engagement metrics, and governance practices. Platform affordances, meanwhile, refer to the communicative possibilities enabled or constrained by particular platforms, including visibility, interaction, personalization, audiovisual communication, network formation, and audience targeting. These concepts provide the analytical lens through which the bibliometric patterns identified in this study are interpreted rather than treated merely as descriptive categories.

Accordingly, the bibliometric patterns are interpreted as indicators of how the scholarly field has conceptualized the transformation of digital political campaigning. The emergence of keywords related to campaigns, elections, engagement, personalization, and political branding is examined in relation to mediatization and platform affordances; the prominence of platforms, algorithms, visibility, and engagement is considered in relation to platformization and platform power; while the clustering of disinformation, polarization, propaganda, and negative campaigning is interpreted in relation to the platform-mediated conditions under which political information is produced, amplified, and contested. This conceptual alignment enables the study to move beyond mapping what has been researched toward explaining how the research field reflects broader transformations in platform-mediated political communication.

It analyzes 554 articles in the Scopus index in order to determine the main themes, including campaign strategies, voter engagement, the use of such platforms as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tik Tok, and WhatsApp. It examines collaboration of authors, common keywords, most popular journals, and most popular countries in this subject. It also examines popular research techniques such as content analysis, sentiment analysis, and network visualization. The central argument of this study is that political party engagement on social media has evolved from a primarily communicative and mobilizational practice into a form of platform-mediated political competition. In this environment, political parties compete not only for electoral support but also for attention, visibility, engagement, and control over political narratives. These processes are simultaneously shaped by party strategies and by the technological infrastructures, affordances, and governance mechanisms of digital platforms. The article identifies research gaps, particularly those in areas that have not been well studied such as Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America and those that focus on party strategies and minority inclusion. The results present perspective on social media and digital democracy research in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role and Usage of Social Media in Political Campaigns in Various Countries

The development of social media has transformed mediatized politics into a process of platformization. Platformization of political communication refers to the increasing dependence of political actors on privately operated digital platforms to produce, distribute, and receive feedback on political messages. Unlike traditional communication channels, platforms structure political communication through specific affordances, recommendation systems, engagement metrics, and content governance practices. Political parties therefore do not communicate in a neutral digital space; their visibility and interaction with citizens are increasingly conditioned by platform infrastructures.

This transformation introduces the concept of platform power into the study of political communication. Platform power concerns the capacity of digital platforms to shape what political content becomes visible, how audiences encounter political messages, and which forms of interaction are encouraged or constrained. Consequently, political parties must adapt their communication strategies not only to voters but also to the technological and commercial logics of platforms. Several studies have highlighted the evolution of academic research on digital campaigns, focusing on themes, author collaborations, geographic regions, and methodological approaches. Bibliometric studies, such as those designed in this study, are essential for understanding the direction of research development, identifying research gaps, and providing a conceptual foundation for future studies related to the effectiveness of social media in campaigns and their impact on the quality of global democracy.

The four concepts of mediatization, platformization, platform power, and platform affordances are treated in this study as complementary analytical dimensions rather than as separate theoretical constructs. Mediatization captures the adaptation of political actors to changing media logics; platformization identifies the growing structural dependence of political communication on digital platforms; platform power highlights the capacity of platform infrastructures and governance mechanisms to condition political visibility and interaction; and affordances draw attention to the specific communicative possibilities associated with different platforms. Together, these dimensions provide a framework for interpreting the thematic structures identified through bibliometric analysis.

From this perspective, digital campaigning can be understood as a process operating at the intersection of political strategy and technological infrastructure. Political parties develop campaign messages and engagement strategies, but the circulation and reception of these messages are also shaped by platform-specific affordances and visibility mechanisms. Therefore, the prominence of particular keywords in the bibliometric network does not simply indicate the popularity of a topic. It may also reflect broader transformations in the organization of political communication, including the movement from media-mediated campaigning toward increasingly platform-mediated political competition.

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of social media in political campaigns across several countries, refer to Table 1 below.

Table 1. The Use of Social Media by Political Parties in Various Countries

Negara & Author	Social Media	Usability in Campaigns
Germany (Aziz & Bischoff, 2025; Borchers, 2025)	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok	Influencing voter behaviour in federal elections & Influencer support in political party campaigns
India (Banerjee & Mitra, 2024)	Instagram, Facebook	Gender-focused visual campaign to create the image of a "good woman"
Indonesia (Budiana, 2024)	Twitter, WhatsApp	Mobilisation of political buzzers in the 2019 election
Nigeria (Ahmad et al., 2025b)	Twitter	Digital communication of parties and journalists during elections, forming digital democracy
Australia (Grantham, 2024b)	TikTok	Labour Party campaign uses short narrative and humour
Thailand (Sinpeng, 2024), (Sriyai & Kwanyou, 2025)	Facebook, Twitter, TikTok	DIY politics by young activists, a counter-narrative to the election

Ghana (Tawiah, 2025a) (Tawiah, 2025b)	Facebook, Twitter	Framing issues by 2024 presidential candidates & included in Winning strategies
Swedia (Widholm et al., 2024)	TikTok	Right-wing wave in engagement-based campaigns
Portugal (Prior, 2024)	Twitter (X)	Populist right-wing communicative strategy in elections
Amerika Serikat (Lukito et al., 2025)	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok	Cross-platform strategy in the 2022 midterm election campaign
Italia (Ceron et al., 2024)	Facebook	The effect of the crisis on voter interaction in the 2022 Italian election
Prancis (Figeac et al., 2024)	Facebook	Public engagement and digital participation by political parties
Finlandia (Pastuhov & Sivenius, 2024)	Facebook	Educate candidates on digital campaign strategies
Kanada (Westlake & Robbins-Kanter, 2025)	Twitter, Facebook	Representation of class identity in the candidate's selection
Israel (Yavetz, 2025)	Facebook	Populist rhetoric and personalisation in digital campaigns
Spanyol (Sarasqueta et al., 2025)	Instagram, Facebook	Political narrative development during election campaigns
Hungaria (Tønnesen et al., 2025)	Facebook	Analysis of emotional reactions to policy issues in elections
Moldova (Nistor & Stretea, 2025)	Facebook, YouTube	Disinformation and civil society responses during elections

The table highlights a consistent global trend: political parties are increasingly reliant on digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp to shape campaign strategies that are more direct, interactive, and measurable. Social media has become more than a supporting resource and evolved into a key medium towards building and selling political stories. As an example, in Germany and Spain, the number of Facebook users who share programmatic content and images is also common. Concurrently, Twitter is preferred in the United States and the United Kingdom to short, reactionary political remarks. TikTok, however, is also becoming one of the main platforms in Australia and Southeast Asia, where the visuals and political information are delivered to younger voters and are largely informal and engaging to view. Regardless of these developments, there are a number of research gaps. To begin with, the current literature is much more focused on Global North nations, whereas little emphasis has been given to digital campaign initiatives in the Global South, particularly, Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America.

Second, the majority of research is inclined to concentrate on the dominant parties and high-profile candidates, whereas the online strategy of smaller, opposition, or independent parties has not been thoroughly studied. Third, the dominant methodological approach is descriptive or content-based; longitudinal, experimental, or big data-based research appears to be lacking that would be able to measure the long-term effects of digital campaigning on political behaviour. The other interesting observation is that platform adoption is depending on political, cultural, and demographic factors. In nations where media freedom is limited, including Nigeria and India, WhatsApp is popular due to its confidential, encrypted communication, which allows grassroots communication to take place outside of the public view. On the contrary, during liberal democracies, social networks like Twitter and Instagram are used to enhance transparency and visibility of the candidates.

Platform affordances are therefore important for understanding variation in digital campaign strategies. Different platforms provide different possibilities for visibility, interaction, audiovisual storytelling, network formation, and audience targeting. The prominence of Facebook and Twitter/X in the mapped literature should consequently not be interpreted simply as evidence of platform popularity, but as an indication that particular platform affordances have historically been central to the ways political actors organize campaign communication and audience engagement.

Three key areas need to be covered in future studies: (1) cross-country comparative studies on the role of political regimes and digital ecosystems in shaping social media strategies; (2) effectiveness studies on visual campaigns, especially on Tik Tok and Instagram; and (3) experimental designs to assess the effects of framing on voter perception and decision-making. Finally, this table-based analysis complements the bibliometric mapping of the present study and confirms the importance of the concept of the digital political campaigns called in the article: Mapping the Digital Campaign of providing new directions to a more inclusive, context-aware, and methodologically diverse literature on digital political campaigns.

METHOD

This study employs a systematic bibliometric research design to map the development, intellectual structure, thematic patterns, and geographic distribution of scholarly research on political party engagement on social media. The systematic identification and selection of literature follows the PRISMA reporting framework, while bibliometric analysis is used to identify publication trends, co-authorship patterns, keyword co-occurrence, thematic clusters, and country collaboration. VOSviewer is employed to construct and visualize the bibliometric networks. The combination of systematic literature identification and bibliometric mapping allows the study to examine both the scope of the existing literature and the relationships among its dominant themes.

The bibliometric analysis is devoted to the articles on the topic of the social media campaigns in political parties, which are indexed by Scopus. The study is systematic because it uses PRISMA framework to find the literature that is relevant to the topic under study, which is, mapping the Digital Campaign of Political Party Engagement on Social Media. The reason why Scopus was chosen is that it is a reputed international multi-disciplinary database, which will provide a wide coverage to all disciplines. First, a total of 1,063 articles were retrieved and then the inclusion criteria were used. The literature review includes publications between 2015 and 2025. The bibliometric network was visualized and analyzed with the help of VOSviewer, and it provided a detailed view of co-authorship, keywords trends, and clusters of themes. This method enables a deeper understanding of the intellectual structure and research dynamics within the field of digital political campaigns. (Husaeni et al., 2022) It also allows researchers to visually identify trends, patterns, and relationships between existing documents (Nandiyanto & Al Husaeni, 2021).

Data Collection Process

The bibliographic data were retrieved from the Scopus database because of its multidisciplinary coverage and structured bibliographic metadata. The search focused on publications addressing the intersection of social media, political parties, and campaigns. The search period covered publications from 2015 to 2025, and the dataset was restricted to English-language publications and the document types specified in the inclusion criteria. The data collection technique through the Scopus database uses the following keywords: TITLE-ABS-KEY (social media Political party campaign) AND PUBYEAR > 2014 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT TO (DOCTYPE, "ar") OR LIMIT TO DOCTYPE, "re")) AND ("IM"-TO (LANGUAGE, "English"):"554 Doc" his is done to reduce the possibility of irrelevant articles participating in the analysed data. The literature identification and screening process is presented in Figure 1. The PRISMA flow diagram reports the number of records identified through Scopus, the records removed through the predefined filtering criteria, the records screened for eligibility, and the final studies included in the bibliometric analysis. The reported numbers correspond to the actual database retrieval and screening process and are presented sequentially to ensure consistency between the search strategy, dataset construction, and final sample.

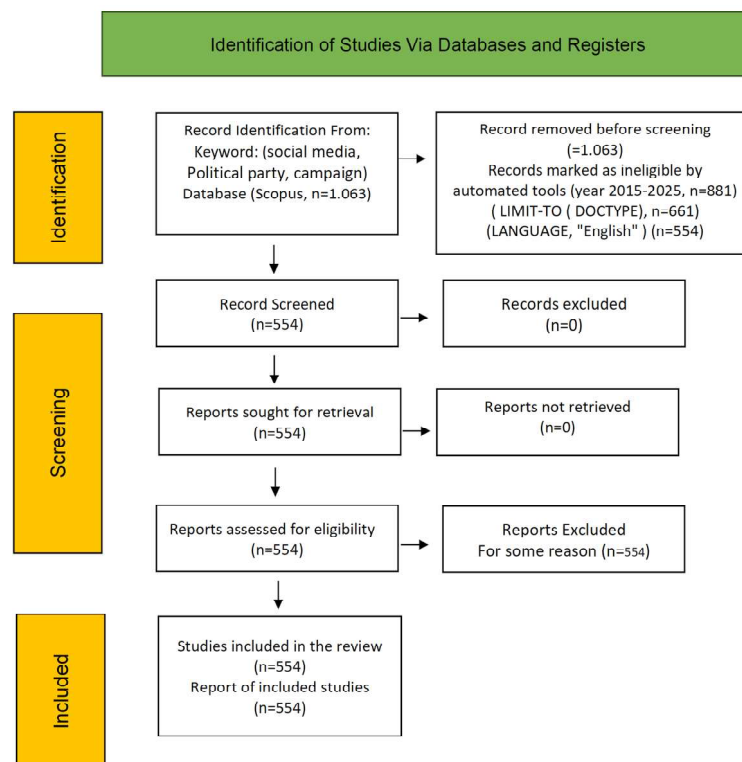


Figure 1. Method Prisma Reporting Protocol
Source: Page et al., (2021)

The data obtained is then processed using Vosviewer and analysed to understand the structure, trends, and relationships between relevant documents related theme of the article.

The inclusion criteria were established to ensure that the retrieved literature was directly relevant to the research focus. Publications were included when they (1) were indexed in Scopus, (2) were published between 2015 and 2025, (3) were written in English, (4) belonged to the eligible document types specified in the search strategy, and (5) addressed social media, political parties, and/or digital political campaigning as substantive research topics. Publications outside the specified publication period, language, document type, or substantive scope were excluded from the final dataset. The screening process was documented using the PRISMA flow diagram to provide a transparent account of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion.

Following the screening process, the final dataset was analyzed using VOSviewer to identify the intellectual and thematic structure of the literature. The analysis included publication trends, co-authorship patterns, country collaboration, keyword co-occurrence, network visualization, overlay visualization, and density visualization. Keyword co-occurrence was used to identify thematic relationships among the concepts represented in the dataset, while network and density visualizations were used to examine the relative prominence and connectivity of key terms. The resulting clusters were subsequently interpreted using the

theoretical framework of mediatization, platformization, platform power, and platform affordances.

RESULT

Number of Publication

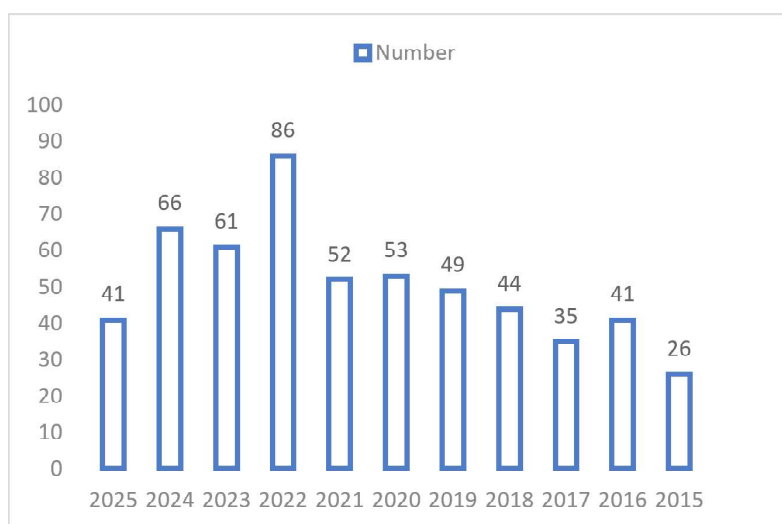


Figure 2. Number of Publications

Interest in how political parties use social media in digital campaigns has grown rapidly over the past decade. Based on Scopus data from 2015 to 2025 using keywords like “social media,” “political party,” and “campaign,” this field showed slow growth in its early years. In 2015, the number of published articles was only 26 because social media was viewed as a support tool to traditional campaign approaches. Publications grew more solidly between 2018 and 2021, with a high of 53 and 52 articles in 2020 and 2021. This increase is demonstrating the increased reliance on digital tools in election campaigns globally, particularly during the major elections in India, Indonesia and the United States. COVID-19 contributed to it too as it pushed the field of political communication to the internet because of restrictions on real-life events. The highest academic output was achieved in the year 2022 of 86 publications and this marked a turning point as far as social media took the centre stage in political campaigns across the globe. This zenith is not just a measure of technological advancement of campaigning, but a concern among scholars on the implications of campaigning, especially in determining voter behaviour, dissemination of information and democratic procedures.

Though a minor drop was recorded in 2023 (61 articles) and 2024 (66 articles), the figures were comparably good, indicating the continued academic interest. As of mid-2025, 41 articles were already published, which implies that the trend might likely continue. This trend depicts the paradigm shift in political campaigning and the academic approaches of

studying it. The social media has transformed political messages, voter engagement, and image building, which have resulted in more interdisciplinary and data-driven studies. In this context, the present study, *“Mapping the Digital Campaign: A Bibliometric Analysis of Political Party Engagement on Social Media,”* aims to map the evolving scholarly landscape by analysing trends, collaboration networks, thematic focuses, and methodological innovations over the past ten years.

Document by Country and Citation

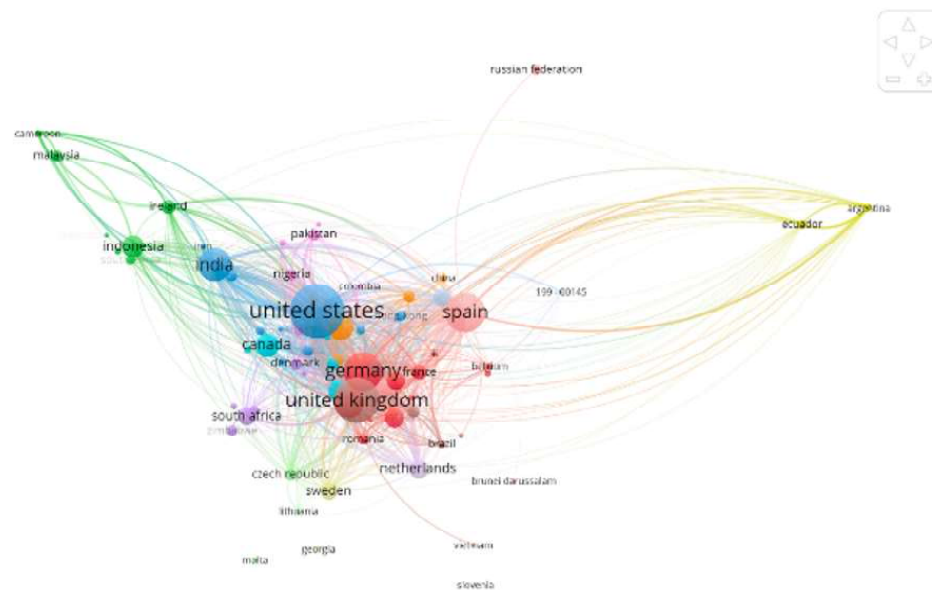


Figure 3. Document by Country and Citation

The visualisation of international cooperation in scientific articles on political campaigns and party interaction via social media indicates a complicated and focused worldwide dynamic. The United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and Spain are some of the major players in this network of collaboration. The large nodes and the high interconnection with several other countries make them the center of attention, and they are essential centers of academic productivity and cooperation. These nations have the advantage of a well-established political system and digital infrastructure that helps in conducting empirical studies and experimentation in the sphere of political communication. As an example, the 2020 American election, in which social media played a significant role, has sparked global scholarly debate, which has led to the pre-eminence of American scholarship in the topic.

In addition to the Western cluster, such countries as India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Nigeria are also presented quite conspicuously, which is indicative of the increased applicability of the Global South in digital campaign studies. These are the countries where

the interaction of politics and digital communication is rich to be examined with the large numbers of social media users and the active democracy process. Their participation in global collaboration networks, particularly collaborating with western institutions is reflecting growing scholarly participation of emergent regions. Intriguingly, Argentina, Ecuador and China are grouped together in separate regional or thematic blocks. The situation with China is that the research is commonly concerned with the state-controlled digital environments and limited social media environments, which creates special circumstances in the fields of political communication studies. The key factor in this case might be the controversial elections and political instability in Latin America, which can lead to localised research work that develops independent collaboration patterns. In general, the map shows that the study of political party participation through the social media is spread all over the world, but it is concentrated heavily due to the epistemic superiority of the developed Western nations. The visualisation also highlights the necessity of more equal and participatory academic cooperation that boosts the input of the Global South. Thus, this article does not only map trends in bibliometric terms, but also provides a critical reflection on how knowledge is produced globally and structural inequalities in digital political research are implicitly present. Improving inter-regional cooperation can assist in closing these gaps and contributing to more representative and diverse knowledge on digital political campaigns on the global scale.

Table 2. Citations and Link Strength

Country	Documents & Citations	Total Link Strength
Germany	53 (1,429)	9,954
Spain	58 (753)	9,933
United States	104 (3,227)	9,676
United Kingdom	73 (1,868)	9,554
Norway	17 (537)	5,120
Italy	32 (773)	4,608
Austria	14 (365)	3,848
Netherlands	14 (577)	3,416
India	40 (379)	3,277
Hungary	13 (208)	2,600

The ten most popular countries in terms of number of publications, citations, and overall link strength demonstrate the world picture of research on the use of social media in the campaigns of political parties. These indicators show the extent to which countries contribute as well as the extent to which they cooperate across the boundaries. The United States has the highest number of publications, 3,227 citations, and a high strength of link (9,676), which demonstrates its significant contribution to the development of this area- in particular, the

most important works on the Obama and Trump campaigns and the presence of numerous academic connections. Germany follows behind in the number of publications (53) but has the greatest link strength (9,954) and 1,429 citations, which indicates its high influence in the European research. Spain is leading in the number of publications (58) and strength of links (9,933) but has fewer citations (753), which indicates that it is quite active but still has limited influence all over the world. The United Kingdom has a strong balance between productivity (73 documents), influence (1,868 citations), collaboration (9,554 link strength), which indicates its dynamic political environment and research interest in the post-Brexit period. Norway, Austria and Netherlands among other countries have a high link strength in comparison to their small number of publications indicating strong international relationships and institutional relationships. But 5,120 link strength indicates this dynamic. However, India (the only Global South country in the sample) submitted 40 documents, but received lower citation and link strength scores, even with its increasing digital electorate and active political discussion.

This points at potential and underrepresentation in world scholarship. These trends indicate that digital political campaign research is concentrated on the West. Nevertheless, the new appearance of Global South nations is an indication of a change toward less exclusionary research. The results justify the application of bibliometric mapping as an instrument to reveal dominance and gaps in the field of the global academic discourse, highlighting the importance of the epistemic equity in the study of digital politics. The geographical concentration of the literature has implications beyond the distribution of publications. It suggests that the conceptual understanding of digital political communication may be disproportionately informed by political systems, media environments, and platform practices in the Global North. This pattern can be understood as an epistemic inequality in knowledge production, whereby some regions receive greater visibility and influence in shaping the international research agenda. Greater participation from Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America is therefore necessary not simply to fill geographical gaps, but to develop more context-sensitive explanations of how political parties interact with platforms under different institutional and cultural conditions.

Document by Author

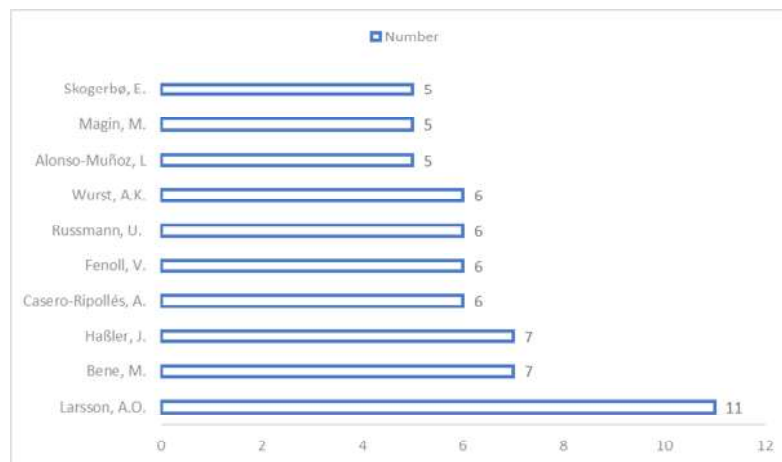


Figure 4. Document by Author

The figure shows the top ten most prolific writers in the area of social media, political parties and campaigns between 2015 and 2025 according to the Scopus statistics. The most prolific scholar in the field is A.O. Larsson who has 11 publications. His interest in digital political communication in Scandinavia and especially in Norway is evident in the fact that Norway has a high total link strength (5,120) with a relatively low number of publications. M. bene of Hungary and J. Haussler of Germany, with seven publications each follow after Larsson. Their publications revolve around the topic of digital campaign perception and online engagement and both are heavily engaged in international relationship within the European research network. Casero-Ripolles, Fenoll, Russmann, Wurst, Alonso-Muñoz, and Magin are also leading contributors, with 5-6 publications each, mostly of Spain, Austria and Germany. Their study emphasizes media logic, politics of Twitter and campaign discourse. E. Skogerbjo of Norway further enhances the Nordic scholarly presence especially in governance and ethics. The fact that the productivity of the scholarly world is concentrated in Europe, and in Germany, in Spain, and in Norway in particular, indicates an imbalance in geography. These prominent writers do not solely influence the academic discourse but also indicate the necessity to diversify the perspectives by involving more of the Global South in the research partnerships in the future concerning digital political communication.

Document by Subject Area

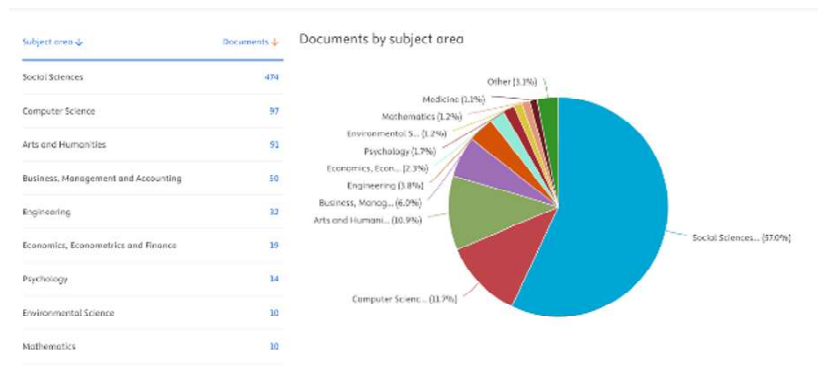


Figure 5. Document by Subject Area

Through the synthesis of the perspectives of the social sciences, technology, humanities, and other disciplines, the paper “Mapping the Digital Campaign: A Bibliometric Analysis of Political Party Engagement on Social Media” reveals the multidisciplinary character of the study. Most of the 474 documents in the field (57 percent) are social sciences. This prominence is expected given that it is mainly a subject of political communication, voter behaviour participation, and democratic engagement that happen to be key issues of focus in political science, sociology, and communication studies. This emphasis suggests that scholarly studies on this topic tend to adopt a sociopolitical and relational approach to digital campaigns, examining the discourse of the masses, power dynamics, and institutional transformation in the digital age.

Computer Science, with 97 articles (11.7%), ranks second, reflecting growing interest in computational approaches such as social media mining, sentiment analysis, machine learning, and bot detection. These studies often evaluate how algorithmic structures, engagement metrics, and data processing techniques influence campaign reach and manipulation of public opinion. The Arts and Humanities contribute 91 documents (10.9%), emphasising interpretive and cultural analyses of digital political behaviour. Topics include discourse studies, ideological narratives, and representation in campaign content, underscoring the symbolic and rhetorical dimensions of political communication in digital spaces. Business, Management, and Accounting appears with 50 publications (6%), indicating a rising interest in political marketing, branding, and strategic communication. As political campaigns increasingly mirror commercial marketing, these studies assess how parties leverage user data and algorithmic targeting to shape perceptions and mobilise support.

democracy, while the fifth cluster reflects country-specific and case-oriented research. Taken together, the clusters indicate that digital political campaigning is studied simultaneously as a communicative practice, a platform-mediated process, a field of democratic contestation, a methodological domain, and a context-dependent political phenomenon.

Bibliometric visualization results reveal that the academic discussion of the role of political parties in digital campaigns is dominated by such themes that are strictly connected to the electoral process, political communication tactics, and the dynamics of public opinion in the digital space. Key word mapping revealed five key clusters, which are complementary research focuses and approaches. The former cluster (red and dark blue) demonstrates the close interconnections between social media and elections and campaigns and sites like X and Facebook. Social media is being placed as the key to political parties developing campaign plans, creating a connection with the voters and distributing political messages in an immeasurable way. The appearance of such keywords like engagement means that the involvement of people and communication with them is significant as the measure of successful digital campaigns. This cluster study focused on the personalisation of candidates, the development of political brands, and the use of platform algorithms to connect with certain segments of the electorate.

This cluster can therefore be interpreted as evidence of a broader transformation in political competition. Social media is no longer positioned merely as an additional channel for distributing campaign messages, but as an environment in which parties compete for attention, visibility, engagement, and political influence. The prominence of personalization and political branding further indicates that platform affordances encourage political actors to adapt campaign communication to the demands of continuous visibility and audience responsiveness.

The second cluster (dark green) concentrates on such issues as disinformation, fake news, political polarisation, propaganda, and negative campaigns. This is indicative of fears over how social media is abused by political forces in order to control the mass opinion, discredit political additions and propagate sectarian discourses. Most of the studies in this cluster leverage the application of big data and sentiment analysis to monitor the proliferation of negative messages and their influence on social fragmentation and trust in the population. This group brings to the fore the dark side of digital campaigns and it is a challenge to electoral democracy. The emergence of disinformation, fake news, polarization, propaganda, and negative campaigning as a distinct thematic cluster indicates that scholarly attention has moved beyond the mobilizing potential of social media toward the integrity of digital political information. These concerns should not be understood solely as problems of individual political actors. They are also related to the platform-mediated conditions through which political information is amplified, recommended, encountered, and contested. Algorithmic amplification may create incentives for emotionally salient content because highly

engaging messages can receive greater visibility. Thus, the democratic risks associated with digital campaigning emerge from the interaction between political strategy, platform architecture, and audience behavior.

The third cluster (purple) is dominated by methodological and analytical approaches including keywords like content analysis, network analysis, user engagement, and framing. The studies within this cluster show an increasing application of quantitative methods and network visualization in learning the patterns of interaction between the parties, influencers, and voters on social media. On the one hand, the digital political alliances and message resonance are mapped through network analysis and, on the other hand, the framing analysis shows how campaign messages are framed and perceived by the populace. This cluster contributes considerably to the creation of a critical model to digital campaigns. The fourth cluster (yellow) emphasizes the social aspect and political engagement, and it is concerned with the youth participation, gender, religion, and democracy. The research in this cluster is about how parties can also customize their campaign messages to specific groups in the audience, as well as vulnerable groups like women, youth, or minorities are generally inaccessible. Digital campaigns are viewed not only regarding content, but also regarding the audiences and the left-outs. The fifth cluster (orange and light brown) represents a case-based approach and a country-specific situation. The keywords used like Donald Trump, India, Germany, Nigeria, and China prove that the political systems, media culture, and platform policies of these nations are the major contributors to the digital presence of political parties. Nevertheless, the coverage of other regions of the world like Southeast Asia and more so, Indonesia is very low and this leaves a lot of room to be contributed to the world literature.

Overlay Visualisation by VOSviewer

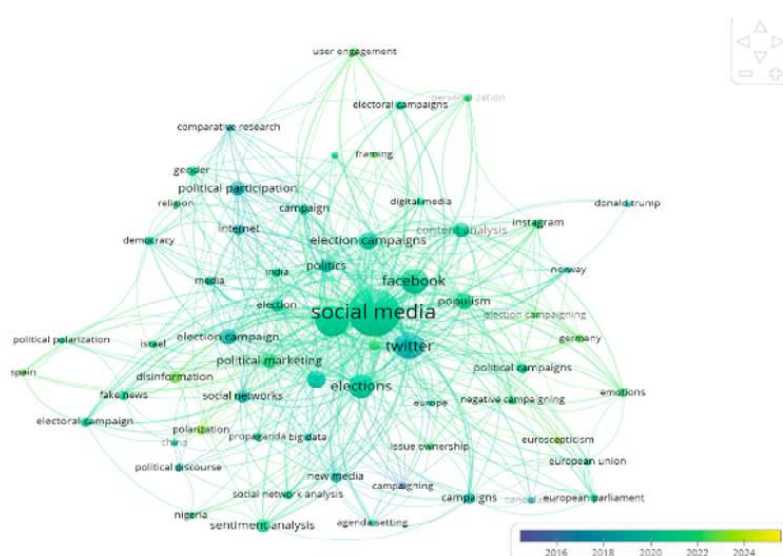


Figure 7. Overlay Visualisation by VOSviewer

This bibliometric visualisation offers a broad visualisation of the current global research on the topic of political parties involvement in digital campaigns using social media, relying on the articles indexed in Scopus between 2015 and 2025. As the visualisation shows, the key nodes include social media, elections, election campaigns, Twitter, and Facebook, which are central in the discourse of scholars and indicate that the use of social platforms as an effective means of electoral influence by political parties had been in the limelight of scholarly discourse. The fundamental aspect of the map is that there is a high correlation between social media and elections, meaning that online platforms have become focal points in influencing the opinion of the people and mobilising voters. The keywords such as political marketing, political participation, and campaigns imply that there is an increasing scholarly interest in the strategic application of the digital media to electoral behaviour. The usage of the terms, user engagement and sentiment analysis also point to the interest in the interaction with the audience and attitude suggesting that the research study is not limited to the field of message distribution but also to the sense of responsiveness and engagement of the electorate.

The other interesting dimension is the use of such terms as disinformation, fake news, polarisation and propaganda, which indicate the scholarly interest in the dark sides of digital campaigning. These words allude to the fact that emotional appeals and identity politics may abuse the politics of social media to take advantage of the emotional appeal and can deepen the divisions. This is an ethical dilemma that causes the strategic narrative building of political parties to be a significant field of research especially with increasing digital populism and declining democratic values. India, Germany, Spain, Nigeria and China are examples of geographical keywords that suggest the cross-nationality of this research area. The countries are a variety of democratic and digital backgrounds that expose not only the universal applicability but also local peculiarities of social media campaigning. The existence of the individual personalities like Donald Trump accentuates how high-profile individuals tend to be major subjects of case-based studies, particularly in situations characterized by aggressive or controversy digital practices.

The methodological approach is characterized by the emergence of keywords such as content analysis, social network analysis, framing, and agenda-setting, which implies a solid combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods, which are typically based on big data. Such techniques are used to map the construction of messages, campaign framing, and interaction networks between political actors and voters. Personalisation, issue ownership, and emotions are concepts that mirror the micro-level research on how parties or candidates develop messages that can create emotional appeal and perceived intimacy with the voters. Altogether, the five thematic clusters that came out of this visualisation highlight the complexity, multidisciplinary, and contextual variability of research concerning the political party digital campaigns. A combination of technical, ethical, communicative, and psychological methods provides a subtle insight into political communication in the digital era. Your article,

Mapping the Digital Campaign, makes a valuable contribution to this area, both in offering a bibliometric level of systematic and reflective overview of the world research trends, as well as the identification of major gaps and potential avenues of future research, particularly in regard to the concept of transparency, algorithmic power, and duality of social media in both empowering and disempowering democratic processes.

Density Visualisation VOSviewer

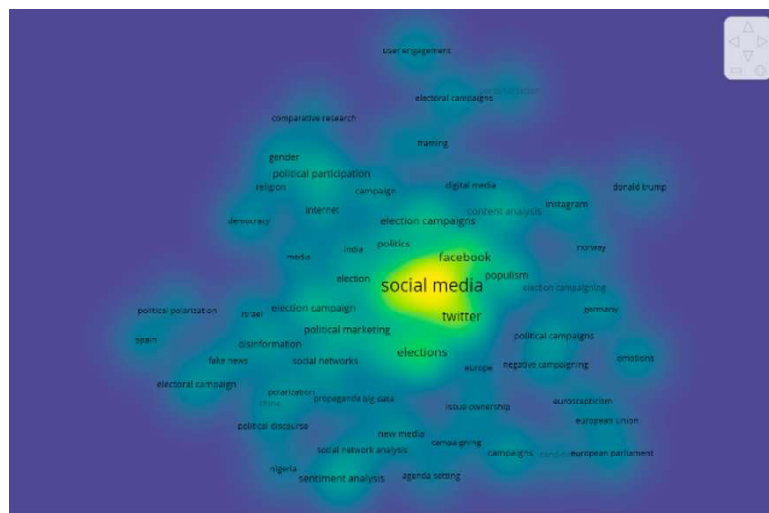


Figure 8. Density Visualisation VOSviewer.

The density chart created with the help of VOSviewer shows the concentration of the main terms that are most influential in actual political campaign used in the literature devoted to the subject of political party participation in digital campaigns on social media. Within the context of the title of the article, Mapping the Digital Campaign: A Bibliometric Analysis of Political Party Engagement on Social Media, the map offers a deep insight into the conceptual and thematic environment of the current academic discourse. The word social media takes the first place with the concentration of the bright yellow colours, which means the prevalence of discussion in the whole literary network. The word is framed by such words as Facebook, Twitter, and elections, which implies that the study of digital campaigns by political parties is closely tied to particular platforms and elections. This strengthens the argument that social media is one of the most important arenas of modern political communication plans where political parties not only spread information but also create stories, personalise political candidates, and quantify public reactions directly.

Taken together, the findings indicate that social media has transformed the conditions under which political parties communicate and compete. The transformation is multidimensional: mediatization explains the adaptation of political communication to media logic; platformization explains the growing dependence on digital infrastructures; algorithmic

visibility explains the competition for attention; and the literature on disinformation and polarization highlights the democratic risks generated by these transformations. Social media therefore represents neither an inherently democratizing nor inherently destabilizing force. Its political consequences emerge from the interaction between platform infrastructures, political strategies, institutional contexts, and citizen practices.

More distant to the centre, there are the keywords that include disinformation, fake news, polarisation and propaganda, which signify the problematic aspect of digital campaigns. This media is susceptible to manipulating the information due to low levels of digital political literacy, and social media algorithms that propagate the confirmation bias. The studies of this field frequently comment on how disinformation is used by political parties (or outside forces) to undermine political rivals or frame certain issues in a particular way. This demonstrates that on-line participation does not necessarily correlate to quality democracy. Other expressions like sentiment analysis, content analysis, and social network analysis indicate the trend towards the application of quantitative analytical techniques in the recent literature, which implies that the research on the topic does not revolve around campaign methods, but rather the sociological nature of digital politics and participation. With this instrument, one can more accurately map the patterns of interaction and the level of engagement, as well as the distribution of the campaign messages on different platforms. This implies that there is an interest in the way some segments of the population (e.g. women, religious groups or the younger generation) are accommodated or marginalised when it comes to the flow of digital campaigns.

DISCUSSION

This paper supports the claim that the involvement of political parties in online campaigns is a multidimensional process, which involves technical, political, ethical, and social aspects. The bibliometric visualisation shows that social media is not a simple communication resource, but a complicated and disputable digital arena in which power, influence, and narratives are discussed. These results highlight the necessity of conducting a systematic study of the academic literature on the topic and help to build a more systematic conceptual framework on the topic of understanding digital political campaigning in different contexts of the world. Twitter and Facebook become the most influential platforms in the political campaigns around the world through network and density visualisations. Twitter is more of opinion shaping in real-time, building a narrative, and candidate-voter communication, whereas Facebook is more about mobilisation, visual content (advertisements, videos) distribution, and message reach. This supports past studies that indicate the unique strategic functions of these platforms in digital political communication.

A striking tendency in the literature is the geographic focus towards western democracies including the United States, Germany, Norway and the major emerging economies like India and China. Co-occurrence networks are dominated by high-profile individuals such as Donald Trump, which suggests that the literature is biased towards celebrity politics and presidential campaigns. This provides the possibility of Global South based studies such as Indonesia to address the gap by studying party-level digital strategies in less examined political systems. Methodologically, the visualisations containing more and more purple clusters indicate the growing popularity of digital research methods, especially network analysis, sentiment analysis, content analysis, and machine learning. This trend of using the conventional descriptive approaches to data intensive methods shows the transformation of the digital campaign research into a more advanced analytical discipline. It also shows that political communication scholars need to adopt these tools in order to gain a better insight on online political behaviour.

The green cluster highlights serious issues related to disinformation, fake news, political polarisation and propaganda. These concerns have taken centre stage in the discussion of digital campaigning, with concerns being more widely felt around the globe about the destabilising nature of social media on the democratic process and electoral integrity. The discovery reinforces the need to conduct further studies to understand digital platform governance and how political actors should ethically use social media. The yellow cluster is emphasizing the aspect of social inclusion, especially on gender, religion, political involvement. Although there is potential in amplifying marginalised voices through social media, the scarcity of literature in the area of inclusivity indicates that there is a gap in the research. Future studies should therefore be on the use (or non-use) of social media by political parties to reach vulnerable sections of the population like women, minorities, and indigenous people. In spite of the fact that the research area is political party engagement, most articles are inclined to highlight individual political leaders and their branding, instead of institutional party strategies. This indicates a knowledge gap in the study of how the parties as a collective unit form digital identities and interact with voters on the Internet. Finally, it is a limitation of the existing body of literature that the number of case studies focusing on a single country does not help us to understand the role of cultural and political contexts in digital campaign strategies. The cross-national comparative studies are urgently required especially in underrepresented areas including Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America to achieve a better understanding of the practices of global digital campaigns

Taken together, the findings position political party engagement on social media as a multidimensional process in which political strategy, platform infrastructure, technological affordances, audience practices, and democratic concerns intersect. This theoretical synthesis provides a more coherent interpretation of the bibliometric clusters and demonstrates that the contribution of the study lies not only in identifying research trends but

also in showing how those trends reflect the broader transformation of political communication in platformized environments.

CONCLUSION

This study mapped the global development of research on political party engagement on social media between 2015 and 2025 using bibliometric analysis of 554 Scopus-indexed publications. The findings demonstrate that the literature is structured around five interconnected thematic domains: campaign strategies and engagement; disinformation and polarization; methodological approaches; social and political inclusion; and country-specific political contexts. Rather than representing isolated research topics, these clusters reveal a broader transformation in how digital political campaigning is conceptualized and studied. The theoretical interpretation of the findings suggests a progression from mediatization toward platformization in the study of political communication. Political parties increasingly adapt their communication practices to digital media logics, while their visibility, interaction, and audience engagement are simultaneously conditioned by platform infrastructures and affordances. The prominence of disinformation, polarization, algorithms, and political participation further indicates that platform power has become an important dimension of digital political competition. Digital campaigning should therefore be understood as a platform-mediated process in which political strategies interact with technological infrastructures, platform affordances, audience practices, and democratic conditions.

This highlights the necessity to investigate the research topic of digital campaigning in the Global South, including Indonesia, which is underrepresented in the world literature. The methodology has been changing, a trend prevalent in the field is the growing use of network analysis, content analysis, and machine learning, making descriptive studies a thing of the past, and more sophisticated data-driven research is being pursued. Furthermore, the analysis indicates that political parties as institutional actors are not given much attention as compared to individual candidates. Political parties are underrepresented as main units of analysis although they are central to the electoral politics. Also, the problem of inclusivity, the representation of genders and minority participation in digital campaigns is under-researched, which is also a significant gap in research. To sum up, the literature on political campaigns on social media continues to grow at a very fast rate; however, it is still disjointed in a number of key aspects. In future studies, more geographically varied settings should be considered, the institutional strategies utilized by parties should be studied, and the ethical and societal ramifications of digital campaigning should be addressed. The results of this investigation play an important role in advancing political communication, providing strategic implications of more inclusive, transparent, and evidence-based online campaigns.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author extends sincere appreciation and gratitude to O.P. Jindal Global University, Haryana, India, for the academic support provided during the preparation of this article. Through various facilitated academic activities and collaborations, the university has served as an invaluable platform for knowledge development, the enhancement of academic capacity, and the strengthening of the author's competence in scholarly writing. This support contributed significantly to the completion of the article. The author also acknowledges all those at O.P. Jindal Global University who shared their insights and experiences, and who fostered an academic environment conducive to research development and scholarly publication.