

JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Social Media Use in Election Campaigns: Bibliometric Analysis of Global Research Trends and Future Directions

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ABSTRACT

Social media has dramatically changed how political messages are shared, necessitating a thorough investigation of its influence. The widespread use of social media platforms has introduced new complexities, including the rapid dissemination of information and the formation of digital echo chambers, which have fundamentally altered the dynamics of democracy. This study employs a bibliometric analysis to examine the evolving research landscape on the impact of social media on elections from 2010 to 2024. The analysis identifies key authors, publications, sources, trends, and maps the structural development of the field using data from the SCOPUS database. Additionally, VOSviewer was used to analyse keyword co-occurrence and visualise the research network. The study also explores future research opportunities through emerging keywords, with particular attention to topics such as misinformation and machine learning. It further highlights the need for greater regional representation, as current research is predominantly focused on Western democracies. Ultimately, this study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the field, identify existing knowledge gaps, and support future academic inquiry and policy development in the digital age of elections, where voters and political actors are both participants and consumers.

Keywords: bibliometric analysis, political campaigns, social media, election, quantitative

Received: 30 March 2025, **Accepted:** 5 July 2025, **Published:** 30 July 2025

Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of daily life. The emergence of platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram has enabled accessible interaction and communication. According to the latest global digital report, there are 5.24 billion active social media users worldwide, dominated by the 16–24 age group, with the primary reason for installing these applications being to connect with family and friends (Kemp, 2025). This ease of communication fosters a sense of belonging in an age where nearly everyone is online. Social media allows individuals to connect, communicate, and stay informed about current affairs. The pervasive nature of these platforms also contributes to the "fear of missing out" (FOMO) phenomenon, alongside the rise of Internet celebrities and viral moments. With users increasingly involved in day-to-day events, social media has become a central arena for public debate and information dissemination, shaping social processes such as elections.

The use of social media to communicate during an election encompasses the selection of an appropriate platform. The choice of message dissemination channels is vital for reaching the electorate, particularly in relation to their preferred social media platforms. Scholars worldwide have studied platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. For example, using Facebook as a political platform is beneficial for dialogue with sympathisers and potential voters (Kalsnes, 2016). The potential of content to "go viral" and reach the desired voting demographic is crucial for attracting attention (Larsson, 2015). Facebook posts can also evoke emotions through controversial topics (Blassnig et al., 2021).

On the other hand, Twitter research often focuses on users' sentiments toward political candidates. Creating buzz during a campaign allows the electorate to witness the "backstage" moments of candidates, scenes often overlooked by mainstream media (Murthy, 2015). While electoral tweets frequently appear more harmful than positive, they tend to reflect genuine sentiments such as criticism, venting, and ridicule. This creates space for public discourse on candidates' personal traits and governmental capabilities (Mohammad et al., 2015). Thus, sentiment analysis on Twitter has provided valuable insights for campaign strategists worldwide to monitor social conversations and support political forecasting (Oh & Kumar, 2017).

Social media has revolutionized political campaigns by delivering, designing, and receiving messages. Politicians are no longer limited to traditional tactics, such as face-to-face campaigns, public speeches, and media appearances. According to Zhuravskaya et al. (2020), accessibility to the Internet and social media enables public participation in political discourse with increased accountability, making it a tool for good candidate-to-electorate communication. It is also helpful in surveying public opinion: a simple election poll using social media reactions or comments can gauge a candidate's popularity. Politicians deploy influencers or key opinion leaders to shape public discourse (McGregor, 2020).

As the field evolves, scholars are now turning their attention to new Internet players such as TikTok and Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in election campaign research. TikTok, a well-known entertainment platform, engages users through humour and personalised messaging. As a video-based platform, it has the potential to support a politician's narrative whether by confronting opposing beliefs through speech or by showcasing their humorous side (Fernandez, 2022). Candidates use TikTok to attract younger voters, aiming to sway their opinions and influence voting behaviour.

The platform's main strength lies in its ability to create a personalised content bubble (#foryoupage), which enables candidates to occupy the minds and hearts of the voting public by leveraging emotional currency (Abdullah, 2023; Cartes-Barroso et al., 2025; Grantham, 2024). In addition, humanising conservative or traditional politicians increases their chances of persuading the public. Joining trends and communicating with youth through TikTok is also an effective way to reach a diverse demographic one that can significantly impact election outcomes (Zamora-Medina et al., 2023).

With the growing body of literature on social media in election campaign studies, this study aims to explore key trends in the field through bibliometric analysis. This quantitative research method is employed to identify influential authors, publications, and keywords, thereby providing a comprehensive overview of the intellectual landscape. Mapping the structure of existing research is valuable for guiding future directions by highlighting prevailing trends and identifying gaps in prior studies. Using Scopus as the primary database, this bibliometric analysis focuses on research related to social media and election campaigns published between 2010 and 2024. This paper presents the research goals through the following research questions:

1. What is the present status of the research landscape of using social media in election campaigns?
2. Which key players, namely, authors, sources, countries, and journals, have contributed to driving progress in social media research in election campaigns?
3. What recent trends in terms of keywords can be observed in publications related to social media and election campaigns?
4. What are the research gaps underlying the development and growth of the adoption and use of social media in election campaigns?

Literature Review

Social Media and Elections

In the age of political communication on social media, many scholars have analysed the role of these platforms in changing the election landscape. For instance, Baviera et al. (2022) studied the potential of Facebook advertising to use targeted messaging to attract specific demographics in Spain. They found that candidates used the platform more to craft their public image than to share their policies. Emojis serve as communication tools, and politicians use them to align with their intended messages. Similarly, Fenoll (2022) examined the potential of Facebook posts to communicate populist rhetoric. Engaging the public is essential to generate likes and shares on the platform, demonstrate dominance of opinion, and tap into users' predisposition to share anti-elite rhetoric that resonates with voters' beliefs. While it is true that the content of Facebook posts can be an effective tool for persuading the public, the danger of disinformation persists. Campaigners who use misleading statements and falsehoods often targeting political rivals can undermine a country's democratic process (Cano-Orón et al., 2021).

Twitter is a top-of-mind platform for political discourse. Numerous studies have used tweets to predict election results. Drawing on a corpus of 1.2 billion tweets, Chen et al. (2022) applied computational techniques to capture political discourse on Twitter during the 2020 US Presidential elections. They unveiled that people are talking mainly about parties, debates, riots, and the transition of the president. Furthermore, Heredia et al. (2017) stated that focusing on tweet volume alone in predicting 2016 election results resulted in inaccurate predictions compared to traditional polls and election results. They suggested that looking into sentiments significantly improves accuracy. Oikonomou and Tjortjis (2018) used sentiment analysis to report views on Twitter related to the 2016 US elections, limiting it to geography. They found that sentiments in the three states predicted Donald Trump's victory, showing much accuracy compared to traditional polls.

The advent of social media has enabled the incorporation of multimodal materials and platforms. Politicians now use YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok to vlog their way to public office. Litvinenko (2021) examined political videos on Russian YouTube during the 2018 election. The platform served as an alternative media outlet through which the opposition could communicate with the public to garner votes, given that mainstream media were state sponsored. The use of YouTube allowed for critical insights and provided space for dissent both crucial for balancing controlled political narratives in the country.

In Tokyo, Japan, YouTube played a significant role in the 2024 gubernatorial election. Intense online campaigning revealed that the platform's capacity to deliver varied political content helped reach a wider audience. It also enabled individuals to independently post and disseminate information, reaching the younger generation more effectively (Nakamura, 2024). As younger voters increasingly consume content in visual and short-form formats, YouTube's algorithmic visibility and community features have made it a strategic tool for voter outreach and mobilisation.

Furthermore, videos from YouTube and Instagram were used in Bahrain to shape the public image of politicians, portraying them as either strong-willed or sympathetic. Although these videos lacked discussion of socio-political issues, they were successful in constructing appealing political personas. This form of image management underscores the performative aspect of political campaigning on social media, where optics often outweigh substance. Women politicians were also found to utilise social media more than their male counterparts (Elareshi et al., 2021), suggesting a gendered strategy in digital engagement that deserves further investigation.

Cross-platform strategies are increasingly evident in the ever-changing social media landscape; platforms differ in functionality, algorithms, and engagement models, offering a comparative perspective on their significance in political communication. Bossetta (2018) examined the digital architectures of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, each of which provides different affordances for politicians. He found that in recent U.S. elections, there was a notable increase in social media advertising expenditure. Facebook, with its large user base, remained the dominant platform, while more informal engagements were observed on Snapchat, X, and Instagram. These differences

illustrate the need for tailored campaign strategies that align with platform-specific norms and user behaviours.

Reuter and Szakonyi's (2015) case study of the Russian parliamentary elections demonstrated that social media can be a powerful tool for political communication, particularly in raising political awareness. While government intervention and censorship may affect message effectiveness, social media often finds alternative pathways to disseminate information. In restrictive media environments, this digital workaround becomes a critical avenue for political expression and mobilisation.

Globally, scholars have explored the voices of underrepresented groups in election campaigns, including gender, culture, and political fanaticism. In India, Banerjee et al. (2024) explored the digital artefacts of women politicians, revealing that they strategically used gendered symbols such as sartorial choices or traditional attire to strengthen their political brand and resonate with cultural expectations. In the Philippines, Sinpeng et al. (2020) studied the role of "fans" or fervent supporters of Digong, who served as the backbone of his campaign. These supporters were highly active online, and their aggressive engagement played a crucial role in influencing the election outcome.

McTernan (2024) studied the use of authenticity by Australian politicians to connect with people. Using ordinariness and presenting as an ordinary person has increased engagement, and the old populist tactic has been less effective in communicating with Facebook users. This is similar to Gruber's (2019) study in Austria, in which he wrote, '*Are Austrian presidential candidates ordinary people?*' Candidate *self-presentation strategies on Twitter during the 2016 Austrian presidential election campaign*. This growing phenomenon of using political authenticity on social media has been rampant, as more politicians want to be seen as ordinary and authentic.

Larsson (2020) studied the cross-platform strategies of politicians in Norway and found that political messaging is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Politicians should tailor their political communication to each platform. This aligns with Bene's (2018) findings on the Hungarian elections, which showed that the way politicians attract voters to share and engage with content on Facebook has a positive relationship with election outcomes. Finally, in Israel, politicians' aesthetic and visual values have been linked to better voter engagement, encouraging candidates to be more mindful and to curate their content more effectively for public consumption (Markowitz-Elfassi et al., 2019).

Indeed, the ubiquity of social media in contemporary democracies underscores its importance in shaping elections. Platforms such as Facebook enable politicians to connect with the electorate more effectively through targeted messaging and advertising. While Instagram and Twitter offer different affordances, they also play key roles in image building and political discourse. However, the public must remain aware of the risks of disinformation and misuse, as social media is highly susceptible to unverified information. In some countries, social media serves as an alternative medium for challenging state-sponsored traditional media environments. These studies highlight the implications of social media in elections, the growing influence of these platforms, and the threats that may emerge in the future of election campaigns.

Bibliometric Analysis in Practice

The use of bibliometric analysis to map the intellectual structure of articles published in established databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, and Dimensions has grown significantly in recent years. It serves as a valuable tool for understanding the impact of publications within a field, identifying leading authors, citation networks, recurring keywords, and emerging research trends. For instance, Al-Khoury et al. (2022) utilised Scopus to trace the historical development of intellectual capital research, focusing on core principles, thematic trajectories, and key contributors. This approach enabled the identification of influential scholarly networks and the evolution of research themes within the discipline. Their study also offered insights into practical applications for organisations aiming to leverage intellectual capital for competitive advantage.

Furthermore, examining co-occurrences, keywords, or author relationships can reveal interconnected networks that form the foundation of intellectual progress. These concepts, ideas, and collaborations

contribute to cognitive frameworks that shape how researchers communicate, collaborate, and coordinate their thinking within a field (Bornmann et al., 2018; Lozano et al., 2019; Radhakrishnan et al., 2017). By visualising such structures, bibliometric analysis not only maps existing knowledge but also helps guide future directions in research. For example, Alsharif et al. (2020) reported a growing body of neuromarketing studies focused on consumer insights rather than traditional marketing approaches. However, they noted a clear gap in the literature regarding election campaigns, political advertising, and the development of affordable neuromarketing tools, areas that remain underexplored and ripe for scholarly inquiry.

Despite its practical implications, Subekti et al. (2023) explored the lack of publications on political communication on social media. Their study revealed that the key themes in the field are information dissemination, campaigns, and strategic use. As a growing field, new terms may arise in the coming years. Obreja (2023) investigated the popular social media and election keywords and found that words such as 'COVID-19' are associated with disinformation, fake news, and infodemic. Donald Trump's presidency also brought new terms such as memes, migration, and refugees.

In Turkey, Özkaynar (2023) suggests that, in the past 40 years, only 14 studies related to political marketing and elections can be found in the Turkish authors category. Using a comparative view of international publications in Turkey, they see that there are gaps in knowledge at the local level since the data are scarce. On the other hand, Indonesian authors have published research on social media in elections for the past decade. Interest in using social media for presidential elections has recently garnered 63 publications recently (Widayat et al., 2022).

Similarly, African researchers closely follow the United States and the United Kingdom in publishing research articles on social media in elections. Topics included in the African scientific landscape involve social media in community engagement, the effect of social media on African conflicts, freedom discourse, and human rights (Musa & Musa, 2023). This growing body of literature reflects the increasing academic interest in how digital platforms intersect with political participation and governance in diverse sociopolitical contexts across the continent.

Undeniably, bibliometric analysis is essential for mapping the intellectual structure of research, revealing trends, gaps, influential authors, institutions, and key themes. In the context of election campaigns on social media, bibliometric analysis has been applied comparatively in countries such as Turkey, Indonesia, and across Africa. These findings are vital in addressing the lack of innovation in the field, helping to identify underexplored areas and inspire more interdisciplinary approaches to political communication research.

Using data from Scopus, the following table provides a clear overview of bibliometric analysis in social media and election campaign research. Table 1 presents the authors, search keyword strategies, number of documents examined, and key attributes. It serves as a useful reference point for scholars seeking to understand the methodological landscape and thematic priorities within this growing research area.

Table 1

Overview Of Social Media in Election Campaign Studies

Author/s	Search Keywords	Number of Documents	Examined Attributes
Sanofi et al. (2024)	Adopt Use Web 2.0 (etc.) Election Campaign	1117	Publication Trend Citation Analysis Leading Authors and Sources Countries and Institutions Subjects and Themes
Ranjan and Upadhyay (2024)	Political advertising Political advertisers Political adverts Political advertisement	114	Bibliometric Performance Intellectual structure Objective and source Message dissemination channel Decoding behavioural patterns/receiver and its consequences
Pellegrino (2023)	Social media Social networking sites Facebook Instagram Twitter Political Campaigns	265	Volume, Growth Trajectory, and Geographic Distribution of the Literature Analysis of Influential Authors Intellectual Structure Most Influential Source Title in the Field of Social Media about the Promotion of Political Campaigns Co-occurrence Analysis
Prakash and Dwivedi (2022)	Political campaigning Election campaigning	1090	Authors Journal Most relevant keyword Country-level analysis and affiliations Highly globally cited document
Subekti, Nurmandi, and Salahudin (2022)	Social media elections	1555	Trends in Global Publication Contributions of Countries Journal Analysis Research Type Institution Output Author Co-authorship Analysis Co-occurrence Analysis Contribution of Social Media to Elections

Note: Only Scopus and articles in English are included.

Methods

Data were acquired from the Scopus database on March 25, 2025. Scopus is a widely known database of peer-reviewed articles that is highly regarded in research. While there are other databases such as Web of Science, PubMed, and Dimensions, the Scopus website is user-friendly, specifically for young

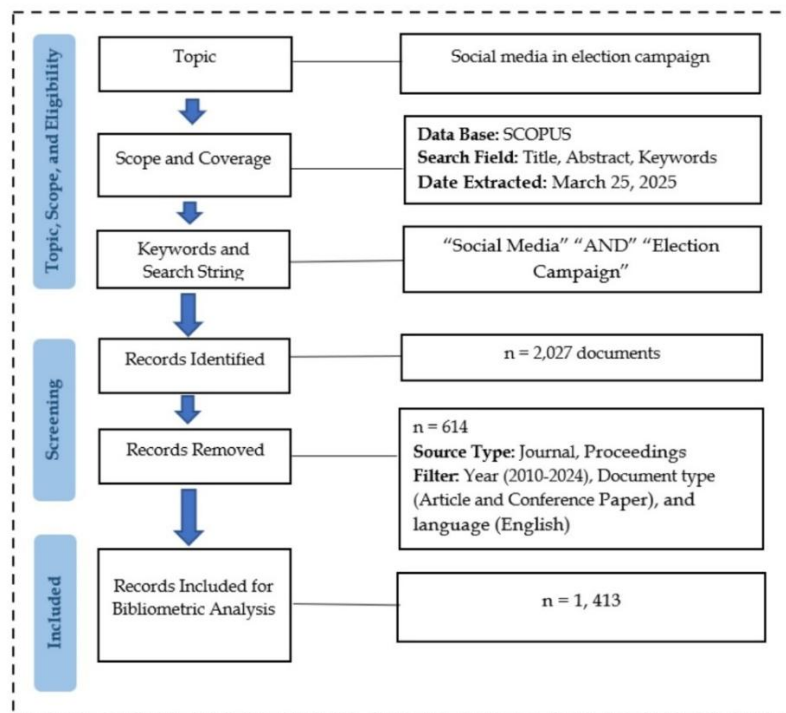
researchers. It provides an easy navigation feature that allows researchers to look for basic information, such as authors, keywords, journals, citations, and so on, and an opportunity to quickly search outside one's discipline (Burnham, 2006). Researchers have used Scopus in different fields to navigate a multitude of data in their field of study, mainly to examine trends and potential research gaps (Chung & Tsay, 2015; Fiallos et al., 2017; Herrera-Franco et al., 2020; Khudzari et al., 2018).

A strategic search is important in bibliometric analysis because it can reveal accurate data for the study. Farooq et al. (2023) suggested strategic search space selection, using varied spaces for different keywords and a "crisscross union" strategy to capture a broader range of relevant articles because databases are sensitive to keywords. Identifying a pattern from previous research can help to design and contrast the search flow strategy in bibliometric analysis (Passas, 2024). While using only one database can limit the number of articles, the advantage of using it is that it can easily categorize mapped articles in the specified source, providing a more valid entry.

To ensure relevant search results, the keywords used were classified into two sections, namely "social media" and "election campaigns," and using Boolean indicator "AND" To capture the latest trends in research on the adoption and use of social media in election campaigns, the search for publication years was refined from 2010 to 2024. The initial data search yielded 2,023 articles. After excluding years, document types, and irrelevant documents, 1,417 articles remained for further analysis, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Search Strategy Flowchart



The structured framework of the bibliometric analysis should include inclusion and exclusion criteria to refine the search strategy. Setting a review system to pre-screen data characteristics, such as population, sample, design, and outcome, helps determine the field's trends (McKenzie et al., 2019). Table 2 shows the criteria preset in Scopus, such as year, document type, language, and topic. This bibliometric study examined published articles from 2010-2024 to, journal articles, and conference proceedings in English relevant to social media and election campaigns.

Table 2

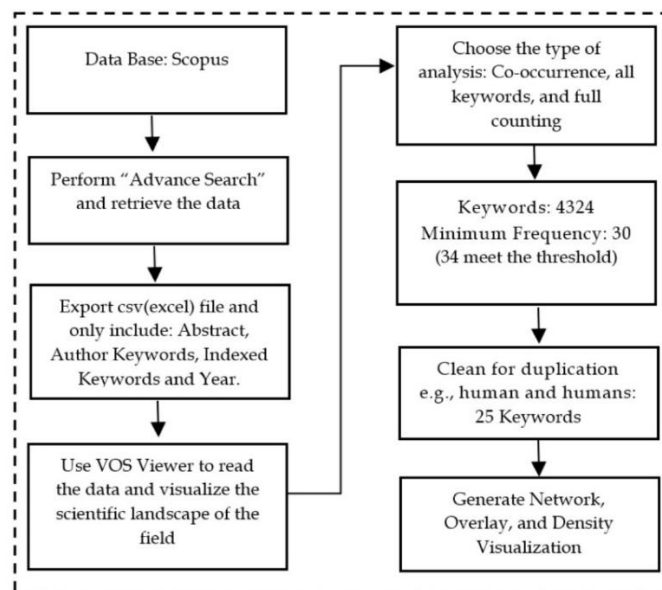
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Year	2010 - 2024	-
Document Type	Journal Article, Conference	Book Reviews, Book Chapters, and Book
Language	English	Non-English
Topic	Relevant to social media and election campaigns	Irrelevant to social media and election campaigns

After retrieving the data from Scopus, it was processed using VOSviewer, a software that can analyze the co-occurrence of keywords and create a map based on bibliographic data. The excel file generated 4,324 keywords. Because this research aims to identify the leading keywords in the field, a minimum frequency of 30 occurrences in the data was used; 34 keywords appeared from the corpus, which was then cleaned for duplication (mostly plural form of the word), leading to 25 keywords as shown in Figure 2

Figure 2

VOSViewer for Data Analysis Flowchart



Results

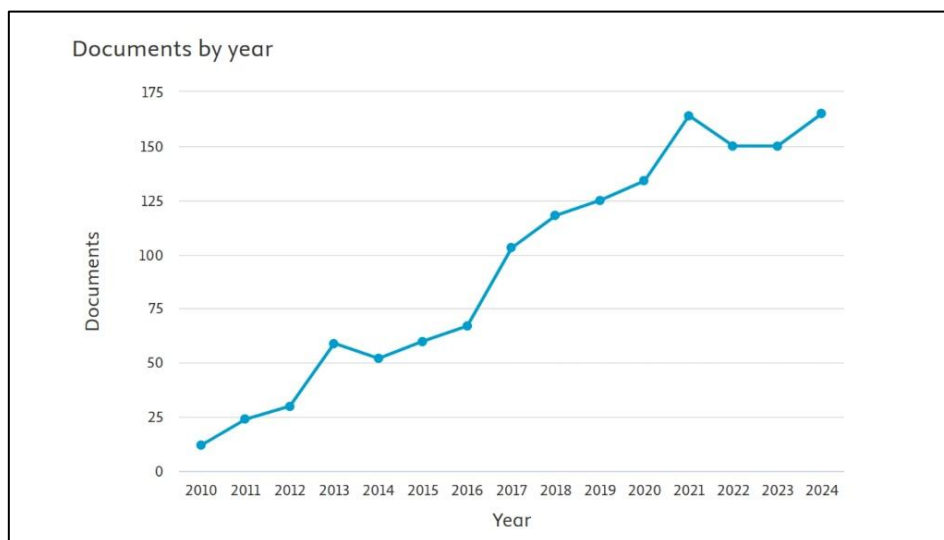
Growth Trajectory of the Field

There has been a growing trend in topics over the years as social media constantly changes the election landscape. Figure 3 reveals that research from to 2010-2016 was relatively low, and there is a gradually increasing interest as new social media players enter the market. There was a massive flow of articles when global elections began using Facebook and Twitter. In 2021, publications appeared to peak in Scopus, highlighting the introduction of more advanced applications, such as TikTok.

Gulati and Williams (2010) studied the early adopters of YouTube in election campaigns. They found that better-financed candidates were likely to use new technology to communicate with their voters. Even though the content on their YouTube channel fits more into traditional media, they still use this platform to disseminate information. In 2016, researchers recognized the power of social media in shaping democracy. People can post online and influence their friends without filters; they can also engage in comments and drive political conversation (Artime, 2016; Safiullah et al., 2016). During the pandemic, research on social media in election campaigns has increased. Scholars are looking at the impact of information related to COVID-19, the pandemic, and vaccination, and its impact on online election campaigns (Ajovalasit et al., 2021). They also examined the challenges of the infodemic, highlighting fake news and disinformation. This growing literature is important to analyze, as it can reveal that there is currently good momentum in researching the impact of social media on election campaigns.

Figure 3

Documents by Year in Scopus



Key Players in the Field

Knowing the leading authors would provide a better view of the field, as we are discussing the impact of articles in this section. This section provides scholars with insight into knowledge generation and article dissemination. Table 3 features the rank, author, number of articles, and citations of their research on social media during election campaigns. Larsson ranked the most published (18 articles) and most cited (861 citations) authors in the field of election campaigns on social media. Notably, most authors in the top ten are from Western countries, specifically the United States (3) and Norway (2). Larsson's prominence in the field is rooted in his work on Twitter and Facebook usage in election campaigns. His early work on Twitter as a microblogging tool in online campaigning and deliberation in Sweden (Larsson & Moe, 2012) has been a framework for many researchers worldwide. He then studied the potential of Facebook to play an important role in long-term campaigning, not just during the election period but also in studying political actors and their social media strategies in general (Larsson, 2016).

Table 3

Leading Authors in Social Media in Election Campaigns Research

Rank	Authors	Country	Articles	Citations
1	Larsson, A. O.	Norway	18	861
2	Bene, M.	Hungary	10	306
3	Vaccari, C.	United Kingdom	10	686
4	Hemsley, J.	United States	9	90
5	Stromer-Galley, J.	United States	9	91
6	Ceron, A.	Italy	8	647
7	Fenoll, V.	Spain	8	21
8	Ferrara, E.	United States	8	789
9	Samuel-Azran, T.	Israel	8	232
10	Skogerbo, E.	Norway	8	606

Another important area for aspiring scholars is to look at the top journals publishing in their fields of study. As shown in Table 4, most of the journals listed in the top 10 are in Scopus Quartile 1, meaning that social media in election campaign research is published in top-quality journals in media, communication, and politics. Various fields also encompass the interdisciplinary nature of this field of research, publishing in information technology, marketing, and social sciences. The Journal of Information Technology and Politics' most cited publication, *"Algorithms, Bots, and Political Communication in the US 2016 Election: The Challenge of Automated Political Communication for Election Law and Administration,"* focuses on the changing election landscape due to internet intervention.

Table 4

Top Journals Publishing Social Media in Election Campaigns

Rank	Source	Documents	Quartile	Publisher
1	Journal of Information Technology and Politics	39	Q1	Taylor & Francis
2	Information Communication and Society	35	Q1	Taylor & Francis
3	New Media and Society	32	Q1	SAGE
4	ACM International Conference Proceeding Series	32	-	Association for Computing Machinery
5	Journal of Political Marketing	32	Q1	Taylor & Francis
6	Social Media and Society	31		SAGE
7	International Journal of Communication	25	Q1	University of Southern California
8	Political Communication	21	Q1	Taylor & Francis
9	International Journal of Press and Politics	21	Q1	SAGE
10	Social Science	20	Q1	SAGE

Keyword Occurrence and Network Visualisation

The number of keywords used in a research field helps other authors identify prevailing trends and existing gaps. In the context of social media and election campaigns, the data strongly favoured platform-related terms, such as Facebook and Twitter, which appear frequently in the literature. As shown in Table 5, the most commonly used keyword is “social media,” followed by “social networking,” reflecting the field’s evolving terminology. It is also noteworthy that terms such as "social media" vs. "social networking" and "political communication" vs. "election campaign" are often used interchangeably in scholarly work. Additionally, sentiment analysis emerges as a prominent research method, focusing on the emotional reactions and discussions of social media users during election periods.

Table 5

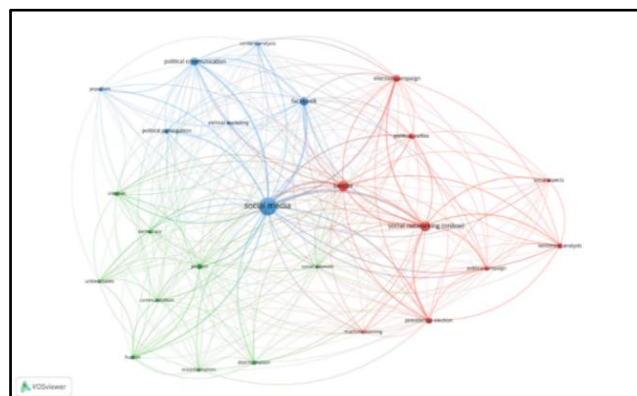
Frequency of Occurrence of the Top 10 keywords

Rank	Keywords	Occurrences	Link Strength
1	Social Media	762	1748
2	Social Networking	262	899
3	Twitter	269	687
4	Election	178	575
5	Facebook	175	458
6	Political Communication	170	378
7	Election Campaign	132	362
8	Presidential Election	98	327
9	Sentiment Analysis	74	246
10	Human	54	284

This network graph presents prominent keywords, clusters, and connections. Figure 4 provides the top 25 keywords on social media for election campaigns. First, blue-clustered keywords showcase political processes, as they connect to political communication, marketing, and participation while engaging with political parties and democracy. Second, red-clustered keywords focus on social media platforms that are commonly used in elections, such as Facebook and Twitter. At the same time, this trend is expected because of the nature of these platforms, which attracts discussion; this also opens the possibility of using other growing platforms such as TikTok and Instagram in future research. Finally, green clustered words lean towards information-related challenges, such as misinformation and disinformation.

Figure 4

Network Visualization of social media in election campaigns

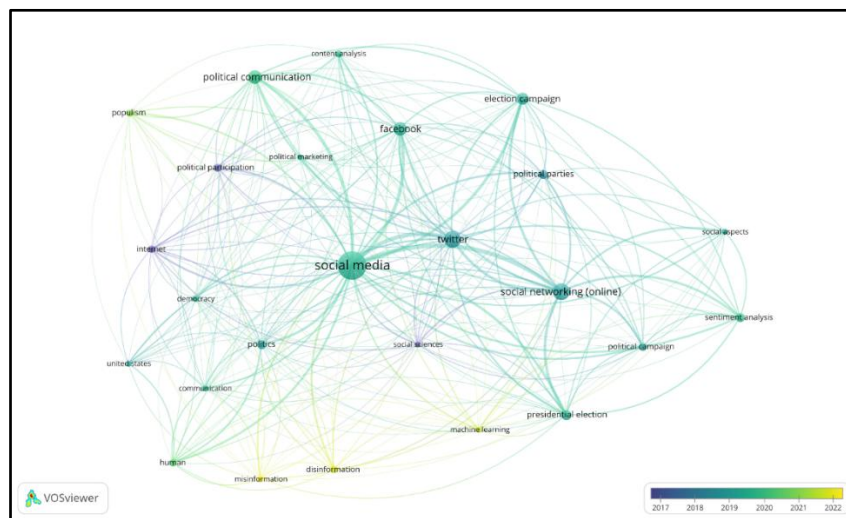


Trends and Future Directions

Understanding field trends help researchers build on the key concepts of social media usage in election campaigns. Figure 5 shows a noticeable evolution of terms and research focus. The field started heavily on platform usage, as politicians consider it an additional channel through which to send traditional messages. However, scholars are now examining political processes in social media and communication dynamics, specifically voters' sentiments. Recently, there has been growing interest in disinformation and misinformation on social media, specifically during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, the interest in applying machine learning to social media in election research is the future of the field.

Figure 5

Overlay Visualization of social media in election campaigns



Discussion

On the Growth and Sustainability of the Field

Mapping the research landscape of social media in election campaigns has proven to have good momentum in this field. Based on the gathered data, the consistent increase in publications and high volume of research, specifically from 2022 to 2024, suggests sustained interest in the impact of social media on elections. However, the rapid change in social media, such as gendered politics (women politicians are assumed to be early adopters of social media in political campaigns than men), fake news and disinformation, and the interdisciplinary nature of the field raise concerns about the ability of scholars and institutions to continue researching emerging trends, threats, and opportunities.

Towner and Muñoz (2024) analysed the contents of politicians' Instagram stories before and after election day. They found that they shared voter support behind the campaigns and indoor rallies. One interesting finding from their research is that women utilise Instagram more than men, specifically the "story" feature during their political campaigns. Women's social media usage patterns can be traced to a lack of traditional media exposure. For instance, Chang et al. (2024) revealed in their research that women still receive lower coverage than their male counterparts. However, this shows the power of social media to change the information dissemination channel for women, aiming for more equal exposure.

Scholars have recently examined the rise of unverified information on social media, which could affect voters' decisions. Serafino et al. (2024) investigated Twitter users suspended during the 2016 US presidential elections, which were aimed at swaying the voting decisions of undecided voters and weak supporters. Alarming online content and trolling on social media have become stronger as the Internet

advances. In addition, Łabuz and Nehring (2024) revealed the use of deepfakes in disruptive elections, calling for stronger social media literacy.

As social media during elections continues to grow with the advent of technology, new Internet players may continue to rise after TikTok. However, the methodological gap in the field persists, as only sentiment analysis made it the top 10 keywords related to the research method. Santana et al. (2024) proposed a scalable computer-vision-based approach. Using the case of Lula, a candidate in Brazil's 2022 presidential election, they investigated the visual elements of the Instagram posts. The multimodal features of the application include the relationship between the post and engagement clustering of tags for thematic analysis. They proposed a social media content analysis that required minimal human intervention through a computational study method.

On Diversity and Research Opportunity

In the past decade, scholars in the field of election campaign research have established a strong reputation by focusing on the use of social media for political marketing. Prominent researchers have guided the field through exploration, innovation, and critical debate, continually updating key concepts. Arguably, the 2016 U.S. presidential election has become the most extensively studied event in this field, generating numerous analyses of Facebook and Twitter. Many scholars have also used the 2016 election as a framework for their own studies, applying its insights to local electoral contexts.

Although the bulk of existing research focuses on Western democracies, studying other electoral environments remains essential for deepening our understanding of the global impact of social media on elections. For instance, social media use in Southeast Asia offers a compelling case, as political actors leverage it to raise awareness, share humour, and engage in debate. Tapsell (2021) interviewed social media strategists from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia to examine how campaigns have adapted to this evolving digital battleground. These interviews revealed that social media discourse in the region is often subversive and centred around identity politics.

In the 2022 Philippine presidential election, for example, leading candidates Leni Robredo and Bongbong Marcos actively used a wide range of social media platforms to connect with voters. Much of their content aimed to deliver compelling narratives rooted in Filipino culture and emotional resonance (Ampon, 2023).

TikTok is also an interesting platform in Asia; this video-based social media application encourages politainment during election campaigns. Susilo et al. (2024) reviewed the potential of TikTok to raise the political awareness of Indonesian voters, specifically the "Gemoy" strategy during presidential elections. The TikTok strategy increased awareness and public debate related to elections, an important aspect of candidates' visibility and, later, voters' recall. In Malaysia, Kasmani (2023) examined the role of TikTok during the 15th general election campaign, revolutionized old social media tactics, and served as an opportunity for new platform usage.

Finally, the emergence of artificial intelligence will disrupt social media election campaigns in the future. Youth who grew up in the age of social media will be the major voters for the upcoming elections. Research on youth and content creation is valuable. This will open the doors to hyper personalised marketing and sophisticated targeting. This technological advancement will intensify the debate on authenticity, misinformation, and the boundaries of social media usage.

Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the research landscape on the adoption and use of social media in election campaigns from 2010 to 2024. This study addressed key questions regarding the status, influential contributors, recent trends, and underlying research topics within this communication field by examining publications indexed in the Scopus database. The findings reveal an expanding area of scholarly inquiry that has significantly expanded along with the increasing prominence of social media in political processes worldwide.

Recent trends observed in publications point towards an evolution in the research focus. Initially, studies concentrated on political actors' adoption and usage of specific platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. However, the field has broadened to include public opinion surveys, influencer marketing, and cross-platform strategies. More recently, there has been a surge in research examining the challenges of misinformation and disinformation, and the application of advanced technologies such as TikTok and Generative AI in political campaigning.

The key players driving progress in this field include influential authors, prominent sources, and contributing countries and institutions. The dominance of authors from Western countries, particularly the United States and Norway, suggests a potential gap in research from other regions, especially considering the diverse democratic landscapes of Asia and Africa.

The field is increasingly engaging with broader themes, such as political communication strategies, voter engagement, the impact of social media on democratic processes, and the challenges of online manipulation. The emergence of keywords related to misinformation, disinformation, and the application of machine learning signifies evolving concerns and future research directions. Looking ahead, the overlay visualization of keyword occurrences over time suggests several future research directions. While platform-specific studies remain relevant, there is a clear trend towards investigating the complexities of political processes in social media environments. The growing emphasis on disinformation and misinformation is a critical area for future research, particularly in understanding its impact on election outcomes and potential mitigation strategies.

Despite the valuable insights gained from this bibliometric analysis, several limitations of this study must be acknowledged. First, the study's reliance solely on the Scopus database inherently restricts the scope of the analysed literature. Although Scopus is a comprehensive and reputable source, it does not index all scholarly publications. This analysis did not include research published in other databases, such as Web of Science, PubMed, or regional databases, as well as grey literature, such as white papers and reports. This could overlook the relevant studies and skew the overall representation of the field.

Furthermore, although carefully designed with relevant keywords, the search strategy might not have captured every publication related to social media in election campaigns. The inherent ambiguity and evolving terminology within this interdisciplinary field could have excluded pertinent articles. Nonetheless, the replication method used in this study can be clearly distinguished as a guide for future research.

Acknowledgment

The author wishes to acknowledge King Mongkut's University of Technology and the School of Liberal Arts for their unwavering support of their staff pursuing research in this project.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

Author Contribution Statement

RKA: Conceptualization, data curation, methodology, writing—original draft, writing—review, and editing.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Ethics Statement

This research did not require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, as bibliometric analysis does not involve human participants. The study was based solely on the collection and analysis of publicly available data from the Scopus database.

Data Access Statement

Research data supporting this publication are available upon request to the corresponding author

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