

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN SHAPING POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND VOTER BEHAVIOUR IN LOK SABHA ELECTIONS 2024

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ABSTRACT

The research investigates how social media platforms function as tools that shape political communication and voter behavior during the Lok Sabha Elections of 2024. The increasing use of digital technologies and the higher internet access rates in India have established Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp as essential platforms for political campaigns and public discussions. The research uses a quantitative approach which includes a survey of 200 participants to examine the effects of social media on political awareness and engagement and their voting behavior. The research results demonstrate that social media platforms create intense voter perception changes through their ability to deliver specialized content and enable instant communication and share information, while they also show the problems that come with false information and social division. The research helps scientists understand digital democracy better while providing information that will assist policymakers and political experts.

Keywords: Social Media, Political Communication, Voter Behaviour, Lok Sabha Elections 2024, Digital Campaigning, Misinformation, Political Awareness, India

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Digital technologies have developed at a quick pace which has changed how political communication works throughout the world because social media platforms have become the main way that politicians and citizens communicate with each other. The Indian population now uses Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp because internet access has grown and people can use smartphones to reach these social media platforms. The platforms enable users to exchange information in real time and organize political activities and develop their personal views about different topics. The transition from traditional media to digital platforms has brought about new electoral strategies which have changed how voters connect with political candidates. This study investigates the impact of social media on political communication and voter behavior during democratic elections which include the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections 2024.

1.2 Evolution and Impact of Social Media on Political Communication in India

Social media began as a basic outreach tool for Indian politics but became essential for election campaigns after its successful use during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and its development through the 2019 and 2024 elections which introduced new methods such as data analytics and influencer engagement and AI-based content production. Political

communication in the digital age now allows for direct engagement between citizens and leaders through interactive channels which also create problems with misinformation spread and political divide. Social media platforms now play a crucial role in elections by shaping narratives, mobilizing voters, and enabling targeted campaigning. The 2024 Lok Sabha Elections demonstrated how these platforms affected both voter behavior and democratic participation in the electoral process.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

People still do not know how social media platforms affect Indian voter behavior and political communication despite social media's growing role in political processes. Digital campaigning has become more common which leads to problems about spreading false information and controlling public views and building divided social groups. The social media platforms show their complete power which creates uncertainty about their effect on voter decision-making. This research project aims to solve these problems through a study of social media platforms which show their impact on political communication and voter behavior during the Lok Sabha Elections 2024 elections to advance understanding of digital democracy in India.

1.4 Research Gap

Current research on political communication and social media focuses exclusively on Western regions while there is insufficient research studying Indian electoral processes. Research investigates how social media affects voter engagement yet it fails to provide a complete study of all platforms and their impact on voter behavior. The research studies fail to consider how misinformation and regional differences and cultural elements affect political communication. The upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections will enable researchers to investigate unstudied areas through their provision of current data about how social media platforms have changed their function in Indian politics and how this development affects democratic processes.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The research study establishes important academic value because it expands existing knowledge about digital political communication and voter behavior. The research study examines how social media platforms affect electoral processes in India which represents a democratic system with diverse populations. The findings can assist policymakers in developing regulations to address misinformation and ensure fair elections. Political parties can use the insights to design more effective and ethical campaign strategies. The research study increases public understanding about how social media influences political opinion formation which leads to better public engagement in democratic processes..

1.6 Scope of the Study

The research examines how major social media platforms including Facebook Twitter Instagram YouTube and WhatsApp impact political communication and voter behavior during the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections. The research investigates how digital content affects voter perceptions through its effect on user engagement and campaign strategies. The study primarily considers Indian voters across different demographic groups. The research does not provide detailed information about traditional media and offline campaign methods. The research focuses on digital platforms to study their electoral system impact on Indian elections.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Agarwal (2018) studied how social media platforms affect political awareness and voter turnout in India. The research demonstrated that Facebook and WhatsApp platforms have transformed political participation because they enable youth and first-time voters to engage in the political process. Agarwal discovered that digital campaigns allow political parties to establish direct communication with voters while avoiding conventional media intermediaries. The research demonstrated that false information and partial content create dangers which alter how voters perceive information. The study found that social media platforms improve democratic participation but they create problems about the genuine nature and trustworthy status of political content which users share on these platforms.

Bennett and Segerberg (2012) studied the concept of connective action as it applies to digital political communication through their research which showed that social media platforms enable users to engage in politics through personal networks. Their research demonstrated that individuals are more likely to participate in political activities when they can express personal views through digital networks. The research study demonstrates how online platforms create new patterns of political behavior among groups because it demonstrates these patterns emerge without needing established organizations. The research showed how digital media helps political campaigns mobilize voters while controlling political discussions which makes it essential for studying modern electoral voter behavior and communication methods.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations of Political Communication

The public sphere functions as the essential foundation for political communication research according to **Habermas (1989)**, who demonstrated that democratic societies need public spaces where citizens can engage in reasoning through open dialogue. He claimed that citizens must experience complete freedom to communicate essential information about public matters because both state authorities and business enterprises should not control their communication. In the digital age, people use social media as platforms that function like public spaces, which enable them to participate in political conversations and open discussions. Nevertheless, Habermas identified two main problems that impede proper communication, which arise from commercial interests and existing power disparities. His theory provides a critical framework to understand how social media can both enhance and undermine democratic political communication processes through its impact on political communication.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) introduced the Agenda-Setting Theory, which posits that media does not tell people what to think, but rather what to think about by highlighting certain issues over others. The theory maintains its practical significance because social media platforms use algorithms together with trending topics to determine which issues receive public attention and what political matters become important. Political parties use social media to create election agendas and shape public opinion during current elections such as the Lok Sabha Elections 2024. The theory helps explain how digital platforms prioritize specific narratives which impact political discussions and voter patterns in today's democratic systems.

2.3 Social Media and Voter Behaviour

Boulianne (2015) examined the relationship between social media usage and political participation, showing how social media impacts voter behavior. The study found that social

media platforms increase political engagement through their ability to provide information and their capacity to support user interactive discussions. Boulianne showed that Facebook and Twitter users who watch political content achieve better voter knowledge and voting rates. The research showed that younger voters use digital content as their main source of political information because they tend to rely on social media for news. The study found limitations because online participation does not always lead to actual voting activities.

Kreiss (2016) studied how digital campaigning together with social media strategies influences how voters view candidates and make their voting decisions. The research demonstrated that political organizations now depend on data-based methods to communicate with voters through customized messages which they use to sway voter choices. Kreiss presented his argument that social media platforms allow users to send personalized political messages which result in higher voter success rates through both persuasion and voter turnout. The research showed that algorithms together with curated content create belief reinforcement patterns which cause users to choose specific information sources and develop political divide patterns. Social media platforms connect people to politics but they create two major problems because users can be easily manipulated and false information spreads through the system. The research demonstrated that social media has become an essential instrument for contemporary electoral campaigns which creates major effects on both voter perspectives and election results.

2.4 Digital Campaign Strategies and Political Engagement

Agarwal (2020) studied how digital campaign strategies affect political participation among Indian voters while showing that social media platforms have changed traditional election campaigning methods. The study showed that political campaigns which use targeted advertisements and data-driven methods together with personalized political messages achieve better voter outreach and participation results. Agarwal discovered that Facebook and WhatsApp platforms allow political parties to communicate directly with voters which helps create an environment of immediate contact between parties and citizens. The research showed that digital campaigns reach their highest effectiveness among younger voters because they actively use social media which results in greater political knowledge and electoral participation.

Kumar (2022) analyzed the relationship between social media-based campaign strategies and political engagement during recent Indian elections. The study showed that interactive content through live sessions and hashtags and influencer partnerships serves as a vital tool for guiding voters while building their political views. Kumar argued that digital platforms not only allow users to share information but also create spaces for people to engage in both dialogue and content distribution. The researchers discovered that misinformation together with echo chambers create obstacles which prevent people from understanding political issues. The study found that digital campaign strategies have become essential elements in contemporary political engagement throughout India

.2.5 Role of Influencers and Opinion Leaders

Bakshy and Messing and Adamic (2015) studied how social media opinion leaders and influencers impact political information spreading across digital platforms. The research discovered that people who maintain extensive social media networks possess the ability to boost political content visibility during election periods. The research found that people who have close relationships with friends and family members use those connections to strengthen their existing beliefs while their weak relationships with others and their exposure to influencers help them discover new political beliefs. The research demonstrates that

influencers function as essential links in political messaging because they amplify digital messages which shape how voters perceive candidates and subsequently determine their voting behavior.

Katz, E., & Lazarsfeld, P. F. (1955) established the two-step flow theory of communication which shows how opinion leaders affect public opinion. The research shows that mass media content reaches opinion leaders first and then those leaders decode the content for public distribution. In modern social media platforms, influencers serve as present-day opinion leaders who control political dialogues while they create voter perception. The theory continues to provide essential insights about digital influencers which they use to conduct political communication during elections through their endorsements and opinions which directly determine voter choices and political participation.

2.6 Misinformation and Fake News in Elections

Allcott, H., & Gentzkow, M. (2017) studied how fake news affects voter behavior during elections because they wanted to research how social media platforms help spread false information. Their research showed that false political information spreads more quickly and reaches more people than actual news does, which results in major changes to how voters understand things and make their choices. The authors demonstrated that social media algorithms increase the exposure of sensational content, which results in more people seeing misleading information. Voters face difficulties in determining which sources present trustworthy information and which sources present untrustworthy information, which leads to election process disruptions. The findings from their research provide essential insights for studying how false information spreads in electoral contests.

The researchers Vosoughi, S. and Roy, D. and Aral, S. (2018) performed a detailed investigation which showed that false news stories spread more quickly and extensively than real news stories across social media networks. The researchers found that people perform an essential function in spreading false information because they work together with automatic systems which are responsible for spreading such content. The study showed that emotionally intense and original material has a higher chance of being shared which helps fake news to spread during election periods. The ability of false information to form public attitudes and cause social divisions has the power to change how voters behave in democratic elections.

2.7 Social Media and Political Polarization

The researchers Bakshy, Messing, and Adamic (2015) published their ground-breaking research about social media platforms which create political polarization through their algorithms that filter user content. Their study of Facebook demonstrated that users tend to find information which supports their existing beliefs through the "echo chamber" effect. The researchers discovered that users restrict their access to different opinions through their personal decisions and the website's automatic systems which control their content selection. The process of selective viewing makes political parties more divided because it creates stronger resistance against their opposing views. The results demonstrate that social media platforms need to be analyzed because they determine which information users receive while they form their political views in democratic systems.

Sunstein (2017) studied political polarization in online settings to demonstrate how social media platforms create "information cocoons" that permit users to interact exclusively with people who share their opinions. He argued that the way algorithms personalize content for users creates a situation where people cannot discover opposing viewpoints which results in negative effects on deliberative democratic processes. Sunstein showed that when people

spend time together in identical groups their common behavior will become more intense over time because they keep interacting with each other. His research demonstrates how dangerous unregulated online communication spaces can be while he emphasizes that diverse information environments need to exist to reduce the harmful impact of polarization on democratic systems.

2.8 Empirical Studies in Indian Electoral Context

Chadha K. and Guha M. conducted their empirical research on social media impact during 2014 Indian general elections to study how digital platforms affected political engagement and voter turnout. Social media platforms Facebook and Twitter increased political awareness among urban youth according to the study results. The research showed political parties used targeted messaging together with online campaigns to successfully mobilize first-time voters. The study discovered that social media had limited reach to the entire electorate because of two main factors which included the digital divide and rural communities' restricted access to technological resources.

Kaur, S., and Kumar, R. (2020) investigated how social media platforms influenced voter behavior during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections through their research which used survey methods. The research showed that WhatsApp and Instagram served as essential tools for voters to form their political views and assess candidates. The study demonstrated that political content and memes together with online digital campaigns have emerged as powerful forces which determine how young voters will cast their ballots. The research found that misinformation spreads as a primary problem which leads to political division and affects election results, thus demonstrating the necessity for digital political communication regulations.

2.9 Research Gap Identification

Kaur, S., and Kumar, R. (2020) investigated how social media platforms influenced voter behavior during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections through their research which used survey methods. The research showed that WhatsApp and Instagram served as essential tools for voters to form their political views and assess candidates. The study demonstrated that political content and memes together with online digital campaigns have emerged as powerful forces which determine how young voters will cast their ballots. The research found that misinformation spreads as a primary problem which leads to political division and affects election results, thus demonstrating the necessity for digital political communication regulations.

Banerjee (2022) examined the digital political communication methods that political parties used during Indian elections by examining their special advertising methods and data-based political campaigns. The study showed that political parties now depend on social media analytics to determine which strategies will best attract voters and win elections. The research offered important details about campaign methods but failed to show how these methods impact voter understanding through psychological processes. The research study excluded the combined effects of different social media platforms and did not evaluate the growing problem of misinformation together with political polarization. The study creates a research gap because it does not provide complete insights into how voters behave during the Lok Sabha Elections 2024.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

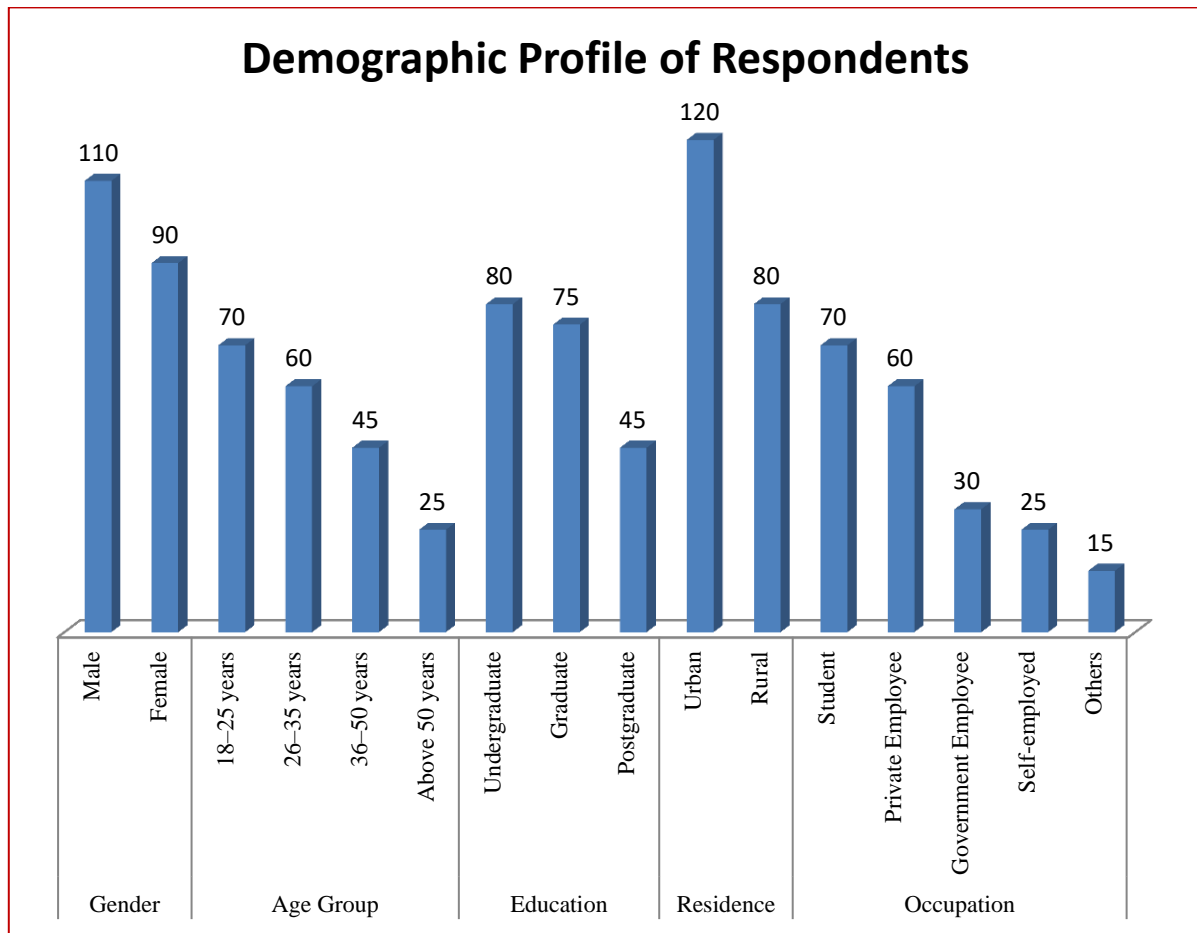
The research project uses a quantitative research design to study how social media affects political communication and voter behavior during the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections. The study

aims to investigate how different platforms impact voter behavior, while research questions and hypotheses assess the connections between different aspects of the study. The research framework establishes connections between social media usage and campaign exposure as independent variables, voter behavior as the dependent variable, and political awareness, age, education as the mediating and moderating elements. The researchers selected 200 participants through stratified random sampling from the total population of Indian voters. The researchers collected data using primary sources which included questionnaires and secondary sources. The research employs a Likert scale and descriptive statistics analysis together with correlation regression and SEM methods. The research maintains reliability, validity, and compliance with ethical standards throughout the study.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

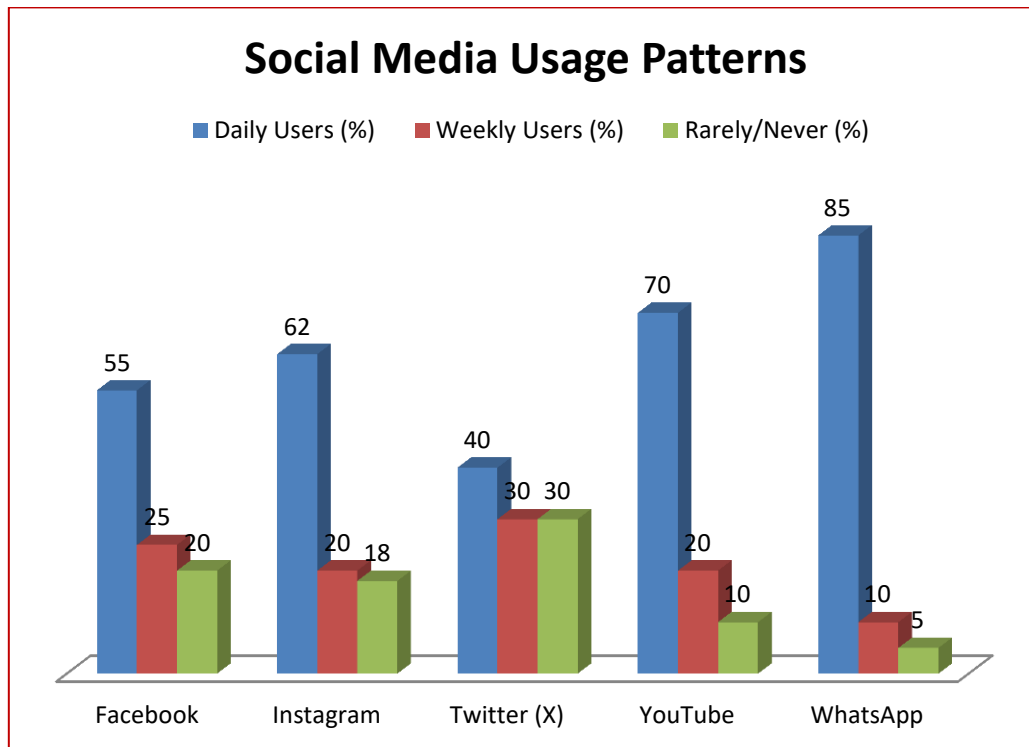
Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	110	55%
	Female	90	45%
Age Group	18–25 years	70	35%
	26–35 years	60	30%
	36–50 years	45	22.5%
	Above 50 years	25	12.5%
Education	Undergraduate	80	40%
	Graduate	75	37.5%
	Postgraduate	45	22.5%
Residence	Urban	120	60%
	Rural	80	40%
Occupation	Student	70	35%
	Private Employee	60	30%
	Government Employee	30	15%
	Self-employed	25	12.5%
	Others	15	7.5%



The study shows equal gender representation because 200 respondents showed 55% male participation and 45% female participation. The study found that most participants belong to the 18-25 age group and the 26-35 age group because these groups contain 35% and 30% of participants respectively. The study shows that respondents possess high educational achievement because 40% of them completed undergraduate studies and 37.5% achieved graduate degrees. The study found that 60% of respondents came from urban areas because these areas provide better internet access. The study found that students (35%) and private employees (30%) formed the largest work groups which brought strong connections to social media-based political participation.

4.2 Social Media Usage Patterns

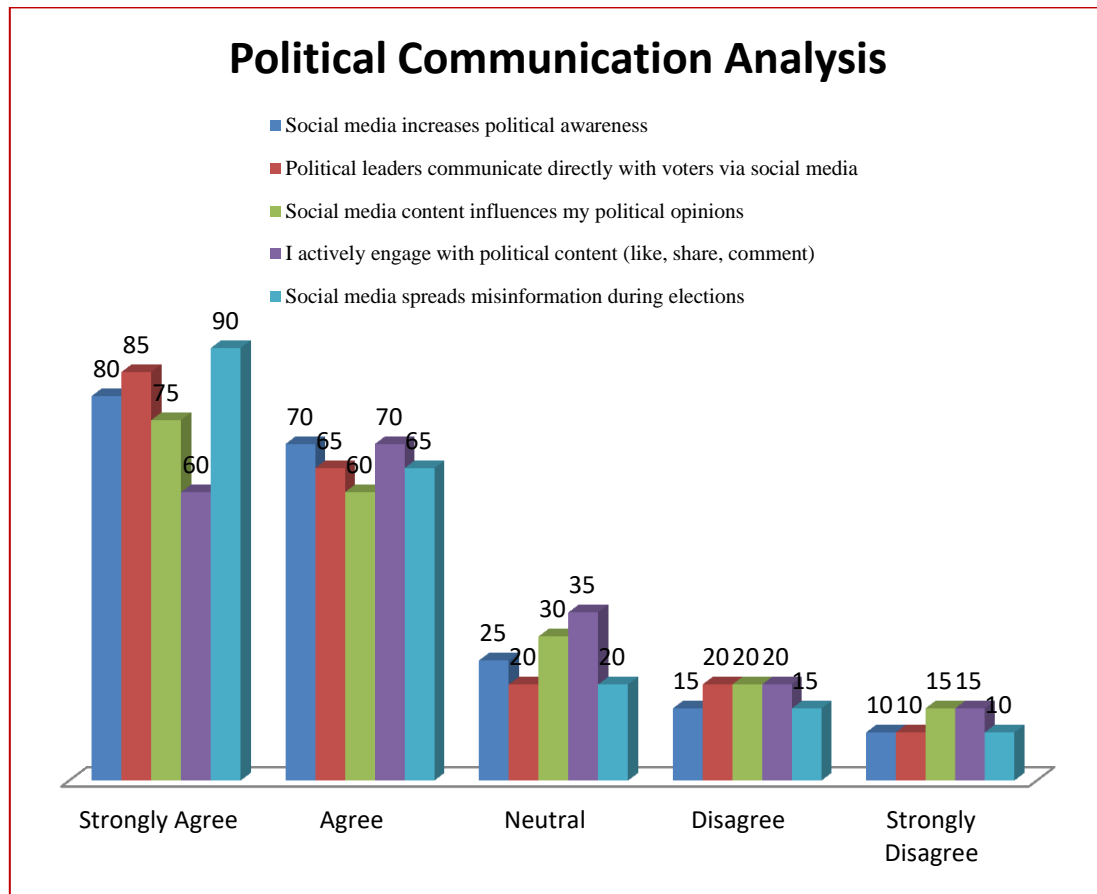
Platform	Daily Users (%)	Weekly Users (%)	Rarely/Never (%)	Mean Usage Score (1-5)
Facebook	55	25	20	3.6
Instagram	62	20	18	3.9
Twitter (X)	40	30	30	3.2
YouTube	70	20	10	4.2
WhatsApp	85	10	5	4.6



The data shows that WhatsApp and YouTube are the most popular platforms used by respondents who access these platforms 85% and 70% of the time throughout their daily lives. The data shows that Instagram users spend most of their time on the platform, which proves that younger users prefer its content. Facebook remains moderately relevant, but Twitter (X) shows lower daily usage because it serves a specific audience who engage in focused discussions. The average usage ratings show that WhatsApp functions as the primary communication platform used by people. The findings show that social media exposure affects political communication and voter behavior during the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections according to the research methods used in the study.

4.3 Political Communication Analysis

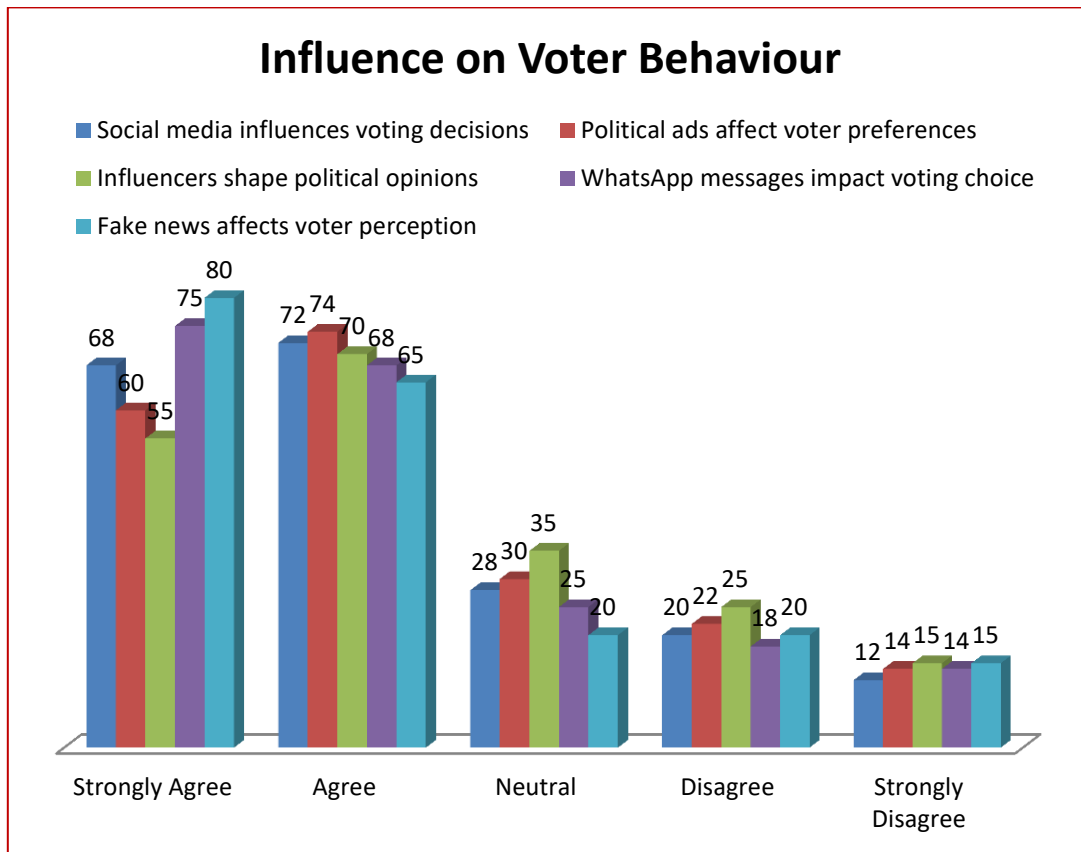
Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean Score
Social media increases political awareness	80	70	25	15	10	4.05
Political leaders communicate directly with voters via social media	85	65	20	20	10	4.00
Social media content influences my political opinions	75	60	30	20	15	3.80
I actively engage with political content (like, share, comment)	60	70	35	20	15	3.70
Social media spreads misinformation during elections	90	65	20	15	10	4.15



The table above shows how people view political social media communication based on a survey which used a Likert scale to assess 200 respondents. The high mean scores for statements such as increased political awareness (4.05) and direct communication with political leaders (4.00) demonstrate that social media platforms significant help users to interact with political matters. The respondents showed strong distrust of online political information through their 4.15 mean score about misinformation. Users take part in the platform at two different levels which results in a 3.70 average level of activity. The research results confirm the research methodology because they show that social media platforms show a dual yet complex effect on both political communication and voting patterns.

4.4 Influence on Voter Behaviour

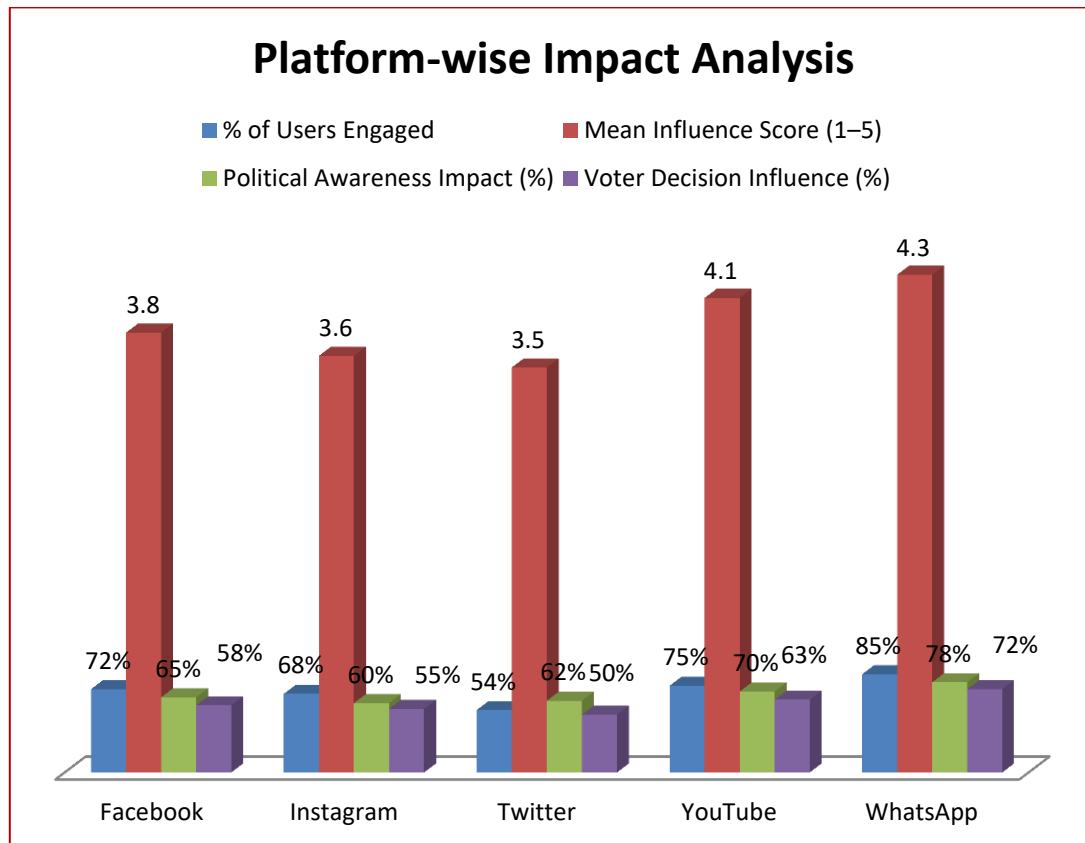
Influence Factor	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean Score
Social media influences voting decisions	68	72	28	20	12	3.82
Political ads affect voter preferences	60	74	30	22	14	3.72
Influencers shape political opinions	55	70	35	25	15	3.62
WhatsApp messages impact voting choice	75	68	25	18	14	3.86
Fake news affects voter perception	80	65	20	20	15	3.88



The above table presents the influence of social media on voter behaviour based on responses from 200 participants using a Likert scale. The mean scores for all variables are above 3.5 which shows that respondents reached a high level of agreement. The highest mean score (3.88) for "fake news affects voter perception" shows that misinformation decreases voter ability to understand political information. The voting choices of people are largely influenced by WhatsApp messages which have a mean score of 3.86 and general social media platforms which have a mean score of 3.82. Political advertisements and influencers also play a considerable role though their impact is somewhat less. The research methodology showed that social media platforms have a major effect on voter behaviour during the Lok Sabha Elections 2024.

4.5 Platform-wise Impact Analysis (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp)

Social Media Platform	% of Users Engaged	Mean Influence Score (1–5)	Political Awareness Impact (%)	Voter Decision Influence (%)
Facebook	72%	3.8	65%	58%
Instagram	68%	3.6	60%	55%
Twitter	54%	3.5	62%	50%
YouTube	75%	4.1	70%	63%
WhatsApp	85%	4.3	78%	72%

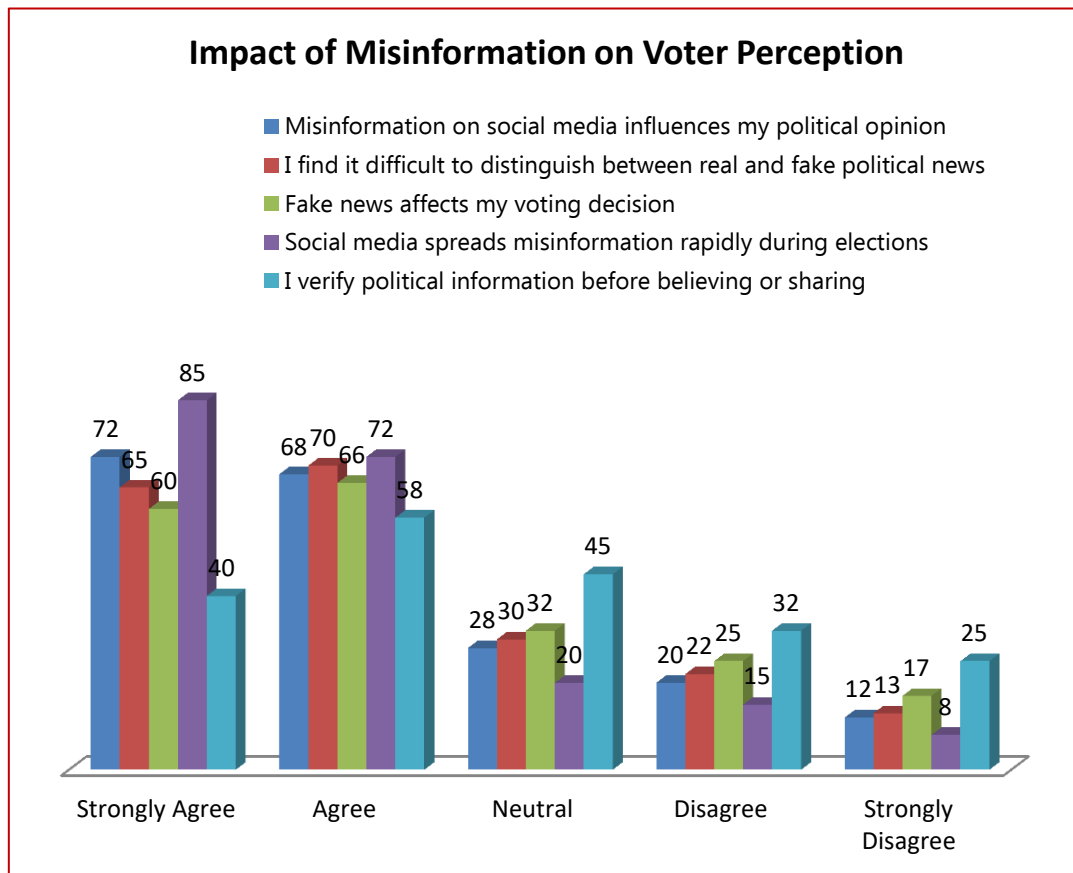


The above table presents a platform-wise analysis of social media influence on voter behaviour based on a sample of 200 respondents, aligned with the study's quantitative research methodology. WhatsApp emerges as the most influential platform, with the highest user engagement (85%) and influence score (4.3), indicating its strong role in grassroots political communication and voter decision-making. YouTube shows its complete power to impact people through its audio-visual content, which helps 70% of viewers understand political matters better. Facebook and Instagram demonstrate moderate influence, primarily in urban engagement and campaign outreach. Twitter creates an important effect through its sophisticated discussions, yet it produces lower voter results. The research shows that platforms which let users talk to each other directly and often, create a bigger impact on voter behavior.

4.6 Impact of Misinformation on Voter Perception

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
Misinformation on social media influences my political opinion	72	68	28	20	12	3.84
I find it difficult to distinguish between real and fake political news	65	70	30	22	13	3.76
Fake news affects my voting decision	60	66	32	25	17	3.63
Social media spreads misinformation rapidly during elections	85	72	20	15	8	4.05

I verify political information before believing or sharing	40	58	45	32	25	3.28
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The data shows that misleading information during elections affects how voters view candidates. A majority of respondents agree that social media influences their political opinions (Mean = 3.84) and spreads misinformation rapidly (Mean = 4.05), showing how digital content disseminates throughout the internet. Many respondents also report difficulty in distinguishing between real and fake news (Mean = 3.76), which indicates that people have poor media literacy skills. While a considerable number acknowledge that fake news affects voting decisions (Mean = 3.63), fewer respondents actively verify information (Mean = 3.28). The research findings show a strong connection between social media usage and voter behavior, which the research methodology proved. The results show a need for educational programs and regulatory measures.

5. DISCUSSION

The research demonstrates that social media impacts both political communication and voter behavior because people who use social media platforms extensively develop greater political knowledge that leads to increased voting activity. The results support earlier research which demonstrates that digital platforms now play an essential role in determining election results while this study delivers fresh findings that pertain specifically to the Lok Sabha Elections 2024. The study results show that digital political communication and agenda-setting theories receive support because online content determines how voters perceive political candidates. The study provides practical findings which show that political parties should use targeted campaigns as their main strategy while policymakers need to tackle misinformation and

establish ethical social media practices to safeguard electoral processes and support democratic participation through well-informed voting.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research demonstrates that social media platforms function as vital instruments which transform political communication methods while they affect voter behavior during the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections 2024. Democratic participation has received a boost through more accessible systems and precise campaign methods and interactive voter outreach programs, but challenges from misinformation and social division continue to exist. The existing digital content monitoring systems require the development of more effective rules which will provide complete visibility into political advertising activities. Political parties should adopt ethical and data-driven strategies to engage voters responsibly. Future research should focus on studying regional differences and how political behavior develops over time and how emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence impact political communication.

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