



Votes and Voices: Role of Social Media in 2024 Pakistani Elections

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Abstract

The 2024 elections in Pakistan changed its laws, and social media played a major role in how those laws were changed. In this article, we examine how the internet plays a big role in elections, with online platforms, such as social media and websites where people share content, influencing them in various ways. It illustrates how these platforms influence political discussions, aid citizens in voting and distribute information. In this article, we examine how political parties use social media to reach out to voters, what modern campaigning does to how people decide to vote, and the challenges posed by false information wrought by regulation. Social media can be a benefit in the sense that people can be a part of, the study adds.

Keywords: Social Media, Pakistan, 2024 Elections, Political Campaigns

Introduction

It's not just here that social media has upended how people engage in politics. It has opened up new ways to converse, to gather information and to share data. The 2024 election in Pakistan demonstrates how much technology has transformed politics. Social media platforms such as Facebook, X (the former Twitter), YouTube, TikTok and Instagram were crucial for election campaigns and getting people to cast their ballots. More young Pakistanis have access to the internet and smartphones, making it both easier and more relevant than ever to communicate in online posts. Political parties identified the significance of digital media in early stage and reshaped their poll strategies accordingly.

It is not only here that social media has radically changed how people engage in politics. It has created opportunities to communicate, gather information and disseminate information. The 2024 election in Pakistan is a great example of how much technology has disrupted politics. Social media apps such as Facebook, X (formally Twitter), YouTube, TikTok and Instagram were essential toolbox for election campaigning and voter engagement. Many more young Pakistanis now have access to both the internet and smartphones, thereby making online posts easier and more relevant than in past elections. Political parties recognized the importance of digital media early on and adapted their campaign strategies to better reflect its importance to contemporary politics. The broad spread of deception, doctored recordings, and online badgering became progressively predominant, raising genuine concerns around the judgment and reasonableness of

the appointive prepare. Also, government actions, such as the shutdown of social media platforms and web administrations, underscored the pressure between advanced flexibility and state control. This paper investigates the influence of social media on Pakistan's 2024 elections, analyzing its role in shaping political communication, impacting voter behavior, and contributing to broader democratic participation. Through theoretical inquiry and case study analysis, it aims to unpack the complexities and challenges of engaging with democracy in the digital age. (Shahbaz, 2022)

Research question:

This research study is based in the following research question:

In what ways were social media platforms used to shape political communication and influence voter behavior during the 2024 general elections in Pakistan?

Objective:

To explore what role social media platforms played in the 2024 elections as a means of elections campaigns in Pakistan within the framework of various communication theories.

Theoretical Framework

There are a number of mass communication theories that relate to the political campaigns for the elections and the media role. Some important theories are as follows:

Political Communication Theory: This theory (McNair, 2017) looks at how data is shared and caught on in legislative issues. In today's world, it highlights how social media impacts political stories and people's conclusions. The two-step stream shows how opinion leaders offer assistance in spreading data through social systems.

Agenda-Setting Theory: Agenda-Setting Theory (Shaw, 1972) recommends that the media can affect which points individuals are talking about and how important they think those themes are. Social media platforms utilize calculations and how users associate with content to highlight certain points. This will influence what individuals think about legislative issues and how they see voters.

Uses and Gratifications Theory: Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, 1973) looks at how individuals select media to meet their specific needs. Amid decisions, individuals might utilize social media to share data, have fun, or interact with others, which can impact how included they are in legislative issues and how they make their choices.

Framing Theory:

Framing Theory (Entman, 1993) examines how media presentation influences public perception. On social media, the way political content is framed through language, visuals, and emotional appeal, can significantly shape how voters interpret issues and candidates. The strategic use of storytelling in digital campaigns plays a crucial role in shaping these perceptions. By framing narratives in emotionally engaging or value-driven ways, political actors can guide public opinion and voter behavior more effectively.

These theoretical perspectives help explain the complex ways in which social media shapes modern election campaigns, demonstrating how online tools influence political communication, voter engagement, and democratic discourse.

Literature Review

Research has shown that social media significantly influenced how voters acted in Pakistan's 2024 elections. Iqbal (2024) found a Lahore-based study that there was a solid connection between seeing political substance on social media and how individuals think and act when voting.

(Ahmad) focused on college students in Jhang area, finding that focus on social media campaigns essentially impacted youthful voters' political characters and loyalties. Additionally, research in Punjab demonstrated that political advertising on social media platforms effectively locked in juvenile voters, upgrading party popularity and government recognition. (Ahmad M. A., 2024) (Malik, 2024) Political parties have moreover been seen to utilize social media in keen ways. The PTI's online campaigns, which included content made by AI, made a difference; it remains solid online indeed, with limits on its leaders. On the other hand, the PML-N utilized social media to reach more youthful individuals, knowing that numerous individuals are utilizing media in an unexpected way presently. Putting politics on the internet came with some problems. According to the Digital Rights Foundation (2024), here was a lot of false information and harmful posts on social media during the elections, and the lack of control over the content made things worse. The government's choice to pause sites like Twitter made people worried about censoring and limiting different views. These studies show that social media can have two impacts during elections. It can help people participate more in democracy, but on the other hand fake news can also hurt the fairness of elections. (Shahbaz H. &, 2022)

Case Analysis: The 2024 Pakistani General Elections

The 2024 general elections in Pakistan showed how social media influences voting and elections. There are over 71 million people who use social media in the country, so websites like these are very important for political campaigns and getting people to vote. (DataReportal, 2024). Political parties used various ways to take advantage of social media. The PTI, despite having big issues like its leader, Imran Khan, being in jail, stayed active online. The party even used AI-made speeches and online activities to reach out to its supporters and communicate its ideas. The PML-N made more efforts to reach young people through social media sites like Instagram and TikTok. But the online campaign had issues. False information spreads a lot, including fake videos and made-up stories. The Digital Rights Foundation said there is a lot of bad content on the internet, and social media sites are not effectively managing it. The government shut down Twitter and internet services on election day, which made people anxious about controlling information and preventing political arguments. (Digital Rights Foundation, 2024). These changes show how internet media, political plans, and laws interact in today's elections. Social media helps people participate in politics, but it also creates serious issues that need clear rules to solve.

Discussion

The 2024 elections in Pakistan show how social media has changed the way politics works. Online platforms have made it simpler for people to participate in politics. This helps political parties connect with more people and talk to voters right away. The smart use of AI-generated content and online meetings by groups like the PTI shows how technology can help overcome the limitations of traditional media. But the elections also uncovered the perils of getting involved in legislative issues online. The spread of lies, utilizing fake recordings made with profound fake innovation, and issues with dealing with online content appear that we require clear rules and regulations. When the government pieces' social media, it raises enormous questions about security within the nation and the correct to talk openly. But we too ought to carefully check the current rules and make clear plans to utilize the benefits of advanced media while minimizing its dangers. This implies investing cash on programs that help individuals learn to utilize innovation, making online content more secure, and being clear approximately the rules we follow.

Conclusion

The 2024 common decisions in Pakistan show how vital social media is in legislative issues nowadays. Computerized stages offer other ways for individuals to associate and get involved, but they also cause genuine issues with fake information, government regulations, and reasonableness in majority rule government. To settle these issues, we ought to take care and think about the benefits of utilizing computerized devices as well as the safeguards we require against their potential issues. Social stages played a key part in forming political talk and made a difference for parties to reach gatherings of people amid campaign amid the 2024 elections in Pakistan. Different political parties, especially PTI, utilized TikTok for the first time for campaigns in 2024. Political activists, advanced influencers, and indeed the party's candidates ran their campaigns through brief recordings to draw in the voters, for the most part, youthful voters who, for the most part, access information through such social stages. Due to its algorithm-driven working, TikTok caused a quick spread of the campaign mottos, manifestos, and other sorts of content to draw in clients. This shift in political campaigning showed an evolution in the country's political scenario, which proved that digital social tools are gaining a central position in the electoral strategies of parties.

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