

PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS IN THE NIGERIAN 2015 AND 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Abstract

The influence of social media has become a defining feature that reshapes the dynamics of elections worldwide. The evolution of social media strategies for the 2015 and 2019 Nigerian general elections highlights the growing sophistication and importance of digital platforms in engaging voters, shaping public opinion, and mobilising support. This study evaluates the public perception of the use of social media on the political campaign of the Nigerian 2015 and 2019 elections. The Agenda Setting theory and Uses and Gratification theory were employed as theoretical framework, while descriptive survey method was used with questionnaire as instrument of data collection. Two hundred and fifty respondents in Ward 5 of Moniya, Akinyele Local Government Area, Oyo State were randomly selected for this study. Findings showed that the respondents perceived social media to be a great tool in shaping their political views for the 2015 and 2019 general elections. Also, results revealed that the respondents adjudged social media platforms as impactful tools for political discourse during the 2015 and 2019 electoral period. The study concludes that social media has become an indispensable tool in political communication significantly influencing election campaigns and interactions in Nigeria and recommends further use and regulation.

Keywords: Social Media, Political Communication, Election, Campaigns, Comparative Analysis

Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of modern society, transforming the way individuals communicate, share information, and engage with political processes. In recent years, Smith (2020) has argued that the influence of social media on political communication has grown significantly, particularly in the context of election campaigns. This study seeks to explore and analyse the impacts of social media on political communication, focusing on a comparative analysis of election campaigns. In the rapidly evolving landscape of political communication, the influence of social media has become a defining feature, reshaping the dynamics of election campaigns worldwide.

As digital technologies continue to permeate every aspect of contemporary society, political actors increasingly recognise the pivotal role that social media platforms play in shaping public opinion, mobilising voters, and influencing the outcomes of elections. In the vibrant landscape of Nigerian politics, the integration of social media into election campaigns has emerged as a dynamic force, shaping the contours of political communication and influencing the trajectory of democratic processes (Obi, 2018). The crucial years of 2015 and 2019 stand as landmark moments in the nation's electoral history, witnessing the expanding role of social media platforms as

indispensable tools for political actors to engage with the electorate.

Over the past decade, social media has transformed from a novel communication tool to an essential platform for political discourse (Howard, 2011). The 2015 and 2019 election campaigns marked watershed moments, reflecting the growing significance of social media in political strategy and engagement. Political candidates and parties leveraged the reach and immediacy of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now referred to as X), Instagram, and others to connect with voters, disseminate campaign messages, and navigate the intricate landscape of public opinion. The dawn of the 21st century brought with it a technological renaissance, transforming the ways in which information is disseminated, and citizens engage in political discourse. The adoption of social media platforms such as X, Facebook, and Instagram has fundamentally altered the landscape of political communication in Nigeria. As a nation with a vibrant democracy, the utilisation of these platforms during election campaigns has become a powerful vehicle for mobilisation, discourse, and influence. This research embarks on a comprehensive exploration, aiming to unravel the impacts of social media on political communication during the 2015 and 2019 Nigeria election campaigns.

Problem Statement

According to Olorunnisola, (2016), the 2015 Nigerian general elections marked a turning point in the nation's political history as social media, once considered subordinate, took center stage as candidates and political parties recognised its potential to directly engage with a rapidly expanding online population. The influence of platforms like X became evident in shaping narratives, mobilising support, and providing a real-time space for citizens to voice opinions and concerns. The 2015 elections laid the

groundwork for a new era of political communication in Nigeria, characterised by the strategic integration of social media.

Building on the momentum of 2015, the 2019 election campaign further underscored the transformative impact of social media on Nigerian politics (Adesanya, 2020). With an increasing number of Nigerians gaining access to smartphones and the Internet, social media platforms became even more instrumental in reaching diverse demographics. The campaign landscape witnessed major political declarations informed by a run up of hash tags, live streaming, and interactive content were used to let voters know how each party or particular candidate felt about important national issues ranging from security to electricity power (Ahmad, Olarenwaju, 2017; Onaopepo, Ojo, Ojetola&Ogunbola 2024), fostering a level of political engagement and discourse that surpassed previous elections. While the impact of social media on the electoral process is widely acknowledged, there exists a critical need to systematically examine and compare its effects across diverse political contexts.

Studies such as (Biswas, Ingle & Roy 2014), have paid attention to the influence of social media on voting behaviour. The findings of the study among others revealed that social media in contemporary political affairs is a veritable instrument for reaching voters and influencing their voting behaviour. However, the study concentrated on just the 2015 election is considered stale with election in the year 2019. In the same vein, (Onaopepo *et al*, 2024) influence of various social media handles for political mobilisation in Odogbolu Local Government Area. The findings of the study reveal that social media in rural settlements like Odogbolu Local Government Area are emerging as a substantial promotion tool during elections by political parties to connect with the

electorates, express their agenda, influence voters, increase their visibility and gather majority votes during elections. Meanwhile, the skewness of the study to the rural area directly is considered a limitation, hence, justification for the present study.

The following key problems and gaps in knowledge prompt the need for a comprehensive investigation; the rapid evolution of social media platforms and the strategies employed by political actors necessitate an in-depth examination, crucial for understanding how these strategies have evolved between the two election cycles and their implications for political communication. Also, the lack of a detailed analysis hinders people's understanding of the transformative nature of social media strategies over time, reflecting changes in technology, political landscapes, and societal attitudes (Jones, 2019).

Campaign messaging on social media has likely transformed over time (Gibson & McAllister, 2015), mirroring shifts in technology, political landscapes, and societal attitudes. However, the identified situation is synonymous with comprehending the evolution of campaign messages and how these changes may have influenced public perceptions and voter behavior. Social media is celebrated for its potential to enhance citizen engagement; however, there is a need to understand how patterns of engagement have shifted between the 2015 and 2019 Nigeria election campaigns (Smith, 2018). Thorough exploration is required to examine variations in types of engagement, levels of interactivity, and the impact on political participation.

A comprehensive analysis is necessary to understand how social media platforms have been utilised to control narratives, counter-narratives, and influence public perceptions during the two election campaigns. Moreover, it is essential to analyse how

online narratives persist or evolve after election results, considering their implications for governance, public sentiment, and the sustainability of political engagement. By addressing these issues, this research seeks to fill critical gaps in knowledge, providing a comprehensive and comparative understanding of the impacts of social media on political communication during the 2015 and 2019 Nigeria election campaigns. The findings aim to contribute to academic scholarship, inform policymakers, and enhance our understanding of the complex interplay between technology, politics, and democracy in the Nigerian context.

The objective of this study is designed to examine public perception of social media campaigns in the Nigerian 2015 and 2019 general elections through the following specific objectives:

- i. To investigate the roles that the social media campaign played in shaping the political narratives during the 2015 and 2019 election;
- ii. To examine the impact of the social media campaigns on public perception of voters behaviour during campaign and election;
- iii. To determine policy recommendations necessary for social media usage and handling during campaign and elections.

Literature Review

Social Media and Digital Campaigning

The 2019 election saw an unprecedented level of digital engagement, as political parties and candidates used social media platforms like X, Facebook, and WhatsApp for voter mobilisation and propaganda. The APC and PDP deployed digital campaign teams to counter each other's narratives and influence public perception (Osaghae, 2020). The PDP, through the #AtikuPlan campaign, sought to present AtikuAbubakar as a candidate who could revive Nigeria's

struggling economy and improve governance. Meanwhile, Buhari's campaign, through the #NextLevel initiative, focused on continuing infrastructural projects and fighting corruption.

As Okon (2020) noted, the 2019 elections reinforced the power of digital political marketing, as political parties increasingly relied on social media to shape public opinion and discredit opponents. However, fake news and misinformation also played a significant role in shaping voter perceptions. False reports about election results, rigging claims, and doctored videos circulated widely on WhatsApp and Facebook, leading to confusion and tensions. Using reverse-image search tools, the BBC traced some of the videos of people thumb-printing ballots to elections in 2021 and 2019. Another viral clip showed people being coached on the best way to print their thumb on ballot papers while voting for a particular party. Meanwhile, both sets of videos had strong regional and religious undertones and were widely shared on WhatsApp groups and Twitter (BBC, 2023).

2015 General Elections

The election, held on March 28, 2015, was characterised by high voter enthusiasm, the use of technology (Permanent Voter Cards and Smart Card Readers), and the strategic role of social media in political engagement. The 2015 elections were a watershed moment in Nigeria's political history, not only because of the electoral outcomes but also due to the strategic use of social media (Oyenuga, 2016). The All Progressives Congress (APC) effectively utilised platforms like X and Facebook to project their candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, as a harbinger of change. This digital strategy resonated with the youth demographic, leading to increased political engagement. As observed by Owoyale, Onaopepo, Ojetola & Muhammad (2024), Facebook was employed due to its

participatory nature and It was used as a platform for political campaign organisation, electioneering crusades, ideological trumpeting exercises, and mobilisation of voters.

2019 General Elections

Building on the digital momentum of 2015, the 2019 election which was held on February 23, 2019 saw an even more pronounced role of social media; political entities refined their digital strategies, employing targeted advertisements, influencer partnerships, and data analytics to reach potential voters (Osaghae, 2020). The People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) both launched comprehensive online campaigns to sway public opinion. Some of the popular catchphrases synonymous with the 2019 electioneering is *Ortomatic*, popularized by supporters of Benue State governor, Samuel Ortom who defected from the APC into the PDP in 2018. While in Lagos State, Sanwo-Eko was adopted campaign slogan of Mr. Sanwo-Olu, APC flag bearer in Lagos (Sunday & Onaopepo, 2021). Studies (Biswas, Ingle & Roy 2014; Onaopepo, *et al*, 2024) indicate that social media was instrumental in informing and mobilising voters during the 2019 elections. Stakeholders utilised these platforms to disseminate information on voting procedures, dates, and locations, thereby enhancing voter turnout.

Functions of Social Media in Electoral Process

Just as traditional media serve various political functions in the electoral process, social media platforms fulfill distinct roles that contribute to the democratic process (Dao, 2015). Social media platforms have become integral components of electoral processes, offering unique functionalities that

complement traditional media channels. These functions are:

- i. Surveillance and Reporting: Social media platforms serve as channels for real-time surveillance and reporting of electoral events (Bello & Kolawole-Ismail, 2017).
- ii. Interpretation and Analysis: Through user-generated content and discussions, social media users contribute diverse perspectives and interpretations of political events, enriching public discourse and understanding (Adetayo, 2021). This function promotes critical engagement with electoral issues and encourages informed decision-making among voters.
- iii. Engagement and Socialisation: By facilitating interactions between political actors and the electorate, social media platforms foster civic participation and community building promoting inclusivity and accessibility in the electoral process by providing avenues for diverse voices to be heard and represented.
- iv. Information Dissemination: Social media platforms function as key channels for the dissemination of electoral information, including candidate profiles, campaign updates, and voter guides. Through targeted messaging and content sharing, social media users can access relevant information about electoral processes and candidates, empowering them to make informed choices (Michael, Clement & Ajibola, 2021).
- v. Message Clarification: Through fact-checking initiatives and interactive discussions, social media users can critically evaluate campaign messages and policies, promoting transparency and accountability in electoral communication (Feezell, Ziegler, & Osborn, 2009). This function strengthens public understanding of electoral issues and fosters trust in the political process.
- vi. Voter Education and Empowerment: Through informational campaigns, live Questions & Answers sessions, and educational content, social media users can acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively in the electoral process (Feezell et al., 2009). This function promotes inclusivity and equity in electoral participation by empowering marginalized and underserved communities.
- vii. Mobilisation and Advocacy: Through grassroots campaigns, online petitions, and viral hashtags, social media users can mobilise support for specific candidates or causes, driving collective action and social change (Knoll, et al, 2020). This function enhances the responsiveness and accountability of political institutions by amplifying citizen voices and priorities.

Theoretical Framework **Agenda-Setting Theory**

This theory is attributed Maxwell McCombs and Donald. L. Shaw in 1993, with the popular assertion that “what is salient in the media is salient in the public”. The theory proposes that the facts which people know about public issues tend to be those which the mass media presents to them (Ojo, Ayobolu& Onaopepo, 2021). Thus, masses concentration on a particular issue in the society can be determine by the degree of attention given to the same issue in the media. The theory postulation on the degree at which mass media sets agenda for our general discussion is common to all media including social media. The density is even high when it is the matter that concern public interest.

Sunday and Onaopepo (2021), argue that political issues are among the top issues that stirs the interest of Nigerians. The scholars

established that during the 2015 and 2019 electioneering campaign, major contenders of the presidential and gubernatorial candidates of the major political parties, employed aggressive approaches to driver their interest, using various media and mass media target at the staggering youth for election.

The Agenda-Setting Theory seems appropriate for this study as it places the media high in opinion moulding of the society, implying that social media, have the power to influence salient political issues in public discourse if effectively applied by the politicians and their cohorts. This theory suggests that the prominence and frequency of media coverage can shape the public agenda, determining which issues receive attention from the public and which are neglected.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) is a communication theory that explores how individuals actively seek out media to satisfy specific needs. Unlike traditional communication models that focus on the power of media to influence passive audiences, UGT emphasises that audiences are active participants in the media consumption process, using media content to fulfill their own desires and goals. Developed in the 1940s and 1950s by researchers like Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch, UGT has been instrumental in examining the relationship between media consumers and media producers. The theory is grounded in the idea that people choose media and content that best serve their psychological, social, and informational needs.

The UGT theory argument by Katz *et al* (1974) emanates from the perspective that the

gratifications in the UGT is in the form of benefits that attract and hold users to different media, with various contents that fulfill users psychological and social needs which is a justification for the theory's relevance to the present study. Individuals, political gladiators and political parties leverage on the various social media platform during these periods of elections to cascade their matters for acceptance and election into various public offices.

Methodology

This study is quantitative adopting the descriptive survey research method with focus on gathering information related to engagement metrics and perceptions during election campaigns. The study adopted two sampling techniques, namely: purposive sampling, and simple random sampling. Ward 5, Moniya, Akinyele Local Government Area of Ibadan, Oyo State Nigeria was purposively for the study area. Purposive sampling is applicable to because the area combined the status of both urban and rural settings. This sampling allows for the choice of participants who are considered best in the researcher judgment, to provide the required information. Simple random sampling technique was employed in the selection of 250 respondents on whom copies of the questionnaire were administered. In simple random sampling, every person has an equal chance of being selected to participate in the study. According to Sobowale (2008), this technique can also be used when the population is rather small, which is the case in this study. Thus, the sampling frame was drawn from the residents of the selected ward, beginning with one. The questionnaires collected were arranged and used for analysis. The data collected from the field was analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency distribution and percentage. The data are presented in tables based on the frequency count for occurrence of respondents using simple percentages.

Data Presentation

To get reliable data from the study population, copies of the carefully structured questionnaires were administered among the residents of the Ward 5, Moniya, Akinyele Local Government Area of Ibadan and usable copies of the questionnaires were retrieved for analysis, interpretation and discussion.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	109	43.6
Female	141	56.4
Total	250	100.0
Age		
Below 29 years	132	52.8
30-39 years	72	28.8
40-49 years	36	14.4
50 years and above	10	4.0
Total	250	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	113	45.2
Married	126	50.4
Divorced	7	2.8
Widowed	4	1.6
Total	250	100.0
Educational qualification		
O' Level	63	25.2
OND/NCE	83	33.2
HND/B.Sc	96	38.4
M.S /MBA	8	3.2
Total	250	100.0
Occupation		
Civil Service	76	30.4
Self Employed	134	53.6
Unemployed	40	16
Religion		
Christianity	168	67.2
Islam	74	29.6
Others	8	3.2
Total	250	100

Source: Field Work, 2024

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1, these reveals that majority of the respondents were female (56.4%), while those from 29 years below were 52.8%. The marital status reveals that 50. 4% of the respondents were married making them the majority. The distribution of their educational qualification indicates that majority of the respondents had HND/B. Sc degrees. The occupation distribution reveals that majority, 30.4% were self-employed. **Research Objective 1:** To investigate the roles that the social media played in shaping the political narratives during the 2015 and 2019 elections

Table 2: Role of Social Media in shaping Political narratives

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD
1.	Social media help to discover new political ideas during the election?	134 (53.6%)	98 (39.2%)	10 (4.0%)	5 (2.0%)	3 (1.2%)
2.	Social media facilitate the spread of misinformation during the 2015 & 2019 elections?	88 (35.2%)	115 (46.0%)	34 (13.6%)	12 (4.8%)	1 (0.4%)
3.	Social media make you feel more engaged or motivated to participate in the political process?	100 (40.0%)	108 (43.2%)	29 (11.6%)	8 (3.2%)	5 (2.0%)
4.	Social media enables political candidates to communicate more directly with votes?	114 (45.6%)	95 (38.0%)	29 (11.6%)	7 (2.8%)	5 (2.0%)
5.	Social media had a positive impact on the political landscape during the 2015 & 2019 elections?	108 (43.2%)	94 (37.6%)	36 (14.4%)	6 (2.4%)	6 (2.4%)

Source: Field Work. 2024

Table 2 reveals that 53.6% of the respondents strongly agree that social media help to discover new political ideas during the election, while 43.2% of the respondents strongly agree that social media had a positive impact on the political landscape during the 2015 & 2019 elections. Also, about average of the respondents 40.0% strongly agree that social media make one feel more engaged or motivated to participate in the political process. These results revealed that social media play a very significant role in shaping political narratives during the 2015 and 2019 Nigeria elections.

Research Objective 2: To examine the impact of the social media campaigns on public perception of voters'' behavior during campaign and election.

Table 3: Public Perception of Voters' Behaviour during Campaign and Election

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD
1.	Social media endorsement and testimonials can influence political decisions?	105 (42.0%)	112 (44.8%)	22 (8.8%)	6 (2.4%)	5 (2.0%)
2.	Social media campaigns influence your perception on political candidates and issues?	88 (35.2%)	116 (46.4%)	30 (12.0%)	7 (2.8%)	9 (3.6%)
3.	Social media campaign motivates you to encourage others to vote?	102 (40.8%)	109 (43.6%)	27 (10.8%)	8 (3.2%)	4 (1.6%)
4.	Social media campaigns impact your decision to engage in political discussions?	81 (32.4%)	118 (47.2%)	35 (14.0%)	9 (3.6%)	7 (2.8%)
5.	Social media made you feel more informed about the political issues?	112 (44.8%)	94 (37.6%)	32 (12.8%)	6 (2.4%)	6 (2.4%)

Source: Field Work, 2024

A significant number of the respondents (44.8%) in the table above strongly agreed that social media endorsement and testimonials can influence political decision. Also, 46.4 % of the respondents strongly agree that social media campaigns influence one's perception on political candidates and issues. Furthermore, about 47.2 % of the respondents strongly agree that social media campaigns impact one's decision to engage in political discussions showing that social media campaigns impacted public perception and voters' behavior during the 2015 and 2019 Nigeria elections.

Research Objective 3: To determine policy recommendations necessary for social media usage and handling during campaign and elections.

Table 4: Policy Recommendations for Social Media usage during campaign and election

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD
1.	There should be regulations to require social media platforms to disclose information about political advertisements?	115 (46.0%)	109 (43.6%)	15 (6.0%)	8 (3.2%)	3 (1.2%)
2.	Public awareness campaigns are necessary to educate citizens about the risks of social media during elections?	95 (38.0%)	108 (43.2%)	31 (12.4%)	6 (2.4%)	10 (40%)
3.	Educational programs should be implemented to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills among social media users?	115 (46.0%)	106 (42.4%)	22 (8.8%)	3 (1.2%)	4 (1.6%)
4.	Government should regulate social media to prevent misinformation during election?	102 (40.8%)	116 (46.4%)	16 (6.4%)	5 (2.0%)	11 (4.4%)
5.	Social media platforms should be held accountable for the content published on their platforms during elections?	101 (40.4%)	90 (36.0%)	43 (17.2%)	13 (5.2%)	3 (1.2%)

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 4 reveals that 46.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that educational programs should be implemented to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills among social media users. This was followed by 40.8% that strongly agree that government should regulate social media to prevent misinformation during election. Also, 40.4% of the respondents strongly agree and recommend that social media platforms should be held accountable for the content published on their platforms during elections.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings from this study examined the pivotal role played by social media in reshaping political communication and voter behaviour during the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria. Integrating insights from both the agenda-setting and uses and gratification theories, the discussion reveals how social media platforms not only inform but also actively influenced public opinion, voter engagement, and the broader democratic discourse.

Drawing from the Agenda-Setting Theory, which posits that the media has the power to shape public priorities by emphasising certain issues over others (McCombs &

Shaw, 1993), it becomes evident that social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp served as potent tools for setting political narratives.

Social media has contributed significantly to every sector in the country at large including shaping political narratives during the 2015 and 2019 Nigeria elections. Using social media in shaping political narratives has helped in discovering new political ideas during the elections in Nigeria. It has also enables political candidates to communicate more directly with votes before and during the election exercise with party members. Findings from this study reveals majority of the respondents acknowledging that social

media helped them discover new political ideas and made them feel more politically engaged. This is in consonance with the assertion by Kruikemeier et al. (2014) that digital platforms allow for grassroots mobilisation, especially among youth demographics, by amplifying issues deemed relevant by political actors.

On the ways that the various social media platforms operated as vehicles for voter literacy, issue clarification, and mobilisation, the study showed that Nigerian voters consume campaign information leading them to various engagements in peer-to-peer political discussions which encouraged others to vote, and felt more informed about election processes and policies. This two-way interaction between content producers and consumers reflects the participatory culture enabled by social media, as noted by Tufekci (2017).

Despite the applaudable outcomes identified with the social media interface with political practice in Nigeria, the study is without certain concerns about misinformation. The study indicates that majority of respondents agreed that social media facilitated the spread of false or misleading content during the election cycles. This finding corroborates global concerns about digital disinformation raised by Barberá et al. (2015), Sunday and Onaopepo (2021) and BBC (2023), where manipulated images and videos were circulated to sway public opinion and exacerbate political tensions. In Nigeria, these concerns were particularly prominent during both elections, where ethnoreligious undertones in viral content further polarised the electorate.

Furthermore, the study has identified challenges and indicates strong support for regulatory frameworks that require transparency in political advertising, public awareness campaigns, and the institutionalisation of media literacy

programs. These recommendations align with Michael, Clement, and Ajibola (2021), who advocate for citizen education to foster critical thinking in digital spaces. Moreover, the call for social media platforms to be held accountable for content dissemination echoes contemporary policy debates on platform responsibility and digital ethics.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that social media has become an indispensable tool in political communication significantly influencing election campaigns in Nigeria. The evolution of social media strategies from 2015 to 2019 highlights the growing sophistication and importance of digital platforms in engaging voters, shaping public opinion, and mobilising support. Social media has proven effective in increasing voter engagement and mobilisation, particularly among younger demographics.

Efforts to combat misinformation need to be more robust and adaptive to the evolving nature of digital content. The regulatory environment in Nigeria has made strides but still faces significant challenges in effectively managing social media use in political campaigns. There is a need for more comprehensive and enforceable regulations to ensure transparency, accountability, and the integrity of the electoral process. Misinformation remains a critical challenge in the digital age. Based on the findings of this study, several key recommendations have been identified. These recommendations aim to enhance the effectiveness of political campaigns, improve regulatory frameworks, and guide future research in this field. For political campaigns, it is essential to adopt advanced analytical tools to gain deeper insights into voter behavior and preferences. By leveraging data analytics, campaigns can create more targeted and effective communication strategies that resonate with specific voter

demographics. Additionally, political parties should invest in digital literacy training for their campaign staff. Enhancing digital literacy will enable staff to create and manage effective social media strategies, ensuring that campaigns can adapt to the rapidly evolving digital landscape. Furthermore, campaigns should prioritize authenticity and transparency in their communications. Engaging with voters through interactive content, and personalised messages, can help build trust and foster stronger connections with the electorate. Policymakers should focus on developing comprehensive regulations that address all aspects of social media use in political campaigns. These

regulations should include guidelines for advertising transparency, misinformation management, and data privacy protection. To combat the spread of misinformation, nationwide digital literacy programmes should be implemented. These programmes would educate the public on how to identify false information and engage responsibly on social media platforms. Moreover, collaboration between regulatory bodies, social media platforms, and civil society organisations is essential. Joint efforts can help develop better tools and strategies to monitor and manage the digital campaign landscape, ensuring fair and transparent use of social media in elections.

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