

Targeted Messaging and Micro Targeting Strategies in Digital Political Campaigns

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Abstract: Targeted messaging and micro-targeting have emerged as one of the most effective tools for altering the attitudes of voters, as the political campaign environment endures significant changes in the scope of digital campaigning. This research examines the efficacy of these techniques in digital political campaigning by examining their impact on electors. Targeted messaging is the process of determining the effectiveness of political communication methods, such as advertisements, social media messages, and emails, based on the broad demographic and behavioral characteristics of the voting demographics. However, micro-targeting entails the utilization of sophisticated technical tools, including artificial intelligence, psychographic profiling, and Big Data analysis, to segment electors into more precise, smaller groups and provide them with highly personalized targeting. The quantitative method was employed to conduct the study, which involved the completion of an online questionnaire disseminated via Google Forms by 200 respondents. The data was analyzed using SPSS 22.0, and the regression significance test revealed that both micro-targeting and targeted messaging strategies have positive and significant associations with voter attitudes. Microtargeting accounted for 39.9 percent of the variance in voter attitudes, while targeted messaging accounted for 32.5 percent. This explains the significant influence. The following conclusions reaffirm that the perceptions and engagement rate of electors can be significantly altered by the presence of personalization and data-informed campaign strategies in the digital era. This paper has not only delineated the strategic utility of these political communication methods in the modern era, but it has also recognized the growing ethical concerns regarding the utilization, abuse, and transparency of voter data. It provides a foundation for the necessity of maintaining a balance between technological efficacy and democratic responsibility in political terms.

Keywords: Targeted Messaging, Micro-Targeting Strategies, Voter Attitude, Digital Political Campaigns, Political Communication, Personalized Messaging

I. INTRODUCTION

Targeted messaging and micro-targeting are digital political campaigning elements that are both relevant and similar. These strategies are founded on personalized messaging to the target voter base. Targeted messaging is a method of tailoring the political message to the specific characteristics of the voter group, including political advertisements, email newsletters, SMS campaigns, or social media posts. Demographic data (age, gender, education), geography, interests, or voting preferences are examples of such attributes. The rationale behind this is to ensure that the content resonates with the target audience, as the concerns are in alignment with their current values, political priorities, or issues of concern (Collier et al., 2024), (Chester & Montgomery, 2017).

However, micro-targeting has advanced and now employs more advanced digital tools and technologies, such as predictive modeling, machine learning, artificial intelligence (AI), and Big Data data analytics, to identify even more precise voter groups. In contrast to the mass marketing of large groups of people, micro-targeting involves the use of information collected from a variety of data points, including online browsing, consumer preferences, their digital traces, and psychographic profiles, to target very small groups, sometimes individuals, of customers. The ultimate goal is to influence the decision-making process at the individual level in order to transmit messages that evoke a sense of trust, timeliness, and relevance to each voter. In the digital age, these techniques collectively form the foundation of the



current political marketing strategy, in contrast to the era of mass communication and personalized persuasion(Simchon et al., 2024).

The operation of targeted messages and micro-targeting in digital political campaigns is governed by a rational architectural and computerized path flow that comprises a series of phases. This is followed by the first stage of data collection, in which the campaigns' teams accumulate substantial quantities of data from a variety of sources. These include publicly accessible voter registration files, online interests (likes, shares, views), histories of purchases, and even geolocation information stored on mobile phones. This data allows political parties to construct intricate voter profiles that surpass demographics (Riedl et al., 2023), (Bakir, 2020).

The data is subsequently segmented based on the facts that have been collected. In this instance, the voter pool has been divided into small, restricted subgroups based on behavioral tendencies, interests, and socio-demographic distinctions, as well as geographical location and psychographics, which are concerned with values, personalities, and emotional stimuli. Targeting can be more specific and personalized by employing these subtler categories (Bakir, 2020), (Molony, 2014).

Tailoring the message to each segment is the third stage, which involves campaign strategists addressing the preferences, fears, needs, or aspirations of each segment directly. For instance, one group may be targeted with a message regarding economic stability and the creation of new employment, while the other group may be targeted with a message regarding social justice or healthcare. This personalization is made possible by the collaboration of creative teams, data analysts, and media consultants, who ensure that the content is customized to suit the unique characteristics of each voter group(Molony, 2014).

These messages are typically disseminated through digital channels, such as Facebook, Instagram, X (previously Twitter), YouTube, Google search advertising, email marketing, or even specific landing pages. The automation of the process would make it feasible to select the appropriate message to be sent to the appropriate person at the most suitable moment, based on their online habits or device behaviour. So, programmatic advertising platforms may be implemented (Chester & Montgomery, 2017), (Chester & Montgomery, 2019).

It is important to note that these campaigns are not static; they are subject to optimization and feedback. In real-time, campaigns can evaluate the efficacy of their communication activities by analyzing the number of click-throughs, engagement indicators, and other performance metrics, such as A/B testing (in which automated versions of messages are evaluated to determine which ones are most effective). This information is beneficial for optimizing or adjusting the messaging strategy. If a message fails, it is either substituted or modified. Scaling up or further customizing is implemented when an individual executes it proficiently. The feedback cycle will enhance the campaign's agility and responsiveness to the campaign, thereby enhancing its ability to influence voter attitudes toward election day(Hackenburg & Margetts, 2024).

Problem statement

The advancement of digital technologies has revolutionized political communication, allowing campaigns to transition from conventional mass outreach to more individualized approaches like focused messaging and micro-targeting. These methodologies utilize demographic, behavioral, and psychographic data—frequently gathered from social media and various internet platforms—to customize political messaging for particular voter categories. As political entities increasingly depend on predictive modeling, artificial intelligence, and Big Data analytics, concerns over the transparency, accountability, and ethical utilization of personal information in these processes are escalating. Despite their increasing significance in contemporary political campaigns, particularly in digital democracies such as India, there is a deficiency of thorough scholarly investigation of the impact of these methods on the political landscape and public trust. The uncontrolled and opaque characteristics of these digital strategies provoke significant inquiries over their influence on democratic principles, voter independence, and informed electoral engagement, hence requiring additional investigation into their execution and consequences.



Objectives

- To assess the effectiveness of targeted messaging in shaping voter attitudes.
- To analyse the impact of micro-targeting strategies on voter attitude during digital political campaigns.

Hypotheses

- **H₁:** There is a significant positive impact of targeted messaging on voter attitude during digital political campaigns.
- **H₂:** There is a significant positive impact of micro-targeting strategies on voter attitude during digital political campaign

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kröger et al. (2024) observe that, there is not enough of a unified global compendium of Southern examples of political microtargeting (PMT), with much of the literature focusing on North American studies and trials. India, the Philippines, South America (Chile, Brazil, and Colombia), and Africa (Nigeria and Kenya) are all included in this chapter's brief reviews of PMT implementations. The examples demonstrate the widespread usage of PMT in all seven countries analyzed, along with its many applications, some of which raise ethical concerns and others of which include the unauthorized capture of data. Short bursts of democratic governance, widespread corruption, and ineffective regulatory and policy frameworks governing the collection and use of personal data are commonalities throughout the cases examined. The PMT applications that are now being evaluated rely heavily on X (formerly Twitter) and Meta (which encompasses Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp) for their social media and instant messaging needs.

Pellegrino (2023) in his research he stated that, Globally, many are worried about how social media affects public discourse and opinion, even if these platforms are everywhere and provide numerous benefits like quick contact. Findings from prior studies on the subject of academic production in relation to political campaigns and social media were the driving force for this investigation. We retrieved 265 articles for bibliometric analysis from the Scopus database. After the data was uploaded to VOSviewer, we looked at citations, co-citations, and keyword co-occurrences. Academic rigor, development, geographical dispersion, major authors, and total volume were all considered. It was also thought of to be the most productive publication source. Based on our bibliometric data, we identified four research groups; among them, 59% were from the US, UK, and India. This is the first category: However, academics who study political campaigns communication tend to focus on issues like online misinformation and privacy concerns; they have also written extensively about how political ads affect both legislative and presidential elections. academics who analyze the rise of minority rights on social media, and activists and political scientists who investigate and document techniques of online dishonesty. Data from most of the research was examined using more than one methodology. A discussion of the study's caveats and possible avenues for further investigation follows.

Dhawan & Hegelich (2023) their study says that, assuming there are quantifiable elements, rules, and conditions (such as psychological, biological, or socioeconomic factors) that influence people's political views, preferences, and biases, the underhanded manipulation of people's political opinions by political actors poses a threat to the basic principles of personal and political autonomy. Some worry that this might lead to the personalization of propaganda and manipulation of political processes through the use of digital phenotyping, psych informatics, and political data science. The present research is centered around digital phenotyping, namely psychographic profiling, and how it might be used to personalize persuasive messages. What follows is an overview of the findings from this study. In their study they argue that people's digital footprints may provide some insight into their political leanings as an innate trait. They also go over some of the political fallout from microtargeting and other forms of tailored persuasion that make advantage of this quality.

Eady et al. (2023) in their study they find out that, one of the more concerning ideas is the possibility that foreign powers are attempting to use social media to sway elections throughout the world. However, there is a lack of information on whether or whether exposure to foreign influence methods correlates with political behavior. their study examines the relationship between exposure to the Russian foreign influence campaign in 2016 and the attitudes and



voting behavior of US citizens using longitudinal survey data connected to Twitter. First, study demonstrate that a very concentrated exposure to Russian disinformation accounts occurred when just 1% of users were responsible for 70% of exposures. The second thing to note is that the demography of Republicans was the one that was most exposed. Third, American lawmakers and media outlets were far more powerful than the Russian influence operation. Finally, we did not discover any evidence that individuals' views, polarization, or voting behavior changed after being exposed to the Russian foreign influence campaign. The findings may have consequences for our understanding of the scope of electoral intervention initiatives utilizing social media.

Kruikemeier et al. (2022) Their research delves at the use of political targeted messaging by well-known political individuals and other entities. To achieve this goal, researchers use a dataset that was collected from ProPublica. A total of 236 American political actors, including elites and other groups, had 55,918 sponsored Facebook ads examined in the study. The first step was to classify policy concerns; the second was to analyze political participants' networks to identify their top policy problems; and the third was to use Sankey diagrams to identify microtargeted messages. We discover that actors focus on traditionally Democratic areas like social welfare, environmental policy, and social issues, and Republican domains like foreign affairs, legislation, and public finances. Wedge subjects lack sufficient evidence for clear conclusions, however there are early indications in targeted media settings, such as an emphasis on reproductive rights and LGBTQ+. Their primarily elucidates the ways in which political actors employ personalized messaging.

Krishnamoorthy (2022) in his research he stated that, Voter targeting in democratic elections is as ancient as democracy itself, and it is equally forbidden to engage in corrupt tactics in order to convince these targeted electorates. Both targeted and unscrupulous tactics are part of this. Voter targeting is deciding which moderate voters to reach out to with specific messaging; they are the ones most likely to be convinced by either side of the issue. Part of political marketing, it is zeroing in on certain demographics in order to promote political candidates by catering to their political requirements and inspiring them to back the candidate's platform. Politicians use consumer marketing tactics in their campaigns. In both consumer and political marketing, the ideas of selling, purchasing, and products and services are comparable. In consumer marketing, people are sold goods and services in return for money; in political marketing, they are offered economic success in return for their votes. An individual's age, gender, level of education, race, religion, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity are all crucial pieces of demographic information for creating tailored ads and messaging. When paired with demographic information, geographic details (such as state, city, location, etc.) make targeted messaging more successful and enhance content and adverts that are dear to voters in such regions.

Nirmala Krishnamoorthy (2022) his study's primary objective is to determine the extent to which political parties' micro-targeting messages influence voters' choices. The research strategy used in this pilot study is deceptive. Participants included judges, attorneys, and law students. The 38 samples that were selected using the convenience sampling method were evaluated using a standardized questionnaire. Research shows that male lawyers aged 25–35 made up the bulk of the respondents. According to the responses, there is no discernible variation in the effect of micro-targeting messages on voters. Most people have observed that political parties are sending personalized messages to the public based on their search history, according to the survey. They also make it seem as though the micro-targeting messages are having an effect on people's voting decisions, even though they are not real. Additionally, it was shown that voter behavior still differs even with micro-targeting. people use social media postings to gauge how others feel about an issue before casting their ballots. As a corollary, respondents felt that news from well-known outlets, publishers, and reporters was crucial in helping them make an informed voting choice. A substantial effect of political parties' micro-targeting messaging on voters' choices was also discovered.

Sinha (2021) in his research he stated that, widespread belief is that India boasts the world's largest democratic population. A democracy's electoral politics—the strategies employed by different political parties to rally support among eligible voters—determine the system's overall viability. This is why political mobilization is so important in democracies. his research endeavors to elucidate the rationale behind how the mobilization technique has been impacted by the political role of social media. When it comes to rallying people behind political issues, no sane person could ever deny the enduring importance of conventional media. But the rise of social media has leveled the playing field, made voting more accessible, and expanded the reach of the election. Party bosses on both sides are putting forth



significant effort to leverage social media for political gain. In the pursuit of a future free of misinformation, this study examines the similarities and differences between conventional and social media in terms of their ability to mobilize political support.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study conducted an empirical investigation into the efficacy of targeted messaging and micro-targeting strategies in shaping voter attitudes during digital political campaigns. The methodology was based on the investigation of the relationship between voter responses and specific campaign techniques in a digitally mediated political environment. Data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted from a sample of politically aware individuals using a structured quantitative research method.

Research Design

The research design was both descriptive and explanatory in nature. It was descriptive in nature, as it sought to characterize the demographic profile of electors and their exposure to digital political communication tools. Simultaneously, it was informative in that it endeavored to investigate the impact of micro-targeting strategies and targeted messaging on voter attitudes. This design was suitable for the purpose of identifying and evaluating the relationships between independent and dependent variables through regression analysis.

Research Approach

A quantitative research methodology was implemented in this investigation. The measurement of relationships between variables was facilitated by this approach, particularly in the evaluation of the impact of targeted and micro-targeting messaging strategies on voter perceptions. The utilization of structured surveys and statistical tools enabled the production of data that was both generalizable and quantifiable.

Proposed Methodology

A cross-sectional survey design was implemented to conduct the investigation. Data were collected at a specific point in time using a closed-ended questionnaire that was administered using Google Forms. In order to evaluate the extent and significance of the relationships among the variables, SPSS version 22.0 was implemented. In order to assess the predictive effectiveness of targeted messaging and micro-targeting strategies on voter attitudes, regression analysis was implemented.

Sample and Sampling

The preference sampling method was employed to select a sample of 200 voters for the study. This non-probability sampling technique was selected for its accessibility and suitability for exploratory research, particularly when random sampling was not feasible. The sample consisted of participants of varying ages, both male and female, who were assumed to have access to digital political content. Demographic data, including gender and age, were also collected to identify trends in voter attitudes.

Data Collection

An online questionnaire was disseminated via Google Forms to collect primary data. The questionnaire was created to evaluate respondents' responses to digital campaign strategies and their attitudes toward political messaging. It was composed of structured, close-ended items that were based on a five-point Likert scale. The digital format was selected due to its cost-effectiveness, convenience, and capacity to reach a diverse and digitally engaged audience.

Data Analysis

SPSS version 22.0 was employed to analyze the data collected through Google Forms. Demographic information was summarized using descriptive statistics, which included frequencies and percentages. Regression analysis was the



primary analytical technique implemented, which facilitated the assessment of the independent variables—micro-targeting strategies and targeted messaging—on the dependent variable, voter attitude.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table: 1 frequency and percentage of Age (In Years)

| Age (In Years) | | |
|----------------|-----------|---------|
| | Frequency | Percent |
| Below 25 years | 40 | 20.0 |
| 25 - 30 years | 51 | 25.5 |
| 31 - 35 years | 43 | 21.5 |
| 36 - 40 years | 46 | 23.0 |
| Above 40 years | 20 | 10.0 |
| Total | 200 | 100.0 |

The above table discusses the frequency and percentage of Age of the respondents. In Below 25 Years Age group, Frequency is 40 and percentage is 20.0 %. In 25-30 Years age group, Frequency is 51 and percentage is 25.5%. In 31-35 years age group, Frequency is 43 and percentage is 21.5%. In 36-40 years age group, Frequency is 46 and percentage is 23.0%. In Above 40 years age group, Frequency is 20 and percentage is 10.0%.

Graph: 1 Graphical representation of Age of the respondents.

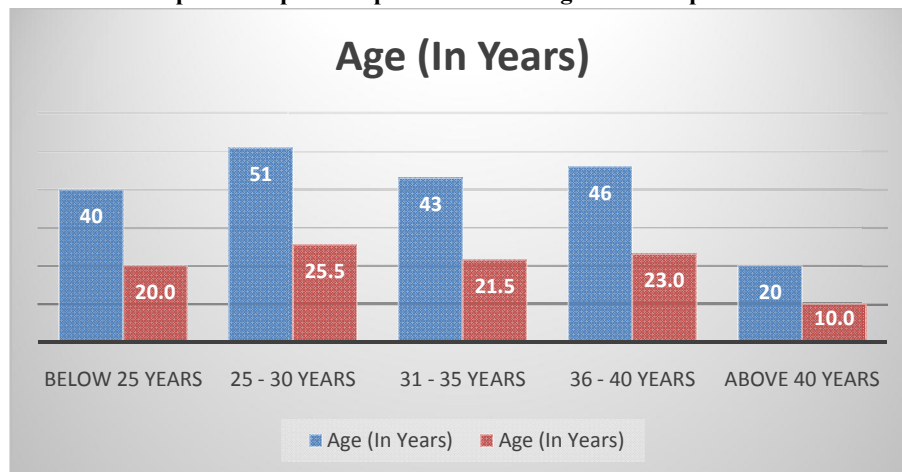


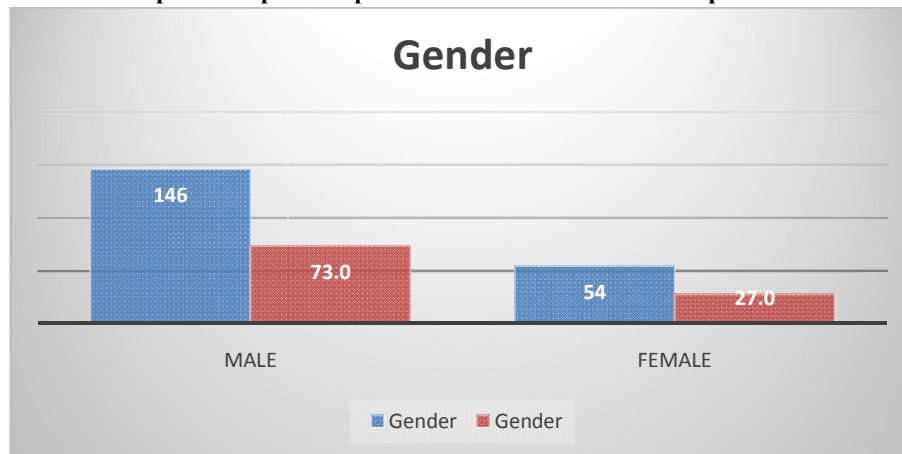
Table: 2 Frequency and percentage of gender of the respondents.

| Gender | | |
|--------|-----------|---------|
| | Frequency | Percent |
| Male | 146 | 73.0 |
| Female | 54 | 27.0 |
| Total | 200 | 100.0 |

The above table discusses the frequency and percentage of gender of the respondents. In male, Frequency is 146 and percentage is 73.0%. In female, Frequency is 54 and percentage is 27.0%.



Graph: 2 Graphical representation of Gender of the respondents.



Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant positive impact of targeted messaging on voter attitude during digital political campaigns.

Table: 3 Regression Analysis Showing the Impact of Targeted Messaging on Voter Attitude

| Model Summary | | | | |
|---|-------------------|----------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1 | .570 ^a | .325 | .321 | 4.17055 |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), Targeted Messaging | | | | |

| ANOVA ^a | | | | | | |
|---|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| 1 | Regression | 1656.174 | 1 | 1656.174 | 95.218 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 3443.906 | 198 | 17.393 | | |
| | Total | 5100.080 | 199 | | | |
| a. Dependent Variable: Voter Attitude | | | | | | |
| b. Predictors: (Constant), Targeted Messaging | | | | | | |

| Coefficients ^a | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 4.480 | 1.033 | | 4.337 | .000 |
| | Targeted Messaging | .602 | .062 | .570 | 9.758 | .000 |
| a. Dependent Variable: Voter Attitude | | | | | | |



The regression model summary indicates a moderate positive relationship between voter attitude and targeted messaging, with a R value of 0.570 and a R Square value of 0.325. This suggests that nearly 32.5% of the variance in voter attitude is accounted for by targeted messaging. The statistical significance of the model is confirmed by the ANOVA table, which shows an F-value of 95.218 and a p-value of .000. The coefficients table indicates that targeted messaging has a substantial positive impact on voter attitude ($B = 0.602$, $t = 9.758$, $p < .001$). This implies that an increase in targeted messaging by one unit results in a 0.602 unit increase in voter attitude. This underscores the efficacy of targeted messaging in influencing voter attitudes during political campaigns.

Hypothesis accepted

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive impact of micro-targeting strategies on voter attitude during digital political campaign

| Model Summary | | | | |
|---|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1 | .631 ^a | .399 | .396 | 3.93559 |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), Micro-Targeting Strategies | | | | |

| ANOVA ^a | | | | | | |
|---|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| 1 | Regression | 2033.279 | 1 | 2033.279 | 131.273 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 3066.801 | 198 | 15.489 | | |
| | Total | 5100.080 | 199 | | | |
| a. Dependent Variable: Voter Attitude | | | | | | |
| b. Predictors: (Constant), Micro-Targeting Strategies | | | | | | |

| Coefficients ^a | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|
| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | Sig. |
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 4.307 | .902 | | 4.773 |
| | Micro-Targeting Strategies | .638 | .056 | .631 | 11.457 |
| a. Dependent Variable: Voter Attitude | | | | | |

The regression model suggests a robust positive correlation between voter attitude and micro-targeting strategies, as evidenced by a R value of 0.631 and a R Square of 0.399. This suggests that micro-targeting strategies can account for 39.9% of the variance in voter attitude. The independent variable's predictive efficacy is confirmed by the statistical significance of the model ($F = 131.273$, $p < .001$) as indicated by the ANOVA results. The coefficients table also demonstrates that voter attitude is significantly and positively influenced by micro-targeting strategies ($B = 0.638$, $t = 11.457$, $p < .001$). This result suggests that voter attitude improves by 0.638 units for each unit increase in the use of micro-targeting strategies. These results indicate that micro-targeting is a potent instrument for influencing voter perspectives in digital political campaigns.

Hypothesis accepted



Discussion

The study's findings are valuable in the context of comprehending the regulator's experience with digital politics, specifically micro-targeting and targeted messaging. The regression analysis demonstrated a moderately strong positive correlation between the voter attitude and the independent element. Targeted messaging is considered influential due to its 32.5 percent contribution to the variance. This implies that the messages are more likely to be received and converted by certain voter segments when politicking is based on their values, preferences, or concerns. Similar to the micro-targeting strategies, they accounted for nearly 39.9% of the variance in voter attitude, underscoring the necessity of more effective campaign strategies that personalize content and target recipients based on their demographics, psychographics, and digital frequency of visits. These findings are not novel, as they are consistent with other reports that have documented the growing importance of digital tools and behavioral data in contemporary political campaigns. Customized political communication is currently gaining popularity among electors, particularly those who are highly engaged on social media platforms. This trend has the potential to influence their political participation, choices, and perspectives. Additionally, the ongoing global trends identified in the most recent literature, particularly emergent democracies, may be attributed to the use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to disseminate the aforementioned messages. While digital targeting has the potential to improve voter outreach and engagement, it raises compelling ethical concerns regarding accountability, privacy, and manipulation. This is to suggest that political strategists have the potential to significantly influence the public's opinion through the use of these tools. However, they must exercise caution in this regard by balancing the necessity of informing the public with the importance of being democratic.

V. CONCLUSION

The research demonstrated that voter attitudes are significantly influenced by both targeted and micro-targeted messaging strategies during a digital political campaign. The data suggests that these are not the only effective strategies; they are also essential in the context of contemporary election communication. When political parties and campaigners employ the techniques and tools of data analytics and behavioral profiling services to personalize their voter messages, they have a greater likelihood of attaining favorable voter outcomes. The power to persuade and engage voters is strengthened by the ability to reach them in the appropriate manner and with pertinent and personalized content, as voters become increasingly engrossed in virtual ecosystems. The results, however, also underscore the urgent necessity of transparency and ethical boundaries in the political utilization of personal data. Nevertheless, there is also a responsible practice known as the implementation of digital strategies, which not only improve the effectiveness of campaigns but also do not result in a decline in democratic values and voter independence. In the future, it will be imperative to investigate the regulatory and ethical frameworks that would regulate the operation of such strategies in democratic societies, in addition to the long-term effects on voter behavior.

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