

A Bibliometric Analysis of Social Media and Election Campaign Success: Mapping Research Trends from 2019 to 2023

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Abstract

This paper aims to identify trends and research mapping on the Influence of social media on the Success of Election Campaigns that have concerned academics and practitioners. The method used in this research is qualitative research with a literature study approach. The data found were 258 documents, which were then analyzed. This dataset was converted to CSV format, imported into Bibliometrix, and analyzed. The findings in this study show that the success of election campaigns is not only related to social media factors but also to the successful integration of various strategic elements in the political process. Social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Telegram, are the main channels for delivering political messages directly to voters. This success also depends on the capacity of candidates or political parties to utilize social media effectively.

Keyword: Social Media; Election Campaign; Democracy; and Political Communication.

Introduction

In the digital age, social media has evolved into a powerful public communication tool in various aspects of life, including politics and democracy. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter serve as spaces for sharing information, expanding social networks, and shaping public opinion in real-time (Rao, 2020). The role of social media is no longer limited to social interaction. However, it has expanded into the political realm as a tool for conveying narratives, mobilizing support, and creating a political dialogue between candidates, political parties, and voters (Rowbottom, 2020).

In elections, social media facilitates more active and open political participation. Voters can access candidate information, express opinions, and participate in online political discussions (Leighton et al., 2020). Meanwhile, political candidates utilize social media to convey their programs, build their political image, and respond to public issues adaptively (Pallister & Fitzpatrick, 2024). With the increasing penetration of the internet, social media has become an ideal strategic tool for effective and large-scale digital campaigns (Liçenji, 2023). However, the role of media in political campaigns cannot be separated from the dynamics of influence and public opinion shaping. As a space for political communication, social media plays a role in conveying messages and shaping perceptions, setting the agenda, and influencing voter preferences (Fetoshi & Shahini-Hoxhaj, 2023). The reciprocal relationship between political actors and social media indicates that digital campaigns are not one-way but interactive and dynamic, creating a new form of political communication that is more fragmented and faster (Santos, 2020).

Previous studies have highlighted the connection between social media and election campaigns, including research by Oschatz et al. (2024), which shows that social media posts are more frequently quoted and/or embedded in news articles during the campaign period than outside. Articles that include posts feature more actors but are not more diverse, as most referenced actors come from the political center. Additionally, articles with posts showed higher responsiveness in positions, but politeness in the political discourse tended to decrease. Furthermore, Liçenji's research indicated that social media plays a crucial role as a modern political communication tool, expanding the reach of campaign messages and influencing election outcomes by increasing voter

engagement and participation. These findings indicate that social media plays an important role in shaping the landscape of modern political campaigns.

However, the effectiveness of social media in determining election success remains contextual. It is influenced by factors such as voter digital literacy, candidates' ability to convey consistent messages, and adaptive responses to public issues. Furthermore, most existing studies focus more on conceptual analysis or case studies, and there is no comprehensive bibliometric study on the influence of social media on the success of election campaigns, creating a significant knowledge gap in understanding the developments, trends, and challenges faced in the application of social media as a political communication tool. This gap indicates a lack of systematic mapping of existing literature, which could help identify key factors contributing to the effectiveness of social media use in political campaigns.

Therefore, this study uses a bibliometric approach to analyze scientific publication trends and the effectiveness of social media use on the success of election campaigns. This study is expected to contribute to identifying the direction of research development, clarifying unexplored research gaps, and offering strategic references for policymakers and researchers to develop evidence-based and contextual political communication studies.

Research Method

This study uses a literature review approach with a bibliometric method, which aims to map the development, trends, and potential research directions in social media and election campaigns. The bibliometric approach was chosen because it provides an objective, systematic, and replicable analytical framework based on structured bibliographic data. Although the interpretation of the results is qualitative, the primary analysis process is quantitative, as demonstrated in the processing of bibliographic metrics and scientific network visualization (Setyaningsih et al., 2016). Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative approach, while the interpretation of its findings can be explored qualitatively to understand the scientific context in depth (Martín-Martín et al., 2018).

The data in this study consists of articles published between 2019 and 2023 (the last five years) in journals indexed in the Scopus database. The

selection of the Scopus database as the data source was based on the consideration that Scopus is one of the two most important databases and includes high-quality articles published in reputable journals. The articles from Scopus in this literature review were sourced from 258 journals downloaded from Scopus in the following format (TITLE-ABS-KEY (campaign) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("social media") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (election)) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2023 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOCI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , "Social Media") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , "Election Campaigns")). In Figure 1, the author presents the criteria and filters used in data collection and the analysis techniques applied.

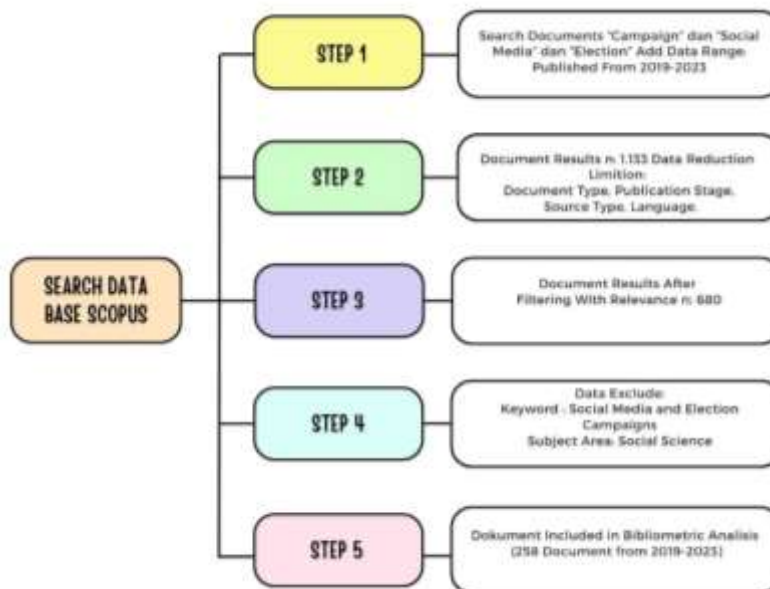


Figure 1. The PRISMA flow diagram is used to identify, screen, and include papers for our bibliometric review

Source: Processed by Author 2024

Figure 1 shows the literature selection process detailed in the modified PRISMA diagram, which illustrates the steps for searching, selecting, and collecting documents for analysis. In the initial search phase, 1,133

documents were identified through the Scopus database. The initial screening process was conducted by applying filters based on document type (article), publication stage (final), source type (journal), and language (English), resulting in 680 documents. Further screening was conducted by narrowing the search scope using specific keywords, namely 'social media,' 'campaign,' and 'election,' and ensuring the appearance of these keywords in the title, abstract, and keywords of the document. In addition, the publication time frame was limited to between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2023 to ensure the topic's relevance in the current context. After this process, 258 final documents met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed further. Applying the PRISMA approach aims to ensure transparency, accountability, and replicability in the document selection process.

The analysis was conducted using VOSviewer software, with three types of visualization: network, overlay, and density, using two main approaches: evaluative analysis, covering publication trends, citations, geographical distribution, and identification of the ten most productive authors, relational analysis, including keyword co-occurrence, author co-authorship, and co-citation relationships (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Before mapping, keyword cleaning (manual and using the VOSviewer thesaurus) was performed to avoid term duplication. Clustering was performed using the complete counting method and association strength algorithm, with a minimum occurrence threshold of five times. Cluster naming was inductive, based on the dominant theme in each keyword group. The final results of this mapping were used to identify significant research trends, potential scientific collaboration between researchers and institutions, and research gaps that could be addressed in future research agendas in social media and election campaigns.

Results and Discussion

General Information and Annual Publication Output

Figure 2 illustrates the annual publication count from 2019 to 2023. The quantity of publications has dramatically risen in recent years. This emphasizes the growing significance of social media and electoral campaign research. This visualizes the evolution of social media and Election Campaign research over the past five years.

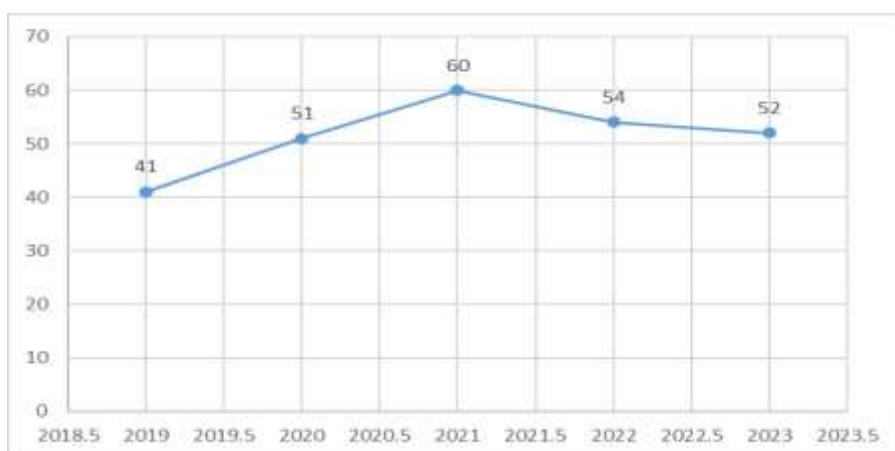


Figure 2. Global trends in publications on Social Media and Election Campaigns from 2019 to 2023

Source: Processed by Author 2024

Figure 2 above shows the trend of scientific publications on social media and election campaigns, which has increased significantly over the last five years (2019–2023). The number of publications increased from 41 articles in 2019 to 60 in 2021 before experiencing a slight decline to 52 articles in 2023. The 46% increase over the first three years reflects the growing relevance of social media in electoral politics in various countries, alongside the shift in the political communication landscape from conventional media to digital media.

This growth pattern shows two important turning points, namely in 2020–2021 and 2021–2022. The surge in publications from 51 to 60 articles during the 2020–2021 period was driven by the growing centrality of social media in digital political campaign strategies, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated the transformation of political communication to the digital realm (Pellegrino, 2023). Meanwhile, despite declining publications after 2021, the publication trend remained above the initial baseline and demonstrated consistent academic interest in this topic. The decline in 2022–2023 from 54 to 52 publications still shows a higher trend than the initial baseline in 2019, indicating the continued academic interest in this topic even outside the momentum of primary elections (Subekti et al., 2024). Additionally, several countries have responded to studies on social media and election campaigns, including:

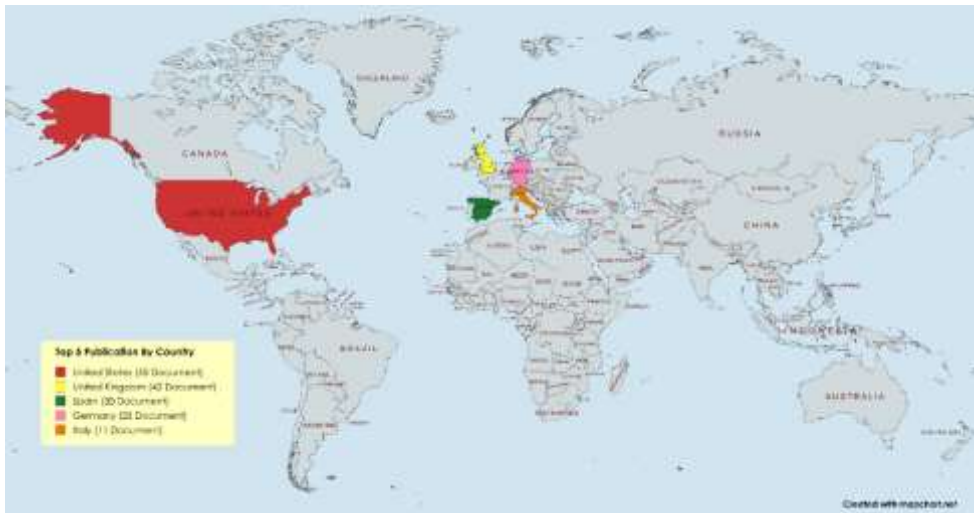


Figure 3. Most Contributing Countries in Social Media and Election Campaigns from 2019 to 2023

Source: Processed by Author 2024

Figure 3 above shows the countries that have significantly contributed to research publications on Social Media and Election Campaigns from 2019 to 2023. The top five countries dominating scientific literature production on this topic are the United States (65 documents), the United Kingdom (42 documents), Spain (30 documents), Germany (25 documents), and Italy (11 documents). The high number of publications from the United States can be understood in the context of the country's position as a pioneer in the use of social media in the political sphere, as well as being the center of many major digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), and Instagram (Fujiwara et al., 2024). This is reinforced by the high global exposure to US political dynamics, particularly during the two primary election cycles of the 2016 and 2020 US Presidential Elections. The role of social media in disseminating information, including disinformation, and its involvement in political mobilization have become an important object of interdisciplinary study. This has made the United States the epicenter of research on the influence of social media on electoral democracy (Murdani et al., 2022).

The United Kingdom and other European countries, such as Spain, Germany, and Italy, have also actively participated in producing scientific literature related to this issue. This reflects the high level of attention to

digital information regulation, protection of voters' data, and comparative studies on the effectiveness of digital campaigns in parliamentary and multiparty systems (Fornasier & Borges, 2022). In addition, challenges to digital democracy, such as opinion polarization and digital propaganda, are a serious concern in the context of elections in these countries, encouraging the growth of cross-institutional and cross-national research collaboration. This mapping shows that research dominance is still concentrated in the West, particularly in North America and Western Europe (Marwala, 2023). The lack of contributions from the Global South or Southeast Asia countries, including Indonesia, indicates a geographical gap in knowledge production. This opens opportunities for strengthening local studies in different socio-political contexts and encourages more inclusive global collaboration.

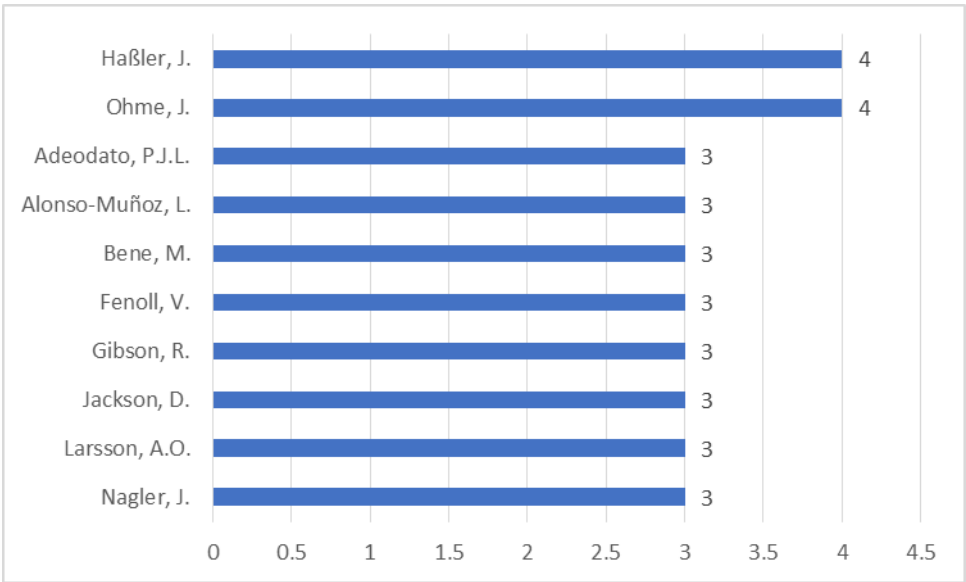


Figure 4. Top Authors Contributing to Social Media and Election Campaigns from 2019 to 2023.
Source: Processed by Author 2024

Figure 4 above shows the contributions of several prominent authors in research on Social Media and Campaigns from 2019 to 2023. Authors Habler J and Ohme J have the most contributions, each with four publications. This indicates that both authors actively engage in digital political issues, particularly in analyzing political communication through

Figure 5 shows a highly complex network diagram or mind map illustrating the interconnected relationships between various Social Media and Election campaign concepts. This figure highlights the key points of Social Media, which is the primary subject of this study. Various nodes of different sizes are connected to the central node through lines representing the strength or relationship between the concepts (Subekti et al., 2023). Each node in the diagram is labeled with a specific keyword, i.e., one closely related to election campaigns through social media. Some of the keywords visible include Social Media, Telegram, Facebook, YouTube, Digital Media, Election Campaigns, Political Communication, Political Participation, and Electoral System. Each keyword provides direction regarding the research focus and relevant conceptual areas. Based on this network analysis, the concepts can be grouped into five analytical clusters, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Cluster Analysis Results

Cluster	Item Themes
Cluster 1	<i>Election Campaigns, Presidential Election, Political Parties, Electoral Campaigns, Electoral Parties, General Election.</i>
Cluster 2	<i>Political Participation, Political Communication, Participation, Electoral Campaigns, Political Engagement, Campaign Communication.</i>
Cluster 3	<i>Democracy, Public Figure, Internet, Media Role, Party Politics.</i>
Cluster 4	<i>Social Media, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Telegram, Digital Media, Social Media Platforms</i>
Cluster 5	<i>Campaign Finance, Digital Technology, Social Media Campaigns</i>

Table 2 shows the cluster analysis results conducted on themes related to social media and election campaigns. This analysis groups the main concepts into six different clusters, reflecting various aspects of the digital transformation process and the level of digital maturity of an organization or sector. Cluster 1 includes keywords such as election campaigns, presidential elections, political parties, and general elections. This cluster indicates the literature's focus on the formal process of national and local

election campaigns. The presence of words such as presidential elections and electoral campaigns indicates that most of the research in this cluster focuses on the dynamics of presidential elections and the participation of traditional political actors. Cluster 2 consists of keywords emphasizing participatory and political interaction aspects, such as political communication, political participation, and campaign communication. This cluster shows the orientation of research towards the function of social media as a means of deliberation and strengthening citizen participation in the digital political process. Keywords such as 'political engagement' indicate that studies in this group examine how social media users are actively involved in discussions and disseminating political content (Spierings & Jacobs, 2019).

Cluster 3 contains keywords related to political systems and the role of media in democracy, such as democracy, public figure, internet, and media role. This cluster represents the literature's attention to the relationship between digital transformation, democratic governance, and public opinion dynamics (Reddy & Naidoo, 2022). Party politics also analyzes political institutions adopting digital strategies as part of the political communication transformation. Cluster 4 contains keywords directly referring to social media platforms, including social media, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Telegram. This cluster indicates that digital platforms are the primary entities studied in research related to digital political campaigns (Nwozor et al., 2022). The emergence of keywords such as 'digital media' and 'social media platforms' also highlights the complexity of the media used by political actors to disseminate messages. Cluster 5 is a more technical and strategic thematic cluster covering campaign finance, digital technology, and social media campaigns. This cluster shows how studies have begun to examine the tactical aspects of digital campaigns, including funding strategies, technological infrastructure, and social media-based campaign design (Kim, 2023).

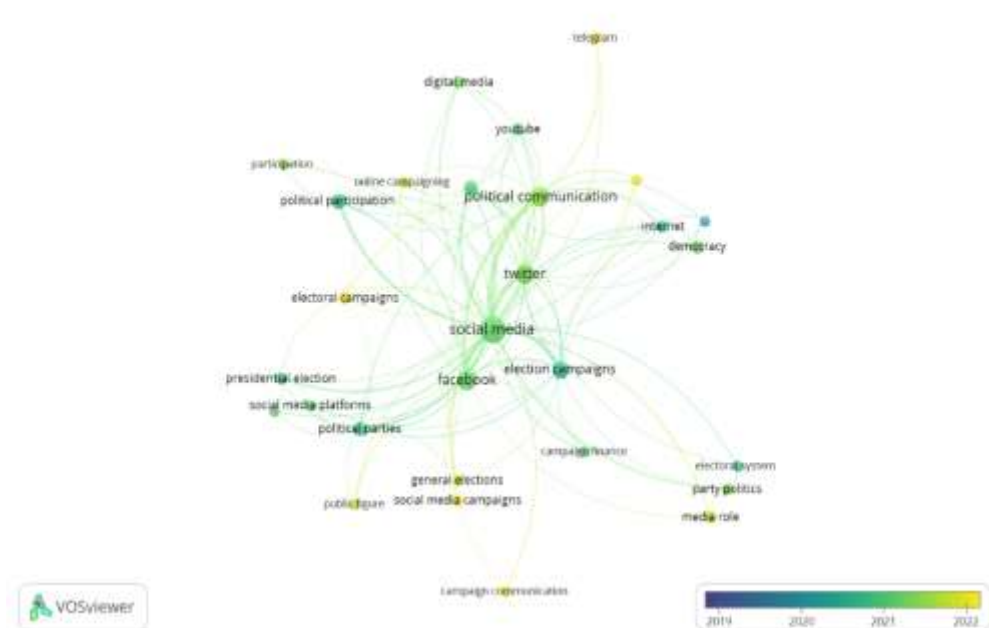


Figure 6. A snapshot of the development of studies on Social Media and Election Campaigns from 2019 to 2023.

Source: Author's Data Processing Using VOSviewer

Figure 6 shows research trends in the 2019–2023 period on social media and election campaigns indexed by Scopus. Keywords marked in dark blue, such as democracy, internet, and public figure, tend to appear at the beginning of the analysis period (2019–2020). This indicates that in the early stages, the research focus was more directed toward conceptual frameworks regarding the influence of digital media on democracy and the role of public figures in shaping opinions through the internet.

This focus is relevant to the global political momentum at the beginning of this decade, including the initial response to the 2020 US presidential election, which emphasized democratic integrity and digital disinformation. Furthermore, keywords such as Twitter, Facebook, political participation, and political communication are dominated by the green-yellow spectrum, indicating an increase in the intensity of studies in the 2021–2022 period. This phase indicates a shift in research focus toward political communication strategies and digital participation, particularly in the context of increasingly massive online campaigns post-COVID-19 pandemic (Fetoshi & Shahini-Hoxhaj, 2023). The pandemic served as the

primary accelerator of digital transformation in political campaign processes, where physical limitations drove the intensive adoption of social media as the primary channel for political communication (Kim, 2023). The bright yellow colors, such as Telegram, YouTube, online campaigns, and campaign finance, represent contemporary themes. These keywords represent new issues that have begun to receive significant attention over the past two years. The increasing attention to platforms such as Telegram and YouTube indicates the diversification of digital campaign channels. In contrast, the emergence of the campaign finance theme indicates concerns about transparency and political funding in digital campaigns (Tapsell, 2021).

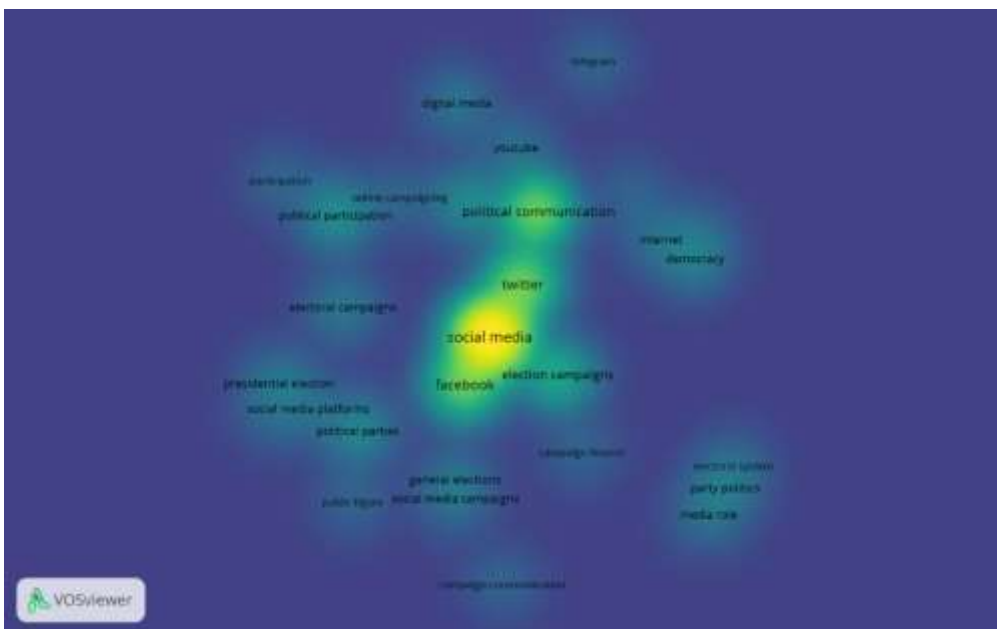


Figure 7. Visualization of Social Media and Election Campaigns overlay from 2019 to 2023

Source: Author's Data Processing Using VOSviewer

Figure 7 visualizes thematic density in studies on social media and election campaigns based on keyword overlay analysis using VOSviewer. Yellow represents topics with high density or the most dominant frequency of occurrence, while blue areas indicate lower discussion intensity. The analysis results show that social media, election campaigns, Twitter, Facebook, and political communication are the most frequently used

keywords and form the gravitational center of scientific discourse from 2019 to 2023 (Turbic & Rosa, 2023). This density indicates a strong academic focus on the role of social media, particular platforms, in political communication and digital campaign strategies.

Meanwhile, keywords such as political participation, electoral campaigns, presidential election, and social media platforms appear with moderate intensity (green-yellow), indicating that although they have been discussed quite frequently, there is still room for further exploration of the contribution of social media in shaping voter behavior and electoral participation more broadly. This is particularly important in the increasing use of social media for political mobilization in developing democracies (Nwozor et al., 2022). Interestingly, several low-intensity keywords, such as campaign finance, party politics, media role, and electoral system, indicate that digital campaigns' structural and regulatory aspects have not been a significant focus of previous research. However, issues related to campaign financing and the influence of the political system on the effectiveness of digital communication are crucial variables that determine the success of social media-based elections, especially in the context of the increasing use of paid political advertising and content distribution algorithms (Belcastro et al., 2022).

In addition, keywords such as YouTube, Telegram, and digital media also show low intensity, even though these platforms have experienced significant growth in recent years. This indicates opportunities for further research to explore the influence of alternative platforms on political communication strategies, especially among young voters and targeted digital communities.

Discussion

Advancements in communication technology, particularly social media, have fundamentally transformed the landscape of modern political communication. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram have become the primary arenas for political interaction between candidates, parties, and voters. This shift transforms conventional one-way communication models into interactive and participatory two-way models (Klein & Robison, 2020). The findings of this study reinforce the argument that social media is not only a tool for disseminating

messages but also functions as a digital public sphere where dialogue, consensus, and even political discourse conflicts occur.

An analysis of publication trends shows a significant increase in studies on social media and election campaigns during 2019–2023, with the highest surge occurring in 2021. This surge coincided with the US Presidential Election and the COVID-19 pandemic. Both events drove major transformations in political communication strategies, with social media becoming the primary channel for digital campaigns when physical activities were restricted (Murdani et al., 2022). However, the decline in publications from 2021 to 2023 is noteworthy, as it may reflect topic saturation, a shift in focus to post-pandemic issues, or critical evaluation of the effectiveness of social media in the context of increasingly complex political campaigns that are vulnerable to disinformation.

The dominance of publications by the United States reflects the reality of the country's progressive political system and research, which is highly adaptive to technology and supported by a strong research infrastructure (Fornasier & Borges, 2022). In this case, social media is used not only for political persuasion but also to personalize in line with the theory of permanent campaigns and individualized advertising. The success of this strategy is reflected in the literature showing how US politicians integrate data analytics and personalized communication on digital platforms to maximize electability (Damilola Bartholomew Sholademi & Adebobola Omowon, 2024).

Furthermore, keyword analysis and topic mapping results show that 'Political Communication,' 'Election Campaigns,' and 'Political Participation' are the center of gravity of the developing academic discourse. However, other important issues, such as campaign finance, electoral systems, and the media's role, are still underexplored. This indicates opportunities for further research into how digital-based campaign financing mechanisms can promote transparency or how electoral systems influence the form and impact of online political communication (Ardiansyah & Muhaimin, 2024). Additionally, the emergence of keywords such as disinformation and social media manipulation serves as a reminder of the dark side of social media in electoral contests. The practice of algorithm manipulation, using bots, and spreading hoaxes can undermine the integrity of elections and weaken public trust in the democratic system (Sheikh, 2024). Within the

framework of deliberative democracy theory, this condition poses a serious challenge because social media can create echo chambers instead of rational and inclusive discussions.

The success of political campaigns in the digital age cannot be determined using social media alone (Anshari, 2013). Its effectiveness is primarily determined by how social media is strategically integrated with elements such as the electoral system, citizen participation, political communication models, and campaign funding regulations. Future studies need to expand their interdisciplinary approach by examining digital technology's ethical and social implications in electoral politics. Further research could also focus on developing data-driven campaign communication models and information justice approaches to strengthen a healthy and inclusive digital democracy. By understanding the interplay between social media's technological, political, and ethical dimensions, future studies are expected to formulate electorally effective, ethical, and sustainable digital campaign strategies that support inclusive democracy.

Conclusion

This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric mapping of the development of studies on the influence of social media in election campaigns from 2019 to 2023. The analysis results show a significant increase in publications each year, with the highest peak in 2021 influenced by the US Presidential Election and restrictions on physical campaigns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The most significant contribution came from the United States, reflecting the country's dominance in digital political communication research. Authors such as Habler, J., are also noted as productive contributors who actively explore the dynamics of social media in an electoral context.

Keyword mapping reveals that Political Communication, Election Campaigns, and Political Participation dominate the academic discourse. However, some important themes, such as campaign finance, electoral systems, and the role of media, remain under-explored and hold potential for future research agendas. These findings underscore that social media is not merely a tool for conveying messages but an integral part of dynamic, participatory, and data-driven political campaign strategies. The main contribution of this study lies in its visual and analytical mapping of conceptual networks and scientific collaboration in this field, which has

not been done systematically. By combining bibliometric and keyword mapping approaches, this research enriches our understanding of how social media is used as a strategic infrastructure in shaping public opinion and political engagement. As for recommendations for further research, cross-regional comparisons are needed to see how socio-political variables influence the use of social media in campaigns. In addition, further exploration of ethical aspects, including algorithm abuse, disinformation, and data privacy, is urgently needed to ensure that digital campaign practices remain within the framework of a healthy and inclusive democracy.

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