

Instruments for Investigating User Engagement in Politics on Social Media

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i1/20565>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i1/20565

Published Date: 10 January 2024

Abstract

This study explores user behavior in social media, with a focus on factors that influence engagement with content posted by political leaders. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Value Theory, this research employs a quantitative survey instrument. The survey covered various factors, including curiosity, expectations and sensitivity, that shape user Attitudes about engaging with politics on social media. Subjective Norms, shaped by sociability, information sources, and communication platforms, reflect the role of social norms in user behavior. Furthermore, Perceived Behavioral Control, represented by factors like availability, self-efficacy, and accessibility, indicates users' perceived control over engagement. The Perceived Value dimension, including prosperity, progressiveness and effectiveness, reveals the user's assessment of the value derived from the capabilities of political leaders. The survey questions have been developed based on the factors that have been identified and their suitability confirmed with the involvement of 5 experts in content validity activities. Understanding these facets of user behavior in the digital age is crucial for refining political campaign strategies, enhancing understanding about users or voters, and fostering democratic participation. This study offers insights into the relationship between social media users and political engagement for meaningful political participation in this digital age.

Keywords: Political Engagement, Social Media, Influence

Introduction

Today's politics is no longer like the previous days in terms of how to communicate between leaders and the people. In the past, physical talks and the use of mass media became the main medium of communication. In today's digital age, the development of social media has changed the way of communicating in all fields of work including politics. The dynamic interaction between users and political leaders on social media has enabled users to express political opinions, engage with political content and interact with political leaders in an easy

way (Khan, et al., 2021). In this digital landscape, understanding how users or voters behave on social media platforms has become an important focus for researchers, political strategists and policy makers. Looking at this trend, this article investigates user behavior in the context of social media and explores instruments to facilitate a deeper understanding of this engagement between users and political leaders.

Understanding the attitudes of consumers and what they want from a political aspect is important for political players who want to win the support from the people and sustain their power (Knoll et al., 2020). If this matter is ignored, then a proactive and digital-friendly political party will remain relevant and successful. In an effort to understand this, this article explores and suggests instruments that can be used to understand user in the digital age. The survey method aims to explore the factors that drive user engagement, the influence of political conversation, and the relationship between citizens and their representatives in social media. Through this instrument, it will be able to obtain a clearer lens to see the network of interactions that make up the contemporary political landscape in digital platforms.

Background of the Study

The emergence of the Internet brought a transformative shift in media dynamics, with social media platforms at the forefront. This evolution from centralized mass media to decentralized and interactive digital platforms has fundamentally altered political communication (Khan, et. al, 2021). Social media's unique feature of facilitating two-way communication has revolutionized political engagement, allowing individuals to actively participate in discussions and interact with political contents (Knoll et al., 2020). This shift has challenged traditional power structures, particularly in authoritarian regimes aiming to control the flow of information (Boullance, 2019). As scholars explored the effects of social media on politics, it became evident that these platforms have not only enhanced information dissemination, mobilization, and outreach, but have also contributed to concerns such as political polarization and misinformation (Valeriani & Vaccari, 2016).

The Malaysian context offers an interesting case study to examine the impact of social media on politics. The 14th and 15th General Elections saw social media platforms significantly shape public opinion and influence political outcomes. Social media has played an important role in discussing critical issues such as new taxation and financial issues that easily influence people in choosing leaders in elections. In addition, user demographics, exposure to communication technology, collaboration among parties, and values in leadership also have a significant influence on voter behavior in decision making (Valeriani & Vaccari, 2016). In order to understand the role of social media and its influence, this study aims to explore the underlying factors, their interrelation and their impact on political discourse. This study aims to provide valuable insights into the relationship between social media users and political engagement in guiding the formulation of effective strategies and policies for meaningful political participation in the digital age.

This study uses the Theory of Planned Behavior or TPB Ajzen (1991) and the Value Theory or VT Debreu (1972) as a basis to understand the attitude of users on social media towards engagement with political leaders. Within the TPB, attitudes are influenced by factors such as curiosity, expectation, and sensitivity, elucidating how these elements shape user intentions and actions. Subjective norms as the second component in TPB include sociability, information sources, and communication platforms. All of these represent common practices in society that communicate on social media. Behavioral control which is

the third TPB dimension focuses on factors such as availability, self-efficacy and accessibility, which indicate the extent to which users perceive control over their engagement. Lastly, perceived value factors within the Value Theory encompass prosperity, progressiveness, and effectiveness, reflecting the expected benefits from political leader engagement. The integration of these factors including attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and perceived value, provides a framework for further investigation of user engagement behavior in social media towards politics.

Table 1 compiles a list of influential factors that can shape user engagement with political leaders on social media. All factors derived from a comprehensive literature review that includes dimensions of attitudes, subjective norms, behavioral control, and perceived values that can drive user engagement with political leaders on social media. These four dimensions give meaning about

- **Attitude:** Refers to the opinions, feelings, and beliefs that individuals hold regarding a particular subject. In this context, it likely pertains to users' attitudes toward political leaders.
- **Subjective norm:** Subjective norm relates to the perceived social pressure or influence that individuals feel from their peers or society at large. In this case, it might refer to how users' interactions with political leaders on social media are influenced by the norms or expectations of their social networks.
- **Behavioral control:** Behavioral control suggests the extent to which individuals believe they have control over their actions or behaviors. In the context of social media interactions with political leaders, this could involve users' perceptions of their ability to engage with political leaders effectively via social media.
- **Perceived values:** This phrase refers to ethical or moral principles that guide people's behavior. In the context of social media interactions, it may relate to users' adherence to certain values when engaging with political leaders, such as prosperity, progressiveness, or effectiveness.

Table 1

Selected Factors and Definitions

No.	Factor	Definition	Source
1	Curiosity	The attitude of users regarding issues and political leaders through social media.	Khan, et. al, (2021)
2	Expectancy	User expectations of kindness from political leaders on social media.	Eckstein, et. al, (2013)
3	Sensibility	A sense of responsibility and appreciation for the role of politics in society.	Khan, et. al, (2021)
4	Socializing	The use of social media as a socializing field between the people and leaders.	Heiss, et. al (2020)
5	Information Source	Social media is a source of information about political issues and leaders.	Okan, E. Y., et al, (2014)
6	Communication Platform	Social media is the primary communication platform for user and leader engagement.	Okan, E. Y., et al, (2014)
7	Availability	Social media is always available for use by users and leaders.	Eckstein, et. al, (2013)

8	Self-efficacy	Users have knowledge and skills in using social media.	Eckstein, et. al, (2013)
9	Accessibility	Social media is easily accessible from anywhere and anytime	Okan, E. Y., et al, (2014)
10	Prosperities	Hoping for prosperity from the understanding, freedom, and harmony that political leaders can bring to society.	Heiss, et. al (2020)
11	Progressive	Hoping for economic and social progress that can be brought by political leaders to the society.	Heiss, et. al (2020)
12	Effective	Expect efficiency in actions and interactions that political leaders can bring to society.	Eckstein, et. al, (2013)
13	Attitude	Factors related to consumer attitudes towards issues and political leaders through social media.	Knoll, et al., (2020)
14	Subjective Norm	Common norms of society regarding engagement with political leaders through social media.	Knoll, et al., (2020)
15	Perceived Behavioral	The user's ability to control and use social media as a communication tool.	Knoll, et al., (2020)
16	Perceived Value	Users' views on the value and advantages gained from leaders through engagement on social media.	Augustine P, et al, (2016)

Methodology

The aim of this study is to investigate the factors that influence user engagement with political leaders' postings on social media. Rooted in the positivist paradigm, the research design uses a deductive and information seeking approach. Data collection will use survey methods to appropriate respondents. The methodology can be divided into three main phases: conducting an extensive literature review, establishing a theoretical foundation, developing and validating a survey instrument.

Development of the Survey Instrument

Efforts to develop instruments that facilitate the investigation of user engagement with political content on social media. To achieve this goal, the survey instrument was carefully designed based on TPB and Perceived Value theory. This instrument is structured into two parts which are the demographic information needs of users and questions related to political involvement.

The first section captures demographic details like age, gender, education, work experience, and familiarity with social media's political aspects. This data is crucial for understanding respondent profiles and their potential influence on engagement. The second section delves into the political views, concerns, and experiences of the respondents. To quantify the responses, the Likert Scale is utilized, a widely adopted response scale in surveys. Respondents use a scale from 1 to 5 to indicate their agreement level with a statement whereby 1 being "Strongly Disagree", 2 "Disagree", 3 "Neutral", 4 for "Agree", and 5 "Strongly

Agree". This enables the participants to express their opinions and viewpoints in a structured manner.

The measurement items were adapted from previous research studies, thus lending credibility and comparability to the current investigation. The items in the survey instrument and their associated factors are concisely outlined in Table 2, providing a clear overview of the components under study. This comprehensive approach ensures the instrument's effectiveness in gathering pertinent data related to user engagement with political content on social media.

Table 2

Factors and the Measurement Items

Factor	Items	Measuring Items	Adapted from
Curiosity	CU_1	I follow political leaders on social media because I am curious about political issues.	Khan, et. al. (2021)
	CU_2	I will always check what political leaders are posting on social media.	
	CU_3	I regularly obtain information about political leaders on social media.	
	CU_4	I want to know more about political leaders by surfing social media.	
Expectancy	EX_1	I think political leaders will be aware of my engagement in social media.	Eckstein et al. (2013)
	EX_2	I believe that my engagement in social media can influence the decisions of political leaders.	
	EX_3	I think my engagement with political leaders on social media will have a positive impact on society.	
	EX_4	I feel that political leaders appreciate the engagement of social media users.	
Sensibility	SE_1	I trust political leaders who are active on social media.	Khan et al. (2021)
	SE_2	I feel that political leaders who engage with social media users are more responsive to people's concerns.	
	SE_3	I believe that political leaders who use social media are more transparent about their policies.	
	SE_4	I think politics using social media will influence people to care about politics.	
Socialization	SZ_1	I believe that it is important for political leaders to be active on social media.	Heiss et al. (2020)
	SZ_2	I feel that engaging with political leaders on social media is common in today's society.	
	SZ_3	I am more likely to engage with political leaders on social media if I know that my friends and family also engage with them.	
	SZ_4	I feel that engaging with political leaders on social media is a way to stay up-to-date on political issues.	

Source of Information	SI_1	I like to find information about political leaders from sources on social media.	Okan et al. (2014)
	SI_2	I feel that social media is a source of information about political leaders.	
	SI_3	I trust the source of information on social media about political leaders.	
	SI_4	I think that the quality of information presented by political leaders on social media can increase their popularity.	
Communication Platform	CP_1	I feel that social media is the main communication channel between political leaders and users.	Okan et al. (2014)
	CP_2	I think using social media as a communication platform with political leaders is a trend these days.	
	CP_3	I believe users feel it is necessary to use social media to communicate with political leaders.	
	CP_4	I find using social media as a communication platform with political leaders as easy.	
Availability	AV_1	I have the ability to reach social media at any time.	Eckstein et al. (2013)
	AV_2	I regularly check social media for the latest news.	
	AV_3	I follow the latest issues of political leaders on social media.	
	AV_4	I actively engage with the posts of political leaders on social media by commenting, liking, or sharing them.	
Self-Efficacy	SE_1	I feel confident in my ability to effectively communicate my opinions and ideas on social media.	Eckstein et al. (2013)
	SE_2	I believe I can contribute with my engagement with political leaders on social media.	
	SE_3	I am good at using social media to get information about political issues.	
	SE_4	I am knowledgeable in using social media for communication.	
Accessibility	AC_1	I think it is easy to reach the content of political leaders on social media.	Okan et al. (2014)
	AC_2	I often come across social media posts made by political leaders.	
	AC_3	I receive notifications about new posts in social media making it easily accessible to me.	
	AC_4	I use social media for political news as a source of information.	
Prosperity	PR_1	I think political leaders who are active on social media will understand the people's problems and try to solve them.	Heiss et al (2020)
	PR_2	I think harmony will exist if there is engagement between the people and political leaders on social media.	

	PR_3	I think freedom will exist if there is engagement between the people and political leaders on social media.	
	PR_4	I think happiness will be created if there is engagement between the people and political leaders on social media.	
Progressive	PG_1	I think economic progress will grow if there is engagement between the people and political leaders on social media.	Heiss, et. al (2020)
	PG_2	I think social welfare will be formed if there is engagement between the people and political leaders on social media.	
	PG_3	I think the quality of service will be good if there is engagement between the people and political leaders on social media.	
	PG_4	I think leadership accountability will be better if there is engagement between the people and political leaders on social media.	
Effectiveness	EF_1	I think the speed of action will be better if there is engagement between the people and political leaders on social media.	Eckstein et al. (2013)
	EF_2	I think the interaction will be better if there is engagement between the people and political leaders on social media.	
	EF_3	I think the right action will be taken by all if there is engagement between the people and political leaders on social media.	
	EF_4	I think service satisfaction will be achieved if there is engagement between the people and political leaders on social media.	
Attitude	AT_1	I feel curious about the opinions and statements of political leaders that they post on social media.	Knoll et al. (2020)
	AT_2	I feel more connected to political leaders when they share personal stories and experiences on social media.	
	AT_3	I feel that the the presence of political leaders on social media affect the willingness to engage with them.	
	AT_4	I regularly look for posts of political leaders in the media out of curiosity.	
Subjective Norms	SN_1	I think the frequency of my close acquaintance engaging with political leaders on social media will affect my attention.	Knoll et al. (2020)

	SN_2	I believe social media is a medium for gathering information about political leaders.	
	SN_3	I feel comfortable using social media platforms to engage with political leaders.	
	SN_4	I consider how others react to the social media posts of political leaders that will influence my choice to get involved.	
Perceived Behavioral Control	PBC_1	I believe that social media users have the skills and ability to effectively engage with political leaders on social media.	Knoll et al. (2020)
	PBC_2	The availability of political leaders on social media affects my intention to engage with them.	
	PBC_3	I think it is safe to get information about political leaders in social media.	
	PBC_4	I feel that I have control over my efforts to engage with political leaders on social media.	
Perceived Value	PV_1	I believe that engaging with political leaders on social media will lead to positive political outcomes.	Augustine et al. (2016)
	PV_2	I will be more likely to engage with political leaders on social media when their political values bring peace to society.	
	PV_3	I feel more interested in engaging with political leaders on social media when their political values bring prosperity to society.	
	PV_4	I feel more interested in engaging with political leaders on social media when their political values improve the quality of service to the community.	
Intention to engage with a political leader in social media.	IT_1	I tend to like, share, or comment on political posts made on social media.	Valeriani & Vaccari (2016)
	IT_2	I tend to engage with politics on social media to make sure my views are heard.	
	IT_3	I tend to engage in political discussions on social media with others.	
	IT_4	I tend to engage in political posts on social media.	

The survey instrument used in this study is designed for comprehensive data collection. The initial part gathers demographic details, while the subsequent sections employ the Likert Scale to gauge participant agreement with the statements. The Likert Scale ranges from 1 to 5, allowing participants to express their stance effectively. The study focuses on active social media users from Malaysia, aged 18 and above who frequently engage with political leaders' posts. Probability sampling, suited for identifiable populations, was used to select the participants.

Instrument Validation

Face validation and content validity are crucial steps in ensuring the quality of a survey instrument. Face validity gauges whether respondents perceive the questionnaire items as suitable for the research's intended purpose. In this study, experts well-versed in social

media's political aspects will assess the questionnaire's face validity to confirm its clarity and appropriateness. Content validity, on the other hand, focuses on the extent to which the questionnaire covers relevant topics and items, ensuring its thoroughness.

The Content Validity Index (CVI) of Lynn (1986) was used to validate this research instrument. A 4-point ranking scale measurement is introduced, which the labels are: 'Not Relevant = 1; Items need some revisions = 2; Relevant but need minor revision = 3; Very Relevant= 4'. The proportion agreement is 3 and 4. From their answers, the CVI was computed using the formula below

$$I-CVI = (\text{agreed item}) \div (\text{number of expert})$$

$$S-CVI = (\text{sum of I-CVI scores}) \div (\text{number of items})$$

In this study, 5 experts in the field of politics on social media were invited to participate in the content validity test. Three of them are Associate Professors from the University and 2 of them are political analysts from political parties in Malaysia. The results of this content validity test are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Content Validity Result

Item	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	No of relevance	I-CVI	Agreement
CU_1	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
CU_2	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
CU_3	4	4	4	3	4	5	1	Agree
CU_4	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
						S-CVI	1	
EX_1	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
EX_2	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
EX_3	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
EX_4	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
						S-CVI	1	
SE_1	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
SE_2	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
SE_3	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8	Agree
SE_4	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
						S-CVI	0.95	
SZ_1	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
SZ_2	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8	Agree
SZ_3	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
SZ_4	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8	Agree
						S-CVI	0.9	
SI_1	4	4	4	3	4	5	1	Agree
SI_2	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
SI_3	4	4	4	2	4	4	0.8	Agree
SI_4	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
						S-CVI	0.95	
CP_1	4	4	4	2	4	4	0.8	Agree

CP_2	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
CP_3	4	4	4	3	4	5	1	Agree
CP_4	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
						S-CVI	0.95	
AV_1	4	4	4	3	4	4	0.8	Agree
AV_2	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
AV_3	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
AV_4	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
						S-CVI	0.95	
SE_1	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8	Agree
SE_2	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
SE_3	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
SE_4	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8	Agree
						S-CVI	0.9	
AC_1	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
AC_2	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
AC_3	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
AC_4	4	2	4	4	2	3	0.6	Not Agree
						S-CVI	0.9	
PR_1	4	4	4	3	4	5	1	Agree
PR_2	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
PR_3	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
PR_4	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
						S-CVI	1	
PG_1	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
PG_2	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
PG_3	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8	Agree
PG_4	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
						S-CVI	0.95	
EF_1	4	3	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
EF_2	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
EF_3	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
EF_4	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
						S-CVI	1	
AT_1	4	2	4	3	4	4	0.8	Agree
AT_2	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
AT_3	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
AT_4	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
						S-CVI	0.95	
SN_1	4	2	4	3	4	4	0.8	Agree
SN_2	4	2	2	2	2	1	0.2	Not Agree
SN_3	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8	Agree
SN_4	4	4	4	3	4	5	1	Agree
						S-CVI	0.7	
PBC_1	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8	Agree
PBC_2	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
PBC_3	4	2	4	3	4	4	0.8	Agree

PBC_4	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8	Agree
						S-CVI	0.85	
PV_1	4	4	4	4	4	5	1	Agree
PV_2	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8	Agree
PV_3	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8	Agree
PV_4	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8	Agree
						S-CVI	0.85	
IT_1	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8	Agree
IT_2	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8	Agree
IT_3	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8	Agree
IT_4	4	2	4	4	4	4	0.8	Agree
						S-CVI	0.8	

**** Note:** S-CVI= Average scale content validity index of each construct

From the previous literature, the I-CVI accepted ratio is recommended at 0.78 or above. In this study, 0.8 is adopted. Therefore, 66 items were accepted as questionnaire items and 2 items namely SN_2 and AC_4 will be dropped as instrument items.

Conclusion

This article attempts to understand the behavior of users or voters on social media platforms in a political context. As the influence of social media on political engagement grows, understanding voter behavior has become essential to fine-tune political strategies and promote citizen engagement in the democratic process. The study discusses the transition from traditional mass media to the digital era through social media that empowers citizens to actively shape public discourse while openly challenging power structures. The research methodology follows the positivist paradigm, emphasizing quantitative research through stages such as literature review, factors identification, instrument development and validation. Expert validation was conducted to ensure the appropriateness and completeness of the questionnaire for a survey execution to understand voter behavior in the field of social media and politics.

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