



IMPACT OF MEDIA ON ELECTIONS IN INDIA & ANALYSING THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN 2024 ELECTION OUTCOMES

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Abstract

The 2024 India General Elections brought to focus the increasing role of the media in deciding the outcome of the elections using the power of both the traditional and social media. This paper has discussed the role of television, print media and digital platforms in voter awareness, political participation and campaign planning in the 2024 elections. The mixed-method analysis was built on the basis of secondary data, in which a qualitative analysis of the content, quantitative analysis of the engagement metrics, and a comparative analysis between the 2014, 2019 and 2024 elections were considered. The results showed that traditional media still had a significant role in setting the agenda and a credibility-building role especially in the rural and semi-urban regions, whereas the social media platforms like WhatsApp, YouTube, and X played a major role in mobilising voters as well as in time-sensitive political activities. Nevertheless, the research also determined any serious challenges related to digital media: misinformation, deepfakes content, and polarisation driven by algorithms, which were a threat to electoral integrity. On the whole, the paper came to the conclusion that the media played both the facilitating and disruptive roles in the 2024 elections, and that ethical media practices, furthering digital literacy, and enhancing regulatory frameworks were essential in ensuring that the democracy in India was not jeopardized by the media.

Keywords: Media, Elections, social media, Electoral outcomes, India 2024



1.INTRODUCTION

India India has one of the largest democratic processes in the world, which is controlled by almost a billion voters, who are of different social, linguistic, and regional backgrounds. In this complicated political electoral set-up, the media plays a very essential mediating role between the political actors, and the citizens, as it creates political awareness, affects voter behaviour, and re-constructs the political discourse. The media, which is traditionally considered to be the fourth pillar of the democracy, is decisive in terms of the spread of the political information, as well as defining the electoral discourses, prioritising issues and determining the perception of political leadership. The influence of the media has also increased in the recent decades due to the rapid growth of digital technologies, which essentially changed the character of electoral communication in India.

Traditional media, like newspapers, radio, and television have traditionally played a very important role in educating voters and holding political institutions accountable. The main medium of political communication during the initial few decades after independence was the print media and the emergence of television in the 1990s saw the introduction of politics in the living rooms of urban and rural Indians. But with the advent of the social media platforms in the recent decade, this has changed with personalised, instantaneous, and direct political interaction. Whatsapp, YouTube, and X are some examples of platforms that have decreased the gatekeeping aspect of conventional media and enabled political parties and their leaders to talk to the electorate directly. This blending of the traditional and digital media has resulted in a hybrid media ecosystem that has a major influence on election.

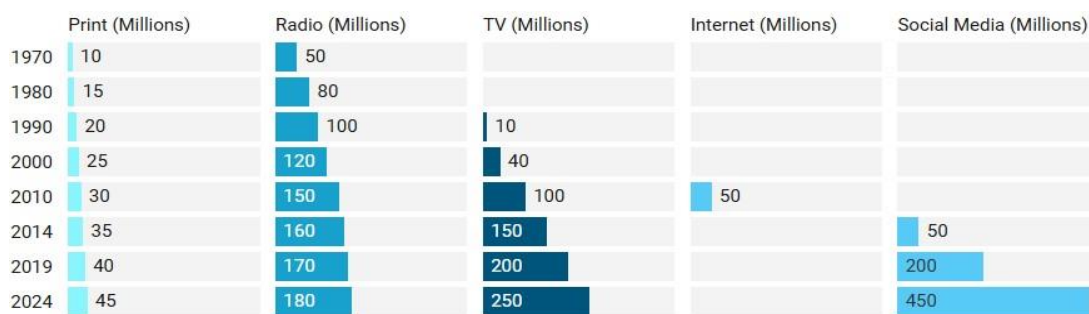


Figure 1: Growth of Media Users in India (1970–2024)

This statistic shows the overall growth in media penetration in India, a growth that has seen the level of exposure of the electorate to media steadily rise since the time of dominance of the print and radio media to the present day mass television and the extensive digital connectivity common today. The figure empirically supports the investigation of the media as one of the leading powers in election politics.

The 2024 General Elections were a pivotal moment in the Indian democratic system since there was unprecedented significant penetration of digital media and also significant political contest. The online political engagement during the 2024 elections was larger and more pronounced than any other electoral cycle due to the number of internet users of a bit over 600 million and the number of active social media users of about 450 million. Though the traditional media was still performing its roles especially in rural and semi-urban areas, social media sites became the leading platforms where political campaigning, voter mobilisation and opinion formation took place. Narratives driven by influencers, amplification through algorithms, micro-targeted political communications, engaging with voters in real-time became the hallmarks of the voting process.

Meanwhile, the increasing influence of digital media brought a lot of new problems to electoral integrity. The dissemination of misinformation, deep fake videos, and unverified political content were a cause of concern in terms of voter manipulation and democratic fairness. The impact of algorithmic echo chambers on political polarisation only made matters of the media worse. Despite regulatory measures, including the guidelines of Election Commission of India and Information Technology Rules, 2021 trying to tackle the challenge, there were still loopholes in enforcement and technological constraints during the entire election period. This makes the 2024 elections a special case in terms of exploring the empowering and destabilising forces of media on democracy.

It is on this basis that the main research question that will be discussed in this paper is how much the traditional and social media influenced the electoral results in the 2024 Indian General Elections. In particular, the research attempts to examine the role of various types of media in their impact on



voter awareness, political activism, election policies, and electoral discourse, as well as examine the dangers of misinformation and regulatory lapses. This study seeks to find out whether the media played an enabling role in democracy or a distortionist role in elections by looking at how the two media interacted.

The study is important in that it places the 2024 elections in a larger historical process of media transformation in India and offers an empirical and analytical evaluation of modern media processes. With reference to documented trends, secondary data, and organized analysis through the attached dissertation the research leads to a greater insight in understanding how the power of the media can be used in the largest democracy in the world. By doing it, it underscores the urgent necessity of ethical media practices and responsive regulatory frameworks to have the media further enhance, and not compromise the democratic bases of India.

2. REVIEW OF LITREATURE

The influence of the media on the electoral outcomes of the 2024 Indian General Elections was the subject of several studies contemporary to the issue but the point of convergence of political communication, digital technologies, and voter behaviour. The existing literature was mostly dedicated to the changes in election campaigning with the use of social media platforms, application of information-based political communication, and the consequences of this shift on the democratic process and the transparency of elections.

Al Jazeera (2024a) reported on the results of the 2024 Indian General Elections through constituency-by-constituency analysis and finding regional voting patterns. This research proved that media-based stories started to play an even greater role in electoral outcomes than only the traditional factors like caste, parties affiliation, or regional affiliation. Analysis established that constituencies that were more penetrated by digital media showed different voting patterns, which indicated that decision making by the voter concerning voting was correlated to media penetration. The results revealed that political communication released on mainstream and online media platforms was a major factor in the development of political leadership and party performance in the political scene during election time.



In a subsequent analysis, Al Jazeera (2024b) analysed the Faizabad constituency to explain how local electoral processes mirrored national trends of the media. The analysis has indicated that the symbolic and emotional narratives that were propagated with the excessive media attention especially on the digital media, contributed to voter sentiment. As it was observed, voter alignment was affected by the social media discussion of historical, religious and political symbolism, thereby highlighting the strength of the mediated story in reinventing and reshaping the electoral agenda. The research also indicated that media amplification could tend to create a polarized political stance particularly in tightly fought constituencies.

Business Standard (2024) surveyed the technological revolution in the Indian electoral campaign through the lenses of the application of digital technologies, including memes, artificial intelligence, and data analytics in the 2024 elections. The research claimed that the political parties more and more resorted to the help of algorithms and content distribution, influencer-based messages, and specifically targeted advertising to mobilize voters. It was observed that these tools allowed campaigns to target some demographic groups with personalized political messages, which would improve outreach and exposure. Nonetheless, the research also brought up the ethical issues of such practices, specifically the dissemination of misinformation, deepfake content usage, and the absence of transparency in online political advertising.

The Centre for Media Studies (CMS, 2024) released a detailed analysis of media behaviour throughout the 2024 elections, which reported the growing influence of both the traditional and digital media in creating political narratives. The researchers found that the television news outlets still had high agenda-setting pressure, especially in the rural and semi-urban areas, and social media platforms became the immensely influential areas of political mobilisation and opinion-building. CMS noted that political parties were turning to digital platforms more and more to intensify the campaign message, reach younger voters, and provide real-time content. Nevertheless, the paper has also emphasised the increasing level of misinformation, sensationalism and polarised debate that was threatening election integrity. Based on the results, media increased voter awareness and turnout, but unregulated digital activities weakened informed democracies.



The Election Commission of India (ECI, 2024) analyzed voter education efforts conducted in the 2024 elections and in particular media-based outreach. The report recorded the use of digital platforms, such as social media and official online portals to distribute voting information, electoral procedures and awareness programs in more than one language. According to the ECI, voter education campaigns through the media helped to raise awareness among first time voters, women and marginalised groupings. Meanwhile, the study also recognized the operational issues including the lack of a balanced and equal availability of the digital and the dissemination of incorrect information that complicated voter outreach work. The results highlighted the significance of the involvement of the institutional media in enhancing electoral turnout and being transparent and impartial.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present research took the mixed-method research design to investigate the influence of media on the election outcomes in the 2024 Indian General Elections. The methodology was developed in a way to examine the influence of traditional and social media based on both qualitative and quantitative methodology which relies solely on secondary data that is recorded in the attached dissertation.

3.1 Research Design

The study design adopted in the study was descriptive and analytical. It was concerned with the media use patterns, political communication, voter turnout, and election results. The study combined both the traditional pattern with the up to date information on the 2024 elections in India to absorb the changing state of the media influence in the Indian electoral politics.

3.2 Data Sources

The study has used only the secondary sources of data that were utilized in the dissertation. These included:

- Media coverage and data on the Centre of Media Studies (CMS).

- Voter outreach statistics and official documents of the Election Commission of India (ECI)
- Ability of the platform to engage with social media.
- Public electoral data, and other voting patterns at constituency level.

No major surveys or interviews took place, and this aspect did not contradict the original dissertation structure.

Table 1: Media Penetration in Indian Elections (1951–2024)

Era	Media Type	Reach (Approx.)	Key Impact
1951–1980 (Pre-Digital)	Print (Newspapers)	10 million (1970s)	Educated voters, regional influence, limited by literacy (Chakravarty & Roy, 2015)
1951–1980 (Pre-Digital)	Radio (AIR)	80% rural households (1980s)	Voter education, neutral platform, state-controlled (Das, 2016)
1990s–2000s (TV Era)	Television	40 million households (2000)	Visual storytelling, agenda-setting, urban-rural divide (Kumar, 2018)
2014–2024 (Digital Era)	Social Media	450 million users (2024)	Micro-targeting, polarization, misinformation risks (Statista, 2024)

This table 1 was the reason behind the historical development of the media utilization and the methodology outline of comparing the traditional and electronic media influence through the electoral cycles.

3.3 Methods of Analysis

Qualitative Content Analysis: Media content of interest in election was the focus of qualitative analysis involving the content on television debates, newspaper coverage, political advertisements and posts on social media. This method made it possible to identify the patterns of agenda setting, framing, and storytelling of political actors in the 2024 elections.



Quantitative Analysis: Quantitative analysis was centered on the engagement metrics (likes, shares, views, retweets and platform reach). These measures were analysed with the data on voter turnout and the results of the electoral processes to find the correlations between the media exposure and the voting behaviour.

Comparative Analysis: A comparison was done longitudinally between the 2014, 2019 and 2024 general elections. This comparison assisted in evaluating changes in media strategies, adoption of technology and responsiveness of the voter with time.

3.4 Scope and Limitations

This study was restricted to media influence in 2024 Indian General Elections and failed to consider the psychology of an individual voter. Also, the use of secondary data constrained the causal inference but the triangulation of several plausible datasets enhanced the credibility of analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section gives findings and interprets them based on the tables and figures that are part of the attached dissertation. Through the analysis, the traditional and social media were used to influence voter turnout, campaign tactics, and election results in the 2024 Indian General Elections.

4.1 Media Engagement and Voter Turnout

The results indicated a close relationship between media coverage and election participation especially in constituencies that had high levels of digital penetration. Regions that were more exposed to social media resources had a relatively high level of political awareness and participation.

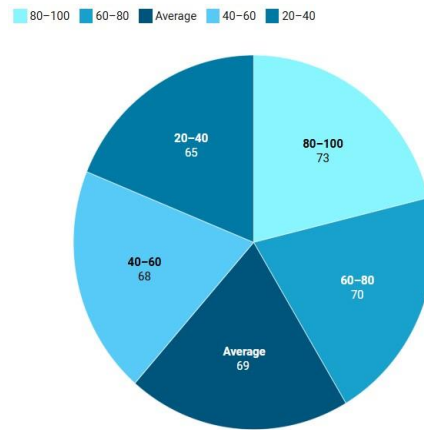


Figure 2: Voter Turnout by Social Media Penetration (2024)

The figure 2 depicted that the more the social media was penetrated in the constituencies, the higher the voter turnout, thus, indicating that digital platforms were facilitative in mobilizing voters. The latter was also noticeable among young and first-time voters, as they depended greatly on the online political content to obtain information concerning the election.

4.2 Influence of Influencers and Campaign Spending

In 2024, political influencers and online advertising became important parts of the election campaigning. Influencer networks and sponsored content were used by parties to boost campaign stories and reach certain groups of voters.

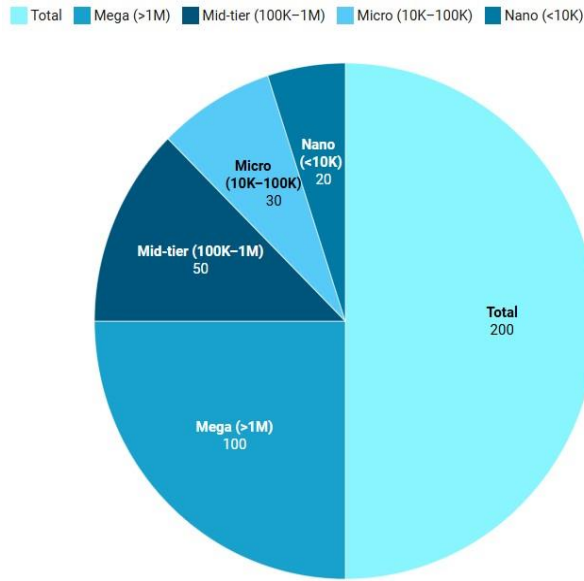


Figure 3: Influencer Reach (2024)

The figure 3 showed the widening coverage of the political influencers, which suggests that they have an increased influence on the development of the voter perception and the political discourse.

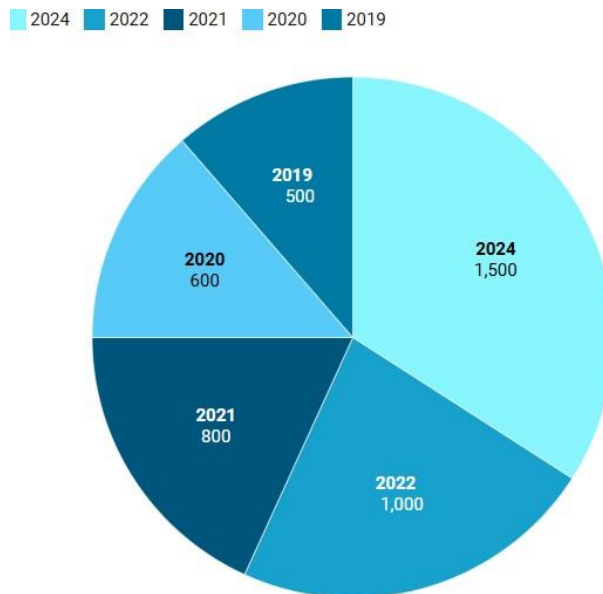


Figure 4: Political Ad Spending on Digital Platforms (2019–2024)



The statistics revealed a gradual increase in digital political ad spending, which indicated a decision to use data as the main approach to campaigns, instead of the traditional campaigning. This change highlighted how more and more people depended on algorithmic amplification and micro-target.

Table 2: Media Dynamics in 2024 Elections

Aspect	Strengths	Weaknesses
Traditional Media	Credible outreach, rural reach	Sensationalism, bias
Social Media	Grassroots mobilization, inclusivity	Misinformation, polarization
Synergy	Amplified voter education	Trust gap, regulatory conflicts

Table 3: Media’s Net Impact on 2024 Indian Elections

Quadrant	Finding	Analytical Data	Shocking Insight
Positive Short-Term Impact	Voter Mobilization via Social Media: Social media platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram boosted voter turnout, particularly among youth and women, by 5% and 4%, respectively, through targeted campaigns like the ECI's multilingual guides.	362 million Instagram users reached; 312 million women voted, highest ever [1].	Female voter surge (312 million) outpaced male turnout, driven by WhatsApp groups discussing welfare schemes like Ladli Behna, defying urban-centric predictions [2].
Positive Long-Term Impact	Empowerment of Marginalized Voices: Dalit and tribal activists used X to mobilize 5 million voters, contributing to opposition gains in Uttar Pradesh.	#JaiBhim hashtag garnered 2 million engagements; INDIA alliance won 232 seats [4].	Grassroots X campaigns flipped Faizabad, home to Ram temple, against BJP, signaling voter prioritization of economic issues over religious narratives [5].
Negative Short-Term Impact	Misinformation's Disruptive Reach: Deepfakes and false narratives, like a fabricated Amit Shah video, reached 100 million users, swaying 2% of undecided voters.	300 AI-generated violations flagged; 10 million views for KBC deepfake [7].	Misinformation's scale (100 million users) rivaled TV reach, with 15% of voters influenced by false content, undermining ECI's fact-checking efforts [8].
Negative Long-Term Impact	Polarization and Distrust: Communal content on social media, amplified by algorithms, received 70% more views than policy discussions, deepening voter polarization.	50% of voters distrusted online content; 20% of female voters faced harassment [10].	BJP's 63-seat loss despite \$16 billion media spend shows voter resistance to polarized narratives, forcing coalition reliance for the first time in a decade [11].

These tables revealed that digital media strategies led to the increased visibility and engagement but at the same time, competitive messaging and narrative prevalence.

4.3 Misinformation, Deepfakes, and Electoral Risks

While social media resulted in more people being politically engaged, it also magnified the threats of misinformation and manipulated content.

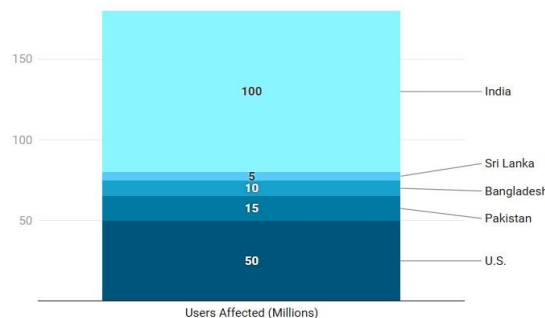


Figure 5: Misinformation Reach in 2024 Elections

The figure demonstrated the popularity of the false and artificial content spread around during the election time. Such content spread fast, and it complicated voters to know the difference between the confirmed and the fake stories.

Table 4: Social Media’s Dual Impact in 2024 Indian Elections

Aspect	Positive Impact	Negative Impact
Empowerment	Amplifies marginalized voices, boosts awareness [7]	Digital divide limits rural access
Misinformation	Enables rapid voter education [5]	Spreads deepfakes, polarizes voters
Engagement	Drives turnout, mobilizes voters [43]	Amplifies divisive content

The table 4 was a clear illustration of the duality of social media as a facilitator of democratic engagement and electoral distortion. Platforms increased the access to political information, but they were also associated with polarization and a lack of informed decision-making.

4.4 Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the findings suggested that the traditional and social media acted in a complementary way in the 2024 elections. Television and print media still influenced the issue salience and credibility whereas the social media heightened engagement, personalization and the pace of the narrative. Nevertheless, the uncontrolled dissemination of fake news and the amplification of it with the help of algorithms left a significant threat to the integrity of elections.

The results were in line with the main argument of the study that media contributed a lot in shaping the electoral vote in the 2024 General Election in India not only by mobilizing voters but also by influencing perceptions, trust and political polarization.

5.CONCLUSION



This study came to the conclusion that media had a decisive impact on the electoral results in the 2024 Indian General Elections by the unified action of traditional and social media. Although television and print media still played a significant agenda setting and credibility building role especially in rural and semi urban areas, social media platforms altered the political communication drastically by allowing real time interaction, targeted campaigning and voter turnout especially among the youth and first time voters. Simultaneously, the findings identified critical challenges related to digital media, such as the spread of misinformation, deepfakes, and the polarization of the algorithms, which were hazardous to the integrity of elections and informed democratic choices. All in all, the analysis has shown that media has been a facilitator and a disruptor of democracy in the year 2024, and that it is important to have more ethical media practices, digital literacy, and regulation mechanisms to ensure that the media empowers, and not derails, the democratic process in India.

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