

Peer Review

Review of: "Social Media on Election Campaigns: Bibliometric Analysis of Global Research Trends and Future Directions"

Kayo Mimizuka¹

1. University of Texas at Austin, United States

Thank you for the opportunity to review this important research. This quantitative study provides important insights into the current status and future directions of the field of social media and election research, but I think there's room for improvement in terms of how some sections are structured, the presentation of quantitative results, and the implications.

- I would appreciate more detailed insights into the current research gaps and future research directions/opportunities. The author notes that research in this field started off by looking at platform usage, then shifted to examining political processes in communication and political dynamics, and recently there's more interest in election-related mis- and disinformation. The author mentions that promising themes for future research include machine learning applications in analyzing social media data for political forecasting and campaign optimization. I appreciate the author's contribution of providing quantitative evidence to what researchers in this field have witnessed over the past years and where it's going, but the paper can be strengthened by discussing in more detail what researchers have missed to interrogate, and what other important topics to study or approaches to take. For example, in terms of election mis- and disinformation, there is an abundance of research. The author mentions how platforms like TikTok or technologies such as Generative AI may impact election misinformation, but are there other angles that seem promising (e.g., multiplatform disinformation coordination, global spread of misinformation, platforms like encrypted messaging apps)? Is it possible, for example, to provide more information on this by potentially complementing the

quantitative results with a more qualitative look into the specific research topics? Currently, the discussion section of the paper is somewhat limited and can benefit from more insights.

- The current configuration of the Introduction and the literature review section does not seem to provide a good overview of the current research on social media and elections. Most studies cited in these sections pertain to how social media is used by politicians and can benefit them, but as the author mentions at the very end of the literature review section, there is voluminous research that examined how social media platforms have been used to manipulate the public. There's also a body of research about campaign advertisements or platform policies affecting election campaigns and discourses. So there are at least bodies of research on (1) how social media affects or influences voters and their discussions, (2) how politicians interact with or target voters, and (3) platform policies that the author mentions in the article. Rather than delving into specific studies too quickly, these sections would benefit from offering a structured overview of the field. Since this study itself is a type of literature review, the literature review section would be more effective if this space is used to more clearly state why this study is needed now (this could also be made more explicit in the Bibliometric Analysis Overview section).
- Relatedly, I found the scope of this research somewhat unclear – the author asks, “What is the present status of the research structure of using social media in election campaigns”?, which at first made me think the focus is on studies looking into the use of social media by political candidates or campaigners. But one or two studies cited in the literature review are about its influence on voters. This may be a matter of wording, particularly the phrase “election campaigns,” which could be interpreted narrowly. If your research scope includes looking at studies on social media and elections in general, that can be made clear, particularly in the introduction – and also provide more justifications for the keywords the author used.
- Regarding Figure 3, more detailed quantitative results (e.g., precise numbers of documents, year, how many research studies looked into certain topics like disinformation) would be helpful.
- In general, this paper would benefit from providing more detailed quantitative results – for example, the author mentions that there is increasing interest in sentiment analysis and technologies like Generative AI and TikTok. But it is unclear how popular these kinds of studies are becoming.
- The author should briefly mention why the study focuses on the 2010–2024 period.
- “...a call for Asian scholars to look into this phenomenon and note the diverse Asian democracies.” I would not limit this to Asia: is it not a call for more research from the Global South, and a call for not

only researchers from these regions to publish but also for major journal articles to advocate for the publication of global research?

- This may be a side note, but social media research in general is facing a dire situation after the closure of major APIs. The disparities between the data “haves” and “have-nots” are only going to widen under the current situation, and as researchers, we are facing a critical juncture of trying to figure out how or whether we can continue this important research on social media and elections. The author makes recommendations on the future direction of the field, but this situation with data accessibility might be something to mention and briefly discuss at the end of the article.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.