
ELECTORAL POLITICS IN THE DIGITAL AGE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BJP AND INC'S SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS IN THE 2024 LOK SABHA ELECTION

***Mohd Riyaz Ahmed**

Research Scholar, Department of Mass Communication, Aligarh Muslim University.

Article Received: 28 October 2025

***Corresponding Author: Mohd Riyaz Ahmed**

Article Revised: 17 November 2025

Research Scholar, Department of Mass Communication, Aligarh

Published on: 08 December 2025

Muslim University. DOI: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijrpa.5652>

ABSTRACT

The study examines the transformational impact of social media on the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, with a focus on how digital platforms have altered political communication, voter mobilisation, and campaign strategies for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress. Drawing on secondary data, official reports, and current analysis, the study illustrates the transition from traditional mass-media campaigning to a digitally driven paradigm characterised by targeted advertising, influencer outreach, WhatsApp-based micro-mobilisation, and data-driven communication. The comparison study demonstrates that, while the BJP maintained a significant lead in digital reach and advertising expenditure, the INC achieved excellent engagement growth through personalised content and grassroots mobilisation. The paper also identifies substantial hazards associated with digital campaigns, including disinformation, algorithmic manipulation, unequal access, and regulatory gaps. The paper concludes that digital politics is already crucial to Indian elections and will continue to impact political competitiveness and voter behaviour in the future.

KEYWORDS: Social Media, Digital Campaigning, BJP, INC, (2024). Lok Sabha Elections, Political Communication,

INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has had a profound impact on global political processes over the past 20 years. With the advent of internet platforms that enable political parties and interest

groups to access larger audiences, digital technology has revolutionised traditional campaigning and election techniques (Diamond, 2019). Politics has become more dynamic due to the capacity to communicate and rally support through social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. However, this technological progress also presents new challenges, particularly in terms of cybersecurity, disinformation, and foreign interference that may affect elections (Norris & Grömping, 2022). Advances in digital technology have created inequities in political competitiveness. Political parties that have access to practical digital tools gain an edge over smaller or independent groups with limited resources (Schmidt, 2021). In the digital era, political competitiveness is driven not only by ideology or candidate popularity, but also by the ability to employ technology effectively. Tucker et al. (2021) suggest using technology to engage and influence the public. These inequalities raise concerns about the fairness of democratic systems and underscore the need for legislation to ensure equality in the electoral process.

Political parties now rely on technology rather than conventional organisational structures. Political activity. Political parties now utilise digital channels, such as social media and internet advertising, to reach voters, in addition to traditional techniques like speeches and pamphlets (Bennett et al., 2020). Chadwick and Stromer-Galley (2016) suggest that digital technology might help political parties collect and evaluate public data to develop more effective campaign plans. However, the dissemination of incorrect information (misinformation) and the possibility of cyber meddling that could undermine election legitimacy pose additional challenges for parties in the digital era (Persily, 2021).

Elections in India constitute the foundation of the nation's political system. Each electoral process, whether parliamentary or legislative assembly, is distinct in character and shaped by the evolving political dynamics at both the national and state levels. Consequently, individual voters' attention, engagement, and decision-making patterns are subject to change over time. As a democracy, India's electoral processes inherently involve extensive campaigning, with political parties consistently adapting their strategies and employing varied tools to reach the electorate. While traditional media historically played a pivotal role in elections, advancements in technology and the proliferation of the internet have fundamentally altered the global landscape, with Indian elections no exception.

Elections are an important moment in a democratic country. It is the primary channel through which people can choose leaders and representatives representing them at the legislative and

executive levels. Along with the development of the era, the election process has also transformed, not only in terms of procedural aspects, but also in terms of political communication and voter mobilisation (Negretto, 2020). Electoral campaigns are increasingly moving online, and digital media ads influence the outcomes of elections (Hager, 2019; Liberini et al., 2018). The advent of digital technologies and internet-based platforms has significantly reshaped the political environment, with social media, in particular, exerting a profound and transformative influence on the country's democratic processes.

The rise of social media has revolutionised political communication, significantly influencing electoral processes worldwide (Chadwick, 2017, p. 89). Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, characterised by its decentralised online engagement, is frequently regarded as a paradigm for involving citizens as active stakeholders in the electoral process (Stromer-Galley, 2014). Digital communication channels are creating new avenues for influencing political involvement and views (Gil et al., 2010). In the mix of changing hybrid media environments that include traditional mass channels, political parties have made use of new information channels, including relatively individualised digital channels like social media, blogs, and text messaging (Chadwick, 2013; Dalrymple & Scheufele, 2007; Hendricks & Denton, 2010; Lilleker & Vedel, 2013; Stromer-Galley, 2014).

In India, the world's largest democracy, digital technology has transformed the way political campaigns are designed and executed. With over 624 million internet users and approximately 400 million active social media users, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube have become integral to political outreach and mobilisation (Kaur & Singh, 2021, p. 45). Social media has become a platform for political conversations and a tool for political parties and politicians to engage with voters. Such uses of social media may expand the information available to voters in developing democracies, where information constraints can limit citizens' ability to enforce good governance (Pande, 2011). By 2024, social media's role had expanded beyond traditional campaign strategies. Integrating artificial intelligence, data-driven targeting, and influencer-based campaigns reflected a more sophisticated approach to voter engagement (Mohan, 2024, p. 78).

Social media has changed the way political campaigns are conducted. It has become an essential feature of election campaigns, enabling political parties to communicate more directly and personally with the public. Social media's influence on public opinion and voting

behaviour should not be underestimated. It enables political parties to engage with citizens, exchange policies and ideas, and rally support. Furthermore, social media enables customised advertising and microtargeting, allowing parties to reach specific demographics and tailor their messaging. In the context of the Lok Sabha elections in India, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube play a crucial role in reaching the masses, particularly the younger generation, who are more engaged on these platforms. Social media can improve democracy by increasing voter turnout, but it also introduces risks such as misinformation, fake news, algorithmic manipulation, and targeted political advertising (Lee & Xenos, 2022; Tariq et al., 2022). Influencers and prominent figures continue to shape political messages, raising concerns about polarisation and voting integrity. Effective regulation and oversight are necessary to address challenges such as hate speech, misinformation, and platform abuse (Suherlan, 2023).

Social Media as the New Frontier in Indian Elections

Social media has emerged as a crucial instrument for influencing public opinion, mobilising politics, and communication. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok will be crucial to digital campaigning in India's 2024 election, supporting traditional media (Staab & Thiel, 2022; Zhuravskaya et al., 2020). Social media facilitates direct, two-way communication between voters and politicians, boosting voter participation, engagement, and a sense of empowerment (Guess et al., 2023; Adjei et al., 2020).

Social media allows for data-driven political campaigns by utilising voter databases to send targeted messaging based on demographics, interests, and online behaviour. Platforms such as Facebook and Google enable highly personalised communication to various voter categories, allowing parties to better prioritise and target their efforts (Franz, 2018; Rohrschneider, 2002; Karp & Banducci, 2007). Through influencer outreach, last-mile outreach on WhatsApp, and top-down communication from politicians via social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, social media plays a significant role in the electoral process. To maximise turnout and influence voter behaviour, WhatsApp facilitates voter reminders, daily political messages, and targeted coordination using electoral roll data. Political parties, such as the BJP and Congress, utilise social media to engage voters, shape campaigns, target ads, and monitor online discourse, tailoring their strategies based on internet engagement and voter interests.

Review of Literature

Social Media and Indian Electoral Politics

Purkayastha (2025) demonstrates that young people (under 35), more than half of the vote, are driving electoral narratives. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube) has enabled young voters to express their thoughts, examine manifestos, and challenge traditional media's gatekeeping. Youth-driven issues (education, employment, social justice) are increasingly shaping political discourse and campaigns.

Shivaraju (2025) found that social media was supplemental in 2019. However, by 2024, it had taken centre stage thanks to influencer-led campaigns, data-driven, tailored voter outreach, and targeted messaging on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube. Digital tactics all greatly aided outreach, mobilisation, and discourse shaping.

Singh R. (2025). Social media has increased political participation by bringing marginalised or apolitical groups into the conversation. Platforms have changed the foundation of political engagement beyond conventional structures by empowering voices and facilitating political mobilisation on social, environmental, and policy problems.

Kaur & Singh (2024) argue that social media is a "game changer" since it allows people to express their thoughts, facilitates direct communication between parties and voters, and aids in the dissemination of party messages, manifestos, and speeches—advocating for more youth involvement and political consciousness.

Chauhan (2022). In contrast to the previous reliance on traditional media, parties in India extensively used social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp) in 2019 to reach voters, sway public opinion, and garner support.

Research Methodology

This study primarily relies on secondary data collection sources, including reports published in national and regional newspapers, analyses by political analysts, relevant websites, and insights provided by media professionals. In addition, primary sources have been incorporated to enhance the robustness of the analysis, including official reports from the Election Commission of India and manifestos of major political parties.

The paper also examines the role and representation of mainstream and social media in the electoral process. The methodology is primarily observational and analytical, seeking to

interpret patterns, trends, and narratives within political communication and campaigning practices.

Objective

1. To compare the digital outreach and engagement metrics of the BJP and the INC's official social media accounts and their leaders' personal channels, such as followers, subscribers, and interaction rates.
2. To compare and analyse the social media strategies of the BJP and the INC during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.
3. To examine how political manifestos were reframed into short-form digital narratives and campaign slogans.

Social Media and Manifesto Politics on Voters

Congress and the BJP released manifestos to get voter support. Several promises were made to improve people's welfare and the country's development. The manifestos of the BJP and Congress were partially effective. Some promises made by both parties influenced the voters in favour of the BJP, while others favoured the INDIA alliance, and thus, a coalition government was formed. Key Highlights of the Manifestos of Congress and BJP are as follows.

Congress' Manifesto for 2024 (Nyay Sankalp Patra)

In its 2024 manifesto, the Indian National Congress emphasised "ensuring justice" with ten main promises addressing social, youth, women's, farmers', labour, constitutional, economic, state, defence, and environmental justice, to reduce inequities and promote inclusive governance.

Social Justice: The Indian National Congress aims to promote social justice and empower impoverished communities by addressing long-standing caste disparities that affect SC, ST, and OBC populations. Key measures include conducting a nationwide socioeconomic and caste census, revising the 50% reservation cap, implementing 10% EWS quotas, filling backlog vacancies, regularising government jobs, expanding land redistribution, improving scholarships, establishing residential schools, incorporating social reformers into curricula, establishing Ambedkar Bhavans, and reserving seats for marginalised communities in private institutions under Article 15(5).

Youth Justice: Congress intends to address youth unemployment with its Yuva Nyay strategy, which includes a Right to Apprenticeship Act that provides one-year paid apprenticeships for under-25 graduates, speedier courts for exam leak cases, and the creation of 30 lakh central, panchayat, and municipal jobs. The Fund of Funds Scheme will be reorganised to promote young entrepreneurs. Additionally, talented athletes under the age of 21 would receive a monthly stipend of ₹10,000.

Education Justice: Congress promotes free, high-quality education as a right, proposing to prolong compulsory schooling from Class I to XII, review the NEP with states, increase Kendriya, Navodaya, and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas, promote STEM education, and eliminate contractual teaching. It aims to establish Government Community Colleges in every tehsil, restore autonomy in higher education, defend academic freedom, and reinstate collateral-free education loans for needy students.

Women's Justice - The Congress manifesto pledges to advance women's rights through the Mahalakshmi scheme (₹1 lakh annual support), one-third legislative reservation by 2025-2029, 50% central government job reservation starting in 2025, and measures to increase workforce participation through safe workplaces, fair wages, maternity benefits, and childcare support. It also promises the stringent implementation of women's protection legislation, enlarged shelters, safe public facilities, free sanitary napkins, assistance for frontline female health workers, and operational women's hostels in every district.

Farmers' justice: Congress promises to help farmers by legally guaranteeing MSP, making CACP formal, delivering digital MSP payments, forming a Permanent Commission on Agricultural Finance, and providing fast-track crop insurance. It supports various sales channels, such as e-markets and farm-gate sales, fosters diversification into horticulture, pisciculture, and sericulture, and plans agricultural and veterinary colleges in each district.

Economic Justice: Congress emphasises economic justice alongside political and social justice, advocating for an open, private-sector-led economy with a robust public sector. The Nav Sankalp Economic Policy prioritises JOBS and manufacturing-led growth while also addressing inflation, poverty, hunger, malnutrition, and inequality through the three pillars of work, wealth, and welfare.

Constitutional Justice: Congress promises to promote democratic freedoms by restoring free expression and media independence, decriminalising defamation, halting arbitrary internet shutdowns, safeguarding privacy and personal liberties, and ensuring peaceful assembly. It also suggests parliamentary reforms, such as a 100-day working period, weekly opposition agendas, and neutral presiding officers.

National Security: Congress aims to enhance national security by implementing a comprehensive National Security Strategy and a new Raksha Mantri Operational Directive to address contemporary two-front challenges. It will establish transparent CDS appointments, halt the fall in defence spending, and eliminate the Agnipath Scheme to ensure secure recruitment. The party intends to increase opportunities for women in the Armed Forces, subject the NSC and NSA to parliamentary scrutiny, and develop policies to address 21st-century security concerns, including cyber, data, financial, communication, and trade-route security.

Rural and Urban Development: Congress intends to boost rural and urban development through the Right to Homestead Act, an expanded PM Gram Sadak Yojana, and expedited implementation of the National Drinking Water Mission. The MGNREGA pay would increase to ₹400/day, with funds allocated for building public infrastructure. Priority areas include urban employment programs, twin city planning, elected mayors with administrative responsibilities, increased rural-urban connectivity, multimodal transportation, and safer travel for women and children. The party also intends to manage stray dog issues humanely and secure full devolution under the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments.

BJP's Manifesto, 2024 (Sankalp Patra)

Modi ki Guarantee for the Garib Parivar Jan: The government pledges to continue providing free rations to over 80 crore people for five years through the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, while promoting self-reliance in key food items. Healthcare coverage under Ayushman Bharat will be expanded, and affordable housing will be increased through the PM Awas Yojana and slum redevelopment. Every household will receive clean drinking water under the Har Ghar Nal se Jal initiative, clean cooking fuel will be extended through the Ujjwala Yojana, and free electricity will be provided to low-income families under the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana.

Modi ki Guarantee for Nari Shakti: Viksit Bharat's vision positions women at the centre of national progress, promoting dignity, equitable opportunities, and full participation. Key initiatives include expanding the Lakhpati Didi plan to include three crore women, integrating SHGs into major service industries, and boosting market access through platforms such as ODOP, ONDC, and GEM. Hostels and creches near industrial centres will help women enter the workforce, while targeted disease prevention programs and Swachh Bharat facilities will improve health and hygiene standards. The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam will

be implemented in its entirety to ensure political representation, while safety measures will be expanded through Shakti Desks and an updated Emergency Helpline, 112.

Modi ki Guarantee for Kisan Samman: The government supports farmers' dignity and empowerment by providing soil health cards, micro-irrigation systems, crop insurance, quality seeds, and direct cash aid through the PM Kisan scheme, which guarantees ₹6,000 annually. The PM Fasal Bima Yojana will be enhanced with technology to facilitate faster and more accurate reimbursement. At the same time, MSPs, which have already grown dramatically, will be amended to ensure farm income. Agriculture will become more profitable by encouraging self-sufficiency in pulses and edible oils, constructing vegetable clusters with storage and logistics, and establishing India as a global leader in millets. A National Mission will promote natural farming and provide incentives for crop diversity.

Modi's Guarantee for MSMEs, Small Traders, and Vishwa Karmas: The BJP aims to enhance MSMEs, small businesses, and Vishwakarma families by increasing access to digital credit, expanding the PM Vishwakarma Yojana, and simplifying compliance requirements. ONDC's technology support, cybersecurity safeguards, affordable insurance, and an easier GST system will all help firms grow. A Handicraft Design Bank would improve traditional crafts, Dak Ghar Nirayat Kendras will increase exports, and Khadi will be promoted globally. The party also aims to make India a central global hub for toy manufacturing, creating more jobs and promoting inclusive growth.

Modi ki Guarantee for Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas: The BJP's Vanchito ko Variyata and Antyodaya agenda prioritises tribals, SCs, STs, OBCs, nomadic communities, individuals with disabilities, Safai Karamcharis, and transgender people. Key efforts include tribal welfare schemes, ₹24,000 crore for PVTGs, expanded Eklavya schools, enhanced representation for SC/ST/OBC, and increased loan access through MUDRA, PM Svanidhi, and Vishwakarma Yojana. Support for education, skills development, housing, disability aids, sanitation workers, transgender welfare, and Ayushman Bharat coverage ensures broad inclusion, which is further bolstered by internet access and easier credit under the PM Suraksha scheme.

Modi ki Guarantee for Good Governance: The BJP's "Reform, Perform, Transform" vision for good governance emphasises transparent, efficient, and citizen-centric administration through technology, simplified procedures, and institutional reforms. Key priorities include robust anti-corruption measures, a Uniform Civil Code, electoral changes such as One Nation, One Election, and a National Litigation Policy to modernise the legal system. The concept promotes faster courts, digital court records, and improved public service delivery

through CSCs, Post Offices, and platforms like Bhashini and MyGov. It also intends to expand the Karma Yogi program, modernise police forces, enhance data systems, and encourage alternative conflict resolution for faster justice.

Modi ki Guarantee for Swastha: Over the last decade, India's healthcare sector has experienced significant growth, focusing on holistic well-being through yoga, nutrition, clean environments, and advancements in both contemporary and traditional medicine. Reforms include the Ministry of AYUSH, 15 new AIIMS, and Ayushman Bharat, which provides free treatment up to ₹5 lakh for millions of people. During the epidemic, India developed indigenous vaccines and rapidly implemented digital tools in healthcare delivery. Swastha Bharat's vision focuses on strengthening AIIMS, Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, district hospitals, and the PM-ABHIM infrastructure initiative. Plans include boosting medical seats, expanding Jan Aushadhi Kendras to provide affordable medicines, and starting an Emergency and Trauma Care Mission.

Modi's Guarantee for Quality Education: Over the last decade, India's education system has expanded to include new IITs, IIITs, IIMs, AIIMS, medical institutions, and universities, thereby increasing its higher education capacity. The focus is on modern, inclusive, and future-ready education, with emphasis on mother-tongue learning, teacher training, infrastructure, and technology integration, as guided by NEP 2020. Industry-aligned curricula and initiatives, such as PM e-Vidya, SWAYAM, SWAYAM PRABHA, and a digital university, aim to upskill young people, particularly those from low-income families. PM SHRI and Ekalavya Schools aim to achieve 100% enrolment, while the One Nation, One Student ID (APAAR) system enables easy access to academic records. Skill development is integrated into education to prepare students for emerging technology, employment, and entrepreneurship.

Modi ki Guarantee for Surakshit Bharat: Over the last decade, the government has taken a zero-tolerance policy to terrorism and Naxalism, as evidenced by the 2016 surgical strikes and the 2019 Balakot air strikes. Defence reforms include the establishment of the CDS, the development of integrated theatre commands, and the modernisation of the Armed Forces and CAPFs with new technology. Roads, trains, telecommunications, and smart fencing have all contributed to improved border security. Artificial intelligence, drones, and big data are being used to combat drug trafficking. Internal security measures include modernised paramilitary units, development initiatives in LWE regions, and complete execution of the CAA. Strategic initiatives include expanding India's presence in the Indian Ocean, enhancing forensic infrastructure, and strengthening digital sovereignty and cybersecurity.

BJP's Social Media Strategy in 2024

Social media and internet advertising were key components of the BJP's massive, well-organised, and well-funded digital campaign in the 2024 general elections. The BJP incurred ₹1,737.68 crore in election-related expenses, of which ₹611.50 crore was allocated to media marketing, including internet advertising, bulk SMS, and digital promotion, according to official expenditure reports submitted to the Election Commission of India. The BJP alone spent over ₹37 crore on internet advertisements on platforms such as Google and Meta (Facebook/Instagram) during the early stages of the campaign (December 2023 to March 2024), which is significantly more than its closest competitor. Video advertisements accounted for a sizable chunk of their digital spending; in the first phase alone, YouTube marketing cost over ₹9.5 crore. By focusing on issues such as infrastructure, youth, development, welfare programs, and national identity, the BJP utilised social media to rally voters from diverse demographic groups. His high-spending, digital-first strategy implies that the BJP saw social media as a fundamental component of their 2024 electoral outreach, combining scale, diversity of content, and strategic targeting to maximise reach and influence rather than as an add-on.

Congress's Social Media Strategy in 2024

In the 2024 general election, Congress employed a multi-pronged social media approach that included direct outreach, digital advertising, grassroots mobilisation, and narrative-driven material, indicating a departure from traditional campaigning. According to credible analyses, INC significantly increased its digital advertisement spending, narrowing the gap with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In 2019, Congress spent approximately ₹2 crore on Google platform ads; however, by 2024, its Google ad expenditure had risen to approximately ₹34.4 crore, a 1,569% increase, significantly narrowing the digital ad gap.

In addition to advertisements, Congress made extensive use of social media and messaging platforms. According to reports, the party recruited roughly 20,000 volunteers to disseminate its messages via WhatsApp. Rahul Gandhi, the party's leader, used "speak-to-camera" communication to interact directly with the public on issues ranging from youth to farmers and advertised its election manifesto (Nyay Patra) online. Its social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and X (previously Twitter), saw significant expansion. Congress's Instagram following grew by more than 1.32 million in the run-up to the election, demonstrating effective audience engagement campaigns. Using hashtags like

#Bhartibharosa, #Pehlinaukaripakki, and #KissanMSPGuarantee to highlight its manifesto promises regarding jobs, farmer welfare, and livelihoods, as well as regularly posting relatable “ground-level” content (such as Rahul Gandhi's interactions with workers, farmers, etc.) to project grassroots connect, Congress also heavily relied on content strategy and narrative framing.

Comparative Social-Media Followers: BJP vs Congress (circa 2024).

| Platform | BJP (Followers/ Subscribers) | INC (Followers / Subscribers) |
|--------------------|---|--|
| X (Twitter) | 22.3 million | 10.3 million |
| Instagram | 8.4 million | 7 million |
| Facebook | 16 million | 6.7 million |
| YouTube | 6.1 million subscribers | 5.5 million subscribers |

Source: Official social media accounts of the BJP and INC (During the Lok Sabha election 2024)

Even though the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) maintained a clear structural advantage in 2024 in terms of raw follower/subscriber counts across major social-media platforms (notably X and Facebook), research suggests that such figures only provide a partial picture of digital influence (Shivaraju, 2025; Prabha Kumar, 2025; Phadke & Mitra, 2024). The massive BJP base likely enabled broad paid advertising reach, rapid content diffusion, and multi-demographic outreach, aided by vast WhatsApp group networks, which provided the party with a high potential for message saturation. Despite being behind in absolute follower count, the Indian National Congress (INC) maintained a significant digital footprint through its public-platform presence (Instagram, X, Facebook, and YouTube), allowing it to engage younger and internet-savvy voters. The interaction between follower size, content strategy, platform affordances, and audience interaction becomes crucial given findings from political communication research that engagement metrics (such as shares, comments, reposts, and network diffusion) frequently matter more than mere follower counts in driving political mobilisation (We-Face-I-Tweet, 2017; Kumar & Yadav, 2024). In conclusion, INC's digital presence and possibly higher relative engagement demonstrate that follower count is an inadequate metric; instead, a nuanced, platform-specific analysis of engagement, content resonance, and diffusion is necessary to evaluate social-media influence in electoral politics, even though the BJP's follower dominance provided structural reach.

A Case of Electoral Change: A Fragmented Verdict

In contrast to the majority of opinion and exit surveys, which had forecast a resounding BJP majority, the vote count on June 4, 2024, revealed an unexpected and fragmented mandate. With just 240 seats, 63 fewer than its 2019 total, the BJP failed to secure a majority in the election, despite the BJP-led NDA winning 293 seats. Despite this defeat, Narendra Modi secured a historic third term in office, matching Jawaharlal Nehru's record, as the BJP emerged as the single largest party for the third consecutive time. The BJP dropped to 36.56% of the vote.

In contrast, the Congress, which leads the INDIA coalition, improved its performance by capturing 99 seats, up from 52 in 2019, and regaining constituencies like Amethi. Its vote share increased to 21.19%, making it eligible for the role of Leader of the Opposition. Regional and alliance partners played important roles: the Samajwadi Party gained 37 seats, the Trinamool Congress won 29, the DMK won 22, and the TDP and JDU emerged as influential NDA allies, with 16 and 12 seats, respectively. Meanwhile, the BSP had its worst performance since 1989, failing to win a single seat. Newly emerging parties, such as ASPKR, gained a modest foothold, obtaining one seat. The 2024 election results show a divided verdict characterised by a decline in single-party dominance, an increase in the influence of regional parties, and changing voter alliances. Despite a slight increase in northeastern states, the national NOTA vote share declined to 0.99%.

Table: Electoral Performance of Political Parties in the 2024 Lok Sabha General Elections.

| Sr. No. | Party | Seats Won | Vote % |
|---------|-----------|-----------|--------|
| 1 | BJP | 240 | 36.56 |
| 2 | INC | 99 | 21.19 |
| 3 | SP | 37 | 4.58 |
| 4 | AITC | 29 | 4.37 |
| 5 | DMK | 22 | 1.82 |
| 6 | TDP | 16 | 1.98 |
| 7 | JD(U) | 12 | 1.25 |
| 8 | SHS (UBT) | 9 | 1.48 |
| 9 | NCP (SP) | 8 | 0.92 |
| 10 | SSH | 7 | 1.15 |
| 11 | LJPRV | 5 | 0.44 |
| 12 | YSRCP | 4 | 2.06 |
| 13 | RJD | 4 | 1.57 |
| 14 | CPI (M) | 4 | 1.76 |
| 15 | IUML | 3 | 0.27 |

| | | | |
|----|---------------|-----|------|
| 16 | AAP | 3 | 1.11 |
| 17 | BSP | 0 | 2.04 |
| 18 | Other parties | 34 | — |
| 19 | Independent | 7 | — |
| | Total | 543 | |

Source: Election Commission of India

Risks, Challenges, and Ethical Concerns of Digital Campaigning in the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections

Social media-driven involvement remains limited by several structural and behavioural issues, despite its potential to enhance political communication. First, because rural, low-income, and educationally disadvantaged youth frequently lack stable internet connectivity and digital skills, the digital divide continues to restrict equitable access, leading to unequal participation and the dominance of digitally privileged groups in political discourse (Noviyantho et al., 2025). Second, the rapid dissemination of false information and polarisation, including unsubstantiated assertions and emotionally charged content, distorts political views and widens ideological gaps, thereby impeding the ability to make informed democratic decisions (Tamrakar & Singh, 2025; Ghosh et al., 2022). Third, despite social media promoting expressive online behaviour, its influence on offline political involvement remains minimal; research indicates that online engagement does not consistently result in voting or other significant civic actions (Barati, 2023). Lastly, political actors can exploit the weaknesses in regulatory and transparency measures related to digital financing, algorithmic amplification, and micro-targeted advertisements, thereby endangering the integrity and fairness of democracy (Nusantara & Subarsa, 2025; Ghosh et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

The 2024 Lok Sabha elections mark a significant turning point in Indian electoral politics, with digital communication emerging as a crucial component of campaign strategy. This study demonstrates that social media has significantly altered the way the BJP and INC mobilise people, disseminate political narratives, and engage diverse constituencies. Both parties utilised platforms like X, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp substantially, signalling a transition from conventional mass-media campaigning to a hybrid, digitally mediated political environment.

The comparison research shows that the BJP retained a significant lead in digital reach, thanks to massive following counts, larger digital investment, and superior data-driven targeting. In contrast, the INC achieved a significant increase in engagement through targeted

messaging, grassroots content, and volunteer-driven WhatsApp mobilisation. This suggests that interaction quality rather than follower numbers alone is increasingly important in digital political impact. The results of the election, a divided decision with less single-party domination, indicate that while internet campaigns enhance political communication, they do not entirely determine election outcomes, which are still shaped by local alliances, socioeconomic concerns, and local dynamics. The digital gap, false information, algorithmic manipulation, and lax regulation of microtargeting and digital finance are among the significant concerns identified by this study as linked to digital electioneering. These issues jeopardise democratic integrity and fair participation.

Digital technologies have increased political engagement and outreach, but they have also created new vulnerabilities that call for immediate legislative action. To protect democratic processes, it is crucial to ensure media literacy, digital fairness, and stricter regulations. The 2024 elections demonstrate how digital politics is already an integral part of Indian electoral strategy and will continue to influence political competitiveness and democratic participation in the years to come.

REFERENCES

1. Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2020). *The logic of connective action: Digital media and the personalisation of contentious politics*. Cambridge University Press
2. Bhartiya Rastriya Congress Nyay Patra (Congress Manifesto, 2024). New Delhi: The All India Congress Committee, Samrat Offset, 2024. Available from: <https://g.co/about/pjsaqs>
3. Bhajpa ka Sankalp, Modi ki Guarantee (BJP Manifesto, 2024); 2024. Available from: <https://www.bjp.org/bjp-manifesto-2024>
4. Barati, M. (2023). *Social Media Use and the Gap between Online and Offline Political Participation* arXiv Preprint.
5. Business Standard. (2024, December 30). *How digital tools reshaped India's 2024 general elections*.
6. Chadwick, A. (2017). *The hybrid media system: Politics and power* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
7. Chadwick, A., & Stromer-Galley, J. (2016). Digital media, power, and democracy in parties and election campaigns. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 21(3), 283-293

8. Diamond, L. (2019). *Ill winds: Saving democracy from Russian rage, Chinese ambition, and American complacency*. Penguin
9. Franz, M. M. (2018). Targeting campaign messages: Good for campaigns, but bad for America?. In *New Directions in Media and Politics* (pp. 174–198). Routledge
10. Ghosh, S., Singh, A., & Banerjee, S. (2022). *Digital Misinformation and Political Polarisation in South Asia*. *International Journal of Electronic Research*, 10(3), 45–62.
11. Hager, A. (2019). Do online ads influence vote choice?. *Political Communication*, 36(3), 376–393.
12. India Today. (2024, May 14). *Congress narrows the online ad spending gap with the BJP for the Lok Sabha polls*.
13. India Today. (2024, August 24). *How Congress got the upper hand in the battle of likes and shares*.
14. Lee, S., & Xenos, M. (2022). Incidental news exposure via social media and political participation: Evidence of reciprocal effects. *New Media & Society*, 24(1), 178–201.
15. Mitchelstein, E., Boczkowski, P., & Giuliano, C. (2023). Platform Matters: Political Opinion Expression on Social Media. *Weizenbaum Journal of the Digital Society*, 3(3), w1-1
16. Mohan, A. (2024). Elections in the digital age: AI and social media strategies in India's 2024 general elections. *Cambridge Journal of Digital Politics*, 14(1), 75–110.
17. Negretto, G. (2020). Constitution-making and liberal democracy: The role of citizens and representative elites. *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, 18(1), 206–232.
18. Noviyantho, H., Pratama, R., & Lestari, D. (2025). *Digital Inequality and Youth Political Participation in Rural Indonesia* *Journal of Indonesian Social Studies*, 18(1), 55–72.
19. Nusantara, A., & Subarsa, I. (2025). *Regulatory Gaps in Political Advertising and Digital Democracy* *Journal of Southeast Asian Governance*, 14(2), 112–129.
20. Norris, P., & Grömping, M. (2022). *Electoral integrity in the digital age: Risks and opportunities*. Oxford University Press.
21. Pande, R. (2011). "Can informed voters enforce better governance? Experiments in low-income democracies". *Annu. Rev. Econ.* 3(1), 215–237
22. Party Expenditure Report. (2025). Indian Election Commission — 2024 Lok Sabha Report: Party Expenditures as submitted by major parties.
23. Phadke, S., & Mitra, T. (2024). *Characterising political campaigning with lexical mutants on Indian social media*. Preprint. arXiv.

24. Prabha Kumar, P. (2025). *Social Media and Electoral Politics in India: The Changing Dynamics*. QUEST – A Peer-Reviewed Research Journal, 3(1).
25. Persily, N. (2021). *Social media and democracy: The state of the field, prospects for reform*. Cambridge University Press.
26. Staab, P., & Thiel, T. (2022). Social Media and the Digital Transformation of the Public Sphere. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 39(4), 129–143.
27. Suherlan, S. (2023). Digital Technology Transformation in Enhancing Public Participation in Democratic Processes. *Technology and Society Perspectives (TACIT)*, 1(1), 10–17.
28. Shivaraju, D. (2025). *Social Media and Electoral Politics in India: A Comparative Analysis of the 2019 and 2024 Lok Sabha Elections*. *South India Journal of Social Sciences*, 23(4).
29. Schmidt, H. (2021). Digital Campaigning and the Rise of Online Political Activism *Political Studies Review*, 19(4), 567-583
30. Statista. (2024, February 12). *India: BJP Party Online Ad Spend by Format, 2024*.
31. The Times of India. (2025, January 30). *The BJP reports an expenditure of Rs 1,737.68 crore to the EC for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections*.
32. The Wire. (2025, August 11). *How India's 2024 Election Became a War of Digital Worlds*.
33. Tamrakar, A., & Singh, M. (2025). *Social Media, Misinformation, and Democratic Risks in Emerging Economies*. *Indian Journal of Emerging Research*, 9(1), 22–37
34. Tucker, J. A., Theocharis, Y., Roberts, M. E., Barberá, P., Dryer, C., Metzger, M., & Vaccari, C. (2018). Social media, political polarisation, and political disinformation: A review. *SSRN Electronic Journal*
35. We-Face-I-Tweet: How different social media influence political participation through collective and internal efficacy. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 22(6), 320-336.