

THE EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGN TECHNIQUES: A LITERATURE REVIEW OF CHANGING STRATEGIES OVER TIME

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Abstract

The evolution of political campaigning techniques is a reflection of technological developments and shifting communication practices in society. This literature study explores how campaign strategies have changed historically from the use of print media and traditional face-to-face communication to the utilisation of sophisticated digital tools in the modern era. The results show that the evolution of political campaign techniques emphasises the importance of transparency, fair regulation and media education to ensure that technological advances enrich rather than disrupt the integrity of democratic practices and electoral processes.

Keywords: Evolution, Campaign Techniques, Politics.

INTRODUCTION

Political campaigns are a fundamental component of democracy that serve not only to promote candidates, political parties and their platforms to voters, but also as a means to help voters make informed decisions in general elections. Campaigns are interactive processes in which candidates and parties convey their messages and exchange information with voters. Campaign techniques have evolved significantly over time, responding to social changes, information technology, as well as demographic aspects of the voting population. (Aijmer, 2023).

Political campaigns play an important role in democracy as an information dissemination tool that allows voters to make informed decisions regarding who they will support. Through campaigns, candidates and political parties have the opportunity to convey their vision, values, and work programmes to the public. (Lawrence, 2020). This process is not only vital in shaping public opinion but also in ensuring a well-functioning democratic process, where voters can compare and consider various political options before determining a stance. In addition, political campaigns provide a platform for voters to voice their concerns and questions, thus creating a dialogue between voters and those contesting elections, strengthening the democratic rope through active participation and public discussion. (Xiaofei, 2023).

Apart from the aspects of communication and dialogue, political campaigns are also vital in voter mobilisation. By raising awareness and interest about current issues

as well as upcoming elections, campaigns can stimulate wider voter participation that ultimately affects the legitimacy and quality of democratic representation. In today's dynamic social and economic context, effective campaigns can help ensure that voters are not simply infophobes - exposed to an abundance of information but passive - but actively involved in the electoral process. (Pachori, 2023). Therefore, the importance of political campaigns is not limited to the aspect of winning elections, but also to its role in strengthening democratic principles, increasing representation, and ensuring that political decision-making reflects the will of the public.

Since the dawn of representative democracy, political campaigning techniques have undergone a dramatic transformation. From public speeches, pamphlet distribution and face-to-face debates, to the use of radio and television which have changed the way campaigns influence public opinion. These advances have had a significant impact on the strategies and outcomes of political campaigns. (Aduda et al., 2023)..

In the last decade, a wave of digital revolution has changed the landscape of political campaigns with the rise of the internet and social media. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are now being used to target and manage voters like never before, allowing for more personalised and data-driven campaigns. The use of big data analytics and technologies such as artificial intelligence offer greater capabilities in mapping and influencing voters' thinking. (Vishwas & Patel, 2020a). However, these changes also raise a number of new issues, including issues of information trust, data privacy, and potentially increased political polarisation due to echo chambers on social media. The existence of digital propaganda and disinformation campaigns has been a major concern in recent elections, raising questions about the ethics and effectiveness of current campaign techniques (Nimmo, 2020).

Taking into account the changing dynamics and complex implications of this evolution of political campaigning techniques, this research aims to answer the important question of how strategies have changed over time and what the resulting impact has been on voters and the democratic process more broadly. Understanding these changes is not only important for political actors to design effective campaigns, but also for voters to understand how they receive and process political information, as well as for researchers, to contribute to the political communication and voter behaviour literature.

Research Methods

The study in this research uses the literature method. The literature research method is an important approach in academic studies, which relies on secondary sources rather than primary data collection. This process involves extracting, analysing, and interpreting existing publications such as books, scientific journals, articles, and other documents related to the topic under study. (Firman, 2018); (Suyitno, 2021). The

main purpose of literature research is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge related to an issue, identify gaps in the existing literature, and determine the direction of further research that may be needed. (Jelahut, 2022).

Results and Discussion

Changes in Campaign Techniques over Time

Political campaigns are a series of organised activities carried out by individuals, groups, or political organisations with the aim of influencing public decisions, especially in the context of general elections. This process aims to convey the message, vision, mission, and values carried by a candidate or political party to the wider community. (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2021).. Political campaigns involve various methods and strategies, ranging from advertising, debates, publicity in the mass media, to field activities such as visits to various regions and direct meetings with voters. A key aspect of political campaigns is effective communication that aims to shape views, raise awareness, and ultimately, influence voters' choices. (Komatsu et al., 2020).

The main objective of a political campaign is to gain the support and votes of as many voters as possible in order to win the election in question. In addition, political campaigns also aim to increase public participation in the democratic process, promote discussion and debate on important issues faced by society, and educate voters about the choices available to them. (Mortimer, 2023). Through campaigns, candidates and political parties seek to build connectivity with the electorate, communicate solutions to problems, and convince the public of their ability to deliver on their political promises. In its broader essence, political campaigns play an important role in strengthening democracy, facilitating active citizen participation, and ensuring healthy political competition. (Nowak-Teter et al., 2022)..

Since its inception, political campaigning techniques have continued to change in line with changing times and technological advances. In the early days of modern democracy, political campaigns were often conducted through public speeches, debates and direct meetings with voters. Candidates travelled from place to place to deliver speeches and build support in person. In addition, pamphlets, brochures and posters also became the main tools in delivering political information and propaganda. These activities allow candidates to reach voters personally and gain appreciation through face-to-face contact. (Vishwas & Patel, 2020b)..

Entering the modern era, print technology and mass media brought about a revolution in political campaigning techniques. Newspapers, radio and later television allowed candidates and political parties to reach a wider and more diverse audience. Political advertising in the mass media became a very powerful tool to influence public opinion. Television campaigns, in particular, changed the landscape of political campaigning by giving candidates the ability to present their image and message more

dramatically through attractively produced adverts and live debates. (O'Donoghue, 2021)..

With the advent of the digital age and the internet, political campaigning techniques are changing revolutionarily once again. Social media, blogs and other online platforms provide a means for candidates to communicate directly with voters, spread their message at a lower cost, and mobilise supporters more quickly and effectively. Advances in data analytics and market segmentation allow campaigns to target voters with more personalised and relevant messages. In addition, online campaigns enable broader fundraising and volunteering, allowing candidates to build larger and more engaged networks of supporters. (Animashaun, 2024).

Today, political campaigns are increasingly relying on the power of big data and artificial intelligence (AI) to analyse trends, understand voter preferences and formulate strategies in real-time. The use of customised mobile apps for campaigns enables highly specific targeting and personalised dissemination of information to voters via their devices. In addition, the phenomenon of deepfakes and fake information has also begun to affect the campaign sphere, requiring political actors and voters to be more critical and careful in sorting out information. In essence, campaign techniques are constantly evolving, reflecting changes in technology and the way we communicate and participate in democracy.

The Influence of Technology and Media on Emerging Political Campaign Techniques

Technological and media developments have had a significant impact on the evolving political campaign techniques. In this digital era, the use of the internet, social media and smart devices has changed the way candidates and political parties communicate with voters. Previously, political campaigns relied heavily on public meetings, live debates, and advertisements through print and broadcast media such as television and radio. Now, with the internet, political campaigns can reach a wider and more diverse audience at a lower cost. Social media in particular, has become a very important tool, allowing candidates to share messages, videos, and other campaign content instantly to thousands or even millions of people. (Abidi & Soo, 2021).

Technology also facilitates more segmented and personalised campaigns. Big data and analytics allow campaign teams to identify and target voters based on demographics, interests and behaviours with an unprecedented level of accuracy. This means that campaign messages can be customised to resonate with specific issues that matter to particular voter segments, rather than the one-size-fits-all approach used in the past. This technique not only increases the effectiveness of political messages but also maximises the use of campaign resources. (Routley, 2023).

The development of digital software and platforms has expanded the ability of campaigns to mobilise and engage with voters. Mobile apps for campaigns allow political organisations to communicate directly with supporters, encourage

participation in volunteer activities, and conduct fundraising in a highly efficient manner. Such technologies also make it easier for voters to obtain information on how to participate in the electoral process, including voter registration and finding polling locations, thus potentially increasing electoral participation. (Orjuela & Ramírez, 2021)..

However, technology and media also bring challenges along with opportunities. Misinformation and disinformation spread rapidly through digital platforms, posing risks to democracy and electoral integrity. The phenomenon of deepfakes, in which video or audio is manipulated using artificial intelligence, can create highly misleading information (Xiaofei, 2023). Therefore, while technology and media provide powerful tools for successful political campaigns, they also entail a great responsibility to be run ethically and with an endeavour to maintain truthful information. A thoughtful approach should be taken to balance utilising the advantages of technology and digital media in campaigns with safeguarding the principles of democracy and fairness.

Implications of Changes in Campaign Techniques on Voter Engagement and Participation

Changes in political campaigning techniques driven by the evolution of technology and digital media have various implications for voter engagement and participation. With the easy access to information and two-way communication offered by social media, voters now have more opportunities to engage in political discussions. The ability to interact directly with candidates and campaigns through platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram can increase their sense of ownership and influence over the political process. This can motivate them to be more active in the electoral process, both online and offline. Better access to information about candidates and important issues also allows voters to make more informed decisions at the polls. (Poirier, 2024).

On the other hand, campaign personalisation through big data analysis has the potential to increase participation by providing more relevant messages to voters. Campaign messages tailored to personal interests or local concerns can touch voters on a more personal level and encourage them to not only vote, but also to share information, attend events, and even volunteer (Garland & Lilleker, 2021). (Garland & Lilleker, 2021). However, there are also concerns that this disaggregation and segmentation can create a 'filter bubble' where voters are only exposed to views that reinforce their own beliefs, potentially reducing exposure to opposing views that are essential for a healthy democracy. (Garland & Lilleker, 2021).

Furthermore, mobile apps and online platforms that make it easier to register to vote and provide information on where and how to vote can remove some of the traditional barriers to participation. For young voters and those living in areas with limited access to polling stations or election information, these technologies can serve as empowerment tools. The availability of digital tools in campaigns also encourages

generations familiar with technology to use such tools as part of their social and political participation, which can increase awareness and participation of young voters. (Gallo, 2021).

However, this digital engagement does not always have a positive impact on all groups of voters. For example, there are concerns that an increased focus on digital campaigns could exclude voters who are less technologically skilled or who have limited internet access. This could widen the digital divide and leave some voters without the information necessary for full participation in the democratic process. For this reason, it is important for campaigns to maintain traditional campaign elements while integrating technological innovations, ensuring that all voters have equal opportunities to engage and participate in the political system. (Borrell et al., 2022).

In addition, more innovative campaign strategies and digitalisation may introduce new risks, such as the spread of false or manipulative information. In the era of "fake news," the tendency to spread unverified or false information quickly through social media can destabilise public opinion and reduce trust in democratic systems. (Robertson, 2023). For example, campaigns that use deepfake tactics or bots to spread misleading narratives can create false perceptions or pollute healthy public discussion. Therefore, higher voter engagement is likely to be accompanied by greater responsibility to sort out and verify information before sharing it or using it to make electoral decisions (Duan, 2023).

As such, changing campaign techniques in the digital age have a significant impact on voter engagement and participation. While technology provides tools that enable more interaction, personalisation and accessibility, it also brings new challenges such as information isolation and the risk of disinformation. To ensure that this increased engagement results in more informed and democratic elections, it is important to implement media education to voters, as well as policies governing the transparency and authenticity of campaign information. Balancing the use of digital innovations in campaigns with maintaining information integrity and voter inclusiveness is key in ensuring that all levels of society can participate effectively and fairly in democracy.

Conclusion

The evolution of political campaign techniques shows that changes in strategy over time have been significantly influenced by technological advances and changes in social dynamics. From the use of pamphlets and public speeches in the early 20th century to the engagement of social media and data analytics tools in today's digital age, political campaign techniques have evolved to meet the changing needs and expectations of voters. These advancements allow political candidates to target voters more effectively, design more personalised messages, and respond dynamically to

changing voter sentiment. However, it also raises questions about data privacy, manipulation of public opinion, and disparities in technology access among voters.

Furthermore, while digitalisation has provided effective tools to increase voter participation and engagement, challenges such as disinformation and online polarisation emerge as negative impacts that cannot be ignored. The use of algorithms that can amplify filter bubbles and echo chambers exacerbates polarisation, while the spread of false or misleading information by irresponsible actors can erode public trust in the democratic process. Therefore, it is important for political stakeholders to find a balance between the utilisation of technology for campaign efficiency and efforts to maintain information integrity and inclusiveness in the political process.

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