



FACEBOOK AS A PLATFORM FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION CAMPAIGN: A STUDY ON NARAYANGANJ CITY CORPORATION ELECTION 2022

Md. Multazim Bin Rihan Siam and Md. Shariful Islam*

Mass Communication and Journalism Discipline, Khulna University, Khulna 9208, Bangladesh

KUS: ICSSI 60

Manuscript submitted: April 13, 2023

Accepted: September 21, 2023

Abstract

This study aims to determine how Facebook is utilized as a platform for election campaigns in the local government election. The study has followed both quantitative and qualitative approaches employing content analysis and Key Informant Interview (KII) methods for data collection. Content has been analyzed under four major codes including a thematic analysis conducted using NVivo-12 Plus. This study revealed that photo content constitutes the majority of posts on candidates' Facebook pages during election campaigns, while video content receives the highest number of shares from users. Additionally, the study reveals that approximately 90% of users' comments on the Facebook platform are positive. The most prevalent campaign category observed on candidates' Facebook pages is the field campaign. Key informant interviews also indicate that candidates' perceptions and attitudes about the Facebook campaign are quite optimistic. The interviewees believe that social media engages more people more rapidly and affordably than traditional methods of campaigning. Moreover, they emphasized the crucial role of social media platforms in persuading voters, attracting a large audience at a minimal cost.

Keyword: Facebook, Social media, New media, Political campaign, Election campaign

Introduction

Election is the essential process to choose the right person as a representative while communication is the most important element to influence the voters (Gibson & McAllister, 2008). So political parties provide a communication platform for people to participate in political discussions (Hong & Nadler, 2011).

The kind of political expression we have been accustomed to seeing for decades is called mainstream political communication but now the whole process is changing through the new media (Chadwick, 2006; Gil De Zúñiga et al., 2012) Thus, the widespread uses of social media are now challenging the methods used by traditional media for information dissemination and discussion on political issues.

It is now seen that politicians use different types of social media platforms in political communication focusing on the election campaign (Lerman & Ghosh, 2010). Election candidates can now use the latest technological advances to communicate their messages directly to the public, bypassing the press (Green & Hobolt, 2008). This paradigm shift from traditional media to new media has helped them greatly in reaching out to voters. Political parties and leaders are benefiting from the advancement of new media and communication (Arulchelvan, 2014).

As Facebook now has more than 2.93 billion monthly active users around the world (Statista, 2022), it permits voters and politicians to participate in political dialogues. Thus, politicians share political content publicly to exchange their political views with the citizens (Wattal et al., 2010). Bangladesh government adopted the initiative namely '*Digital Bangladesh*' to develop telecommunication infrastructures and connected to the internet through the submarine cable and mobile networking system which has expanded online traffic and shrunk connectivity costs leading to an expansion of new media in Bangladesh (Shoesmith & Mahmud, 2013). Moreover, 52.58 million people have an internet connection and Bangladesh's internet penetration rate stood at 31.5 percent of the total population at the start of 2022 while the majority of total internet users are connected to Facebook (DataReportal, 2021).

*Corresponding author: < sharif.mcj@ku.ac.bd >

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53808/KUS.SI.2023.ICSSI60-ss>

New media has begun to influence the outcome of political events and practice in Bangladesh, as well as elsewhere in the world (Al-Zaman, 2020). Major political parties in Bangladesh have their websites, blogs, and social media accounts, such as Facebook pages, groups, etc. They update, watch, and read their social media content regularly to grab the user's attention. Sharma (2015) demonstrated that the significant adoption of social media in Bangladesh began during the 2013 Shahbag movement. However, preceding this, politicians had already begun exploring the potential of new media during the 9th national parliamentary election in 2008. In that election, candidates such as Maskawat Hasan from Rajshahi-04 employed Facebook, Hasan Mahmud from Chittagong-06 utilized a blog, and Nurul Islam BSP from Chittagong-08 ran a personal website as part of their political campaigns. Consequently, the trend of political candidates using social media continued during the 10th national election as well. Likewise, Harun and Salam (2018) examined the Facebook campaigns of 15 candidates during the 2018 national election in Bangladesh. They observed a total of 207 posts on the candidates' Facebook pages, encompassing various types of content such as photos, news, live videos, and written posts. Among these, videos were the most frequently posted content by the candidates. During their analysis, the researchers also measured the engagement on these posts, recording a total of 1663 reactions and 42 comments from the audience.

Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have been systematically adopted by election campaigns in Bangladesh and across the world for effective communication (Stromer, 2014). It is considered that during the 2000 US presidential campaign, social media were initially acknowledged as a tool in political elections (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2016). Similarly, Yang and DeHart (2016) shows that the 2012 US presidential election was a significant turning point in the use of social media. During the 2010 federal election campaign, the study indicated the primary ways in which social media are being used in political communication. They revealed that approximately 75% of Australian federal politicians maintained a presence on Facebook, using a combination of 'profiles,' 'official pages,' and 'community pages.' The 'official pages' and 'community pages' allowed for public content display but did not permit 'friends' to join; visitors could only 'like' the pages. Many politicians used Facebook to post speeches, activities, policies, and election-related content, but the focus was more on one-way transmission of political messages rather than engaging with citizens or listening to the electorate (Macnamara & Kenning, 2011).

Stieglitz et al. (2012) conducted a comprehensive study to understand political communication through social media in Germany. They analyzed the social media presence of various German political parties on social media with content analysis method. Additionally, they surveyed members of the German parliament to gather information about their own use of social media. By combining these methods, they revealed that a majority of politicians report that they are planning to use social media for political communication more intensively. Many participants use social media to report political activities from their job, for self-presentation purposes, to keep in touch with their group members/fans/followers, and to inform those about current political events. Interestingly, many politicians by using social media also attempt to look for feedback, suggestions, and new ideas from their political peers as well as others for their political work. However, despite the limited use of new media in post-election, new media are improving political communication in Nigeria, particularly during elections and electioneering comprising the activity of trying to persuade people to vote for a particular political party. Additionally, it demonstrates that new media have enhanced political awareness and interaction (Olabamiji, 2014). To better comprehend how social media is utilized in contemporary political discourse, Gerodimos and Justinussen (2015) focuses on Barack Obama's Facebook campaign during the 2012 campaign. This analysis shows that the Obama's campaign used Facebook as a tool of top-down marketing concentrating on Obama's personality and as a method of strategically encouraging supporters to act.

Narasimhamurthy (2014) examined the correlation between the use of social media and its development as a tool in the context of political campaigning for parties in India. They found that social media has grown its importance as a campaigning tool in the Indian electoral system. Political parties and candidates can more quickly and efficiently reach a huge number of voters through social media. Social media, as opposed to traditional media, enables politicians to actively communicate with potential voters. However, Rossini et al. (2018) examines the connection between the use of social media during the 2016 US presidential campaign and the positions of candidates in polls of the general public, concentrating on the surfacing and primary phases of the campaign. The findings show that a candidate's polling success influences some communication tactics, including the employment of advocacy as well as the emphasis on a candidate's personal image on social media.

Over the past two decades, scholarly interest in political campaigns' use of digital technology has grown, although the majority of researchers have concentrated on assessing the use of digital platforms without taking contextual elements into account. This study considers the emerging development of social media usage in local government election campaign. As '*Digital Bangladesh*' is widely used terminology in technology sector of Bangladesh, it is needed to assess the use of digital technology and social media like Facebook in the election campaign of Bangladesh. In the global context, the use of social media as a tool for election campaigns has been studied since the early days of the 2004 US election. In contrast, there has been limited research conducted so far in the context of local government election in Bangladesh, especially with a comprehensive approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative methods. This study is definitely be able to demonstrate the new trend in political campaign.

RQ 1: To what extent do different content types prevail in content posting and user sharing on the mayoral candidate's Facebook page?

RQ 2: How do Facebook users express their reactions towards content, and what is the sentiment of users' comments?

RQ 3: What are the overarching campaign categories that characterize the activity of the mayoral candidates during their election campaign on Facebook platforms?

RQ 4: What are the factors that have led election candidates to use Facebook for election campaign?

Materials and Methods

The study followed both quantitative and qualitative approach. Data has been collected through the content analysis method and Key Informant Interview (KII). This study followed purposive sampling to analyze the three Facebook pages related to the city mayor of Narayanganj. These are i) Bangladesh Awami League, ii) Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy, iii) Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy Media Cell. The official Facebook page named "Bangladesh Awami League" represents the ruling political party and has been selected as a sample because it is dedicated to promoting their candidate, Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy, for the mayoral position. The page is officially recognized by Facebook, as indicated by the presence of a blue verification badge. Furthermore, there are two other official Facebook pages that function as campaign platforms for the ruling party's mayoral candidate, Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy. These pages have received confirmation and endorsement from Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy's media cell. No Facebook pages were found for the opposition party's candidate.

Content has been collected manually by scrolling the respective Facebook pages from 16th December 2021 to 15th January 2022 as 16th December was the announcing date of the election campaign and 15th January was the last date of the campaign. Content has been analyzed under four major coding — i. Content Genre (including text, photo, video, news link and Facebook live) ii. Content Reaction (including like, love, care, ha-ha, sad and angry reactions) iii. Users Comments (including positive, negative and neutral comments) and iv. Campaign Category (including field campaign, public speeches, public interaction, meeting, public gathering, road show, theme song and press conference) inspired by Alvarez et al. (2020); Jost et al. (2020); Macnamara & Kenning (2011); Wittenberg et al. (2021).

First two broader codes "Content Genre" and "Users' Reaction" have been developed with deductive coding approach. The coding process was conducted by two graduate students pursuing a major in mass communication. These coders participated in training workshops where they were familiarized with coding protocols and the specific definitions of each variable used in the study. They were guided through practice exercises, involving the coding of 30 Facebook posts to understand intercoder consensus and how to achieve the desired agreement on study variables. The initial categorization of data was then verified by the first author, while the second author reviewed the articles and cross-checked the categorization in parallel. Since both authors reached a consensus on the categorization, the results were considered reliable.

Third broader code 'Users Comments' analysis followed the subsequent procedures to categorize comments as positive, negative and neutral using NVivo-12 Plus inspired by Pudaruth et al. (2018). Initially, comments made by Facebook users were downloaded from the comments section of the respective Facebook pages. Subsequently, these comments were translated and transcribed into English. Since the data extraction was done manually, no adjustments were needed to be made for the metadata; only the authentic content of the comment field was utilized. This field sometimes included unnecessary elements like irrelevant image or memes, which were eliminated. Further,

words with similar roots, such as "explain," "explanation," and "explanatory," were stemmed to their root form, "explain," utilizing the Stemming function. Ultimately, comments were categorized into positive, negative, or neutral sentiments using the auto code feature in NVivo 12 Plus. This auto coder incorporates predefined lexicons for identifying positive and negative emotions. Positive words comprise terms like "happy," "smile," and "hope," while negative words encompass "sad," "fear," "hate," "shame," "regret," and "anger," among others. Words that lack clear positive or negative connotations are considered neutral.

Fourth code "Campaign Category" has been developed inductively. Facebook content was labeled into different campaign categories and inputted as child codes in NVivo. Subsequently, we merged these child codes into larger codes for analysis. After completing the coding process, we used various features in NVivo, such as the explore tab, frequency tab, run query tab, and word cloud tab to analyze the data further. Through this comprehensive process, we identified 12 broad categories that emerged from the analysis of the content, as presented with NVivo.

Among various social media platforms, we specifically chose Facebook pages for our study. Facebook has an extensive user base, with approximately 3.5 billion cumulative monthly users worldwide as of the third quarter of 2021. It is the most widely used social media platform globally (Statista, 2022). In Bangladesh, Facebook holds the top position among the most-used social media platforms, followed by Twitter and YouTube, with around 80% of the total internet users in the country connected to Facebook (StatCounter, 2023). Narayanganj City Corporation election campaign has been selected as the study area. There are 517,361 registered voters in the constituency, with 2,59,846 men and 2,57,511 women, and four third-gender voters ("Ivy Wins," 2022). Bangladesh Awami League, the ruling party of Bangladesh announces Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy as the mayor candidate in the 2022 election. Though the 'main' opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party withdrew from the election, but a candidate, Taimur Alam Khandaker from this party decided to run as an independent candidate for mayor of Narayanganj City Corporation election ("Taimur Loses", 2022). On the other hand, this study includes Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy's Facebook campaign as she maintained the Facebook page for election campaign and finally won the election where Taimur Alam Khandaker has no official Facebook page, so his campaign has not been included in this study.

This study also used Key Informant Interview (KII). The researcher interviewed five key persons. They are i) Md. Abu Hossain, personal Assistant of Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy, ii) Zim Rahman, Assistant Press Secretary of Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy, iii) Azit Kumar Moholdar, Research Assistant, Media Wing, Bangladesh Awami League, iv) Sharifa Umma Shirina, Assistant Professor, Mass Communication and Journalism Department, University of Barishal, v) Nishat Tarannum, Assistant Professor, Mass Communication and Journalism Discipline, Khulna University.

Three individuals were interviewed as they were directly involved in Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy's election campaign and two experts were interviewed who possess specialized knowledge on social media and political communication. Then, first author conducted the interview and transcribed it and the second author finally analyze these interviews in sequential explanatory design. After reviewing the script, the findings of the content analysis have been shared with each participant. Through this process, we collected potential explanation of the findings observed in the quantitative analysis. The transcripts were then thematically analyzed, searching for common themes. Thus, the Key Informant Interview (KII) has been analyzed and presented this study.

Findings

Table 1 demonstrates the several types of content that candidates have posted on their respective Facebook pages, as well as the content shared by users from these Facebook pages during election campaign. These content types encompass photos, videos, Facebook Live, news links, and text content. Overall, photo content represents the largest portion of candidates' posts, comprising around 53% of the total, while video content is the most widely shared by users, constituting 47.22% of the shares.

The second most prevalent category of candidates' post is videos, comprising nearly 24% of the content. Additionally, news links represent a significant content category, making up 19% of the overall posts, followed by text content at 3.25%. Facebook Live post is the least frequent, accounting for only 0.75% of the total content posted by candidates during the election campaign.

Conversely, among the content shared by users of these Facebook pages, photo content is the second most popular, constituting 33% of the total shares. Surprisingly, Facebook Live posts did not receive any shares from

users during the campaign. Text posts received 435 shares, amounting to approximately 11% of the total shares, while news links received almost similar number of shares, accounting for roughly 9% of the total shares.

Table 1. Frequency of content genre posted by candidate and shared by Facebook users

Content Genre		Candidates' Post (n=133) %n	Users' Share (n=4028) %n
Text	Written content including Facebook status	04 (3.25%)	435 (10.80%)
Photo	Images with or without accompanying caption, diagrams, banners, posters and pamphlet	71 (53.00%)	1330 (33.02%)
Video	Recorded footage with or without accompanying caption, including YouTube video, Broadcast media content	32 (24.00%)	1902 (47.22%)
Facebook Live	Directly go to live streaming from Facebook page	01 (0.75%)	00 (0.0%)
News Link	Hyperlink or URL that leads to a news article published on a news website	25 (19.00%)	361 (8.96%)

Table 2 illustrates the Facebook reaction feature. The most common reaction, provided by 81.33% of users, is "Like," while "Sad," which is offered by 0.03% of users, is the least common. Facebook reactions including Love (15.31%), Care (2.65), Ha-Ha (0.45%), Wow (0.12%), and Angry (0.11%) indicate a variety of perspectives.

Table 2. Frequency of Users Reactions on Content

Content Reaction		(n=73621) %n
Like	The users' initial response to a post on Facebook	59879 (81.33%)
Love	The users absolutely adored someone's Facebook post	11268 (15.31%)
Care	This Reaction depicts a smiley face character hugging a heart	1948 (2.65%)
Ha-Ha	It was developed to enable users to express laughter at the content	334 (0.45%)
Wow	It expresses shock and surprise at the contents	90 (0.12%)
Sad	This reaction expresses users' compassionate feelings	19 (0.03%)
Angry	It expresses dislike and anger felt toward other users' posts	83 (0.11%)

Table 3 displays the sentiment analysis results derived from users' comments on the candidates' Facebook pages. It reveals a significant predominance of positive comments, comprising roughly 90% of the total. In contrast, negative comments are less frequent, representing only 6%. Interestingly, within the dataset of 3755 comments, there are 162 comments (accounting for approximately 4%) that are deemed irrelevant.

Table 3. Users Comments Tone

Users Comments		(n=3755) %n
Positive	Favorable users' comments including positive words like "happy," "smile," and "hope"	3391(90%)
Negative	Unfavorable users' comments including negative words like "sad," "fear," "hate," "shame," "regret," and "anger," towards candidate election campaign	202 (6%)
Irrelevant	No relevancy with election campaign including words that lack clear positive or negative connotations	162 (4%)

Table 4 illustrates an overview of the 12 campaign categories, which includes field campaigns, meetings, interactions, public opinions, theme songs, interviews, press conferences, voting tutorials, public speeches, road shows, and discussions. Field campaigns are the most frequently posted category, accounting for 17% of the total. The second

most of the time on their Facebook pages as they believe these contents get high response and views from the followers. This opinion was expressed as follows:

"We should emphasize the user's feedback and reactions while choosing the content for election campaign" [Interviewee 4]

Platform Priority: Interviewees believe that Facebook has evolved into a new tool and become the new paradigm of political communication. They can simply communicate and reach out to their users instantly. On the other hand, Traditional methods are slow to reach individuals and take a long time to gather audiences whereas social media like Facebook engages more people rapidly at a low cost. Additionally, traditional election campaigning tools, such as posters, banners, flyers and leaflets, loudspeakers, and so on, are much more expensive than social media election campaigning content. Even a simple written post can engage more people than traditional campaigning. Interviewee opined that social media content allows political leaders and parties, and voters to communicate directly with one another. As a result, political operations could become more transparent, and citizens could become more engaged in political decision-making, especially on election occasions. The quotes below represent the platform priority:

"We have a large number of followers on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms. As Facebook is the most popular platform, we are very active and alert to share content in this platform." [Interviewee 3]

"We prefer new media as it is less expensive than traditional media. It also enables us to reach more people." [Interviewee 2]

Facebook as Election Campaign Tool: The interviewee told that Facebook is a very reliable and communication friendly platform to promote election-related information. Facebook has an abundant number of users in Bangladesh and most of the citizens and voters in Narayanganj city use Facebook. Furthermore, Facebook has various options and forms to communicate with its users and those options have equal for all users. So, they choose Facebook as a tool for election Campaigns. Candidates assume that meetings, public awareness activities, disseminating election posters, and organizing events are much easier with Facebook pages and groups. For Example:

"During the city election period, we arrange several monthly meeting about Narayanganj city election with different stakeholders through Facebook platform to promote the election campaign on behalf of our candidate Dr.Selina Hayat Iry." [Interviewee 3]

Target Users: Interviewees narrated that candidates and election campaigners are highly focused on their target audiences and on social media, election campaigners post content especially on Facebook campaigns to grab the attention of young users and, educated middle-class users. Since the interviewee believed that half of the Facebook users are between the ages of 18 and 25 and the other one-third are between the ages of 25 and 35, comprising eligible voters, they chose to supplement their traditional campaign by initiating a social media-driven campaign. Interviewee also added that they don't take any kind of sponsors or boosting service for promoting content within their target group. Social media experts believe that positive activities can easily be circulated by new media without boosting.

"Our primary target is the young generation as they are the mostly active in Facebook while middle-class educated people are the secondary target." [Interviewee 1]

"We do not accept sponsors for election-related content on our pages to promote campaigns" [Interviewee 2]

Perception of New Media Campaign: Interviewee stated that political leaders and parties understood the necessity of a new media campaign because of declining public interest from participation in traditional medium. So, they maintain Facebook profiles and update the Facebook timeline on a regular basis. They believe that Facebook is helping to close the gap between politicians and the general public. This is exemplified by the quote below:

"We don't prefer traditional media as it doesn't get enough attention from the public while new media is gaining the public's interest." [Interviewee 2]

Attitudes against Users Comments: Interviewee expressed that they usually don't respond and reply back to the comments. They believe that citizens frequently utilize these new public forums to express their feelings. Audiences may have different points of view, so the negative feedback should be ignored.

“Candidates should be very positive about audience feedback. They should not response the negative comment. It may discourage the audience and candidate.” [Interviewee 5]

Discussion

Table 1 of this study depicts the diverse categories of content that candidates have published on their Facebook pages, alongside the content disseminated by users from these pages throughout the election campaign. These content categories encompass photos, videos, Facebook Live sessions, news article link, and written text. In terms of content distribution by Facebook users, video content emerges as the most widely shared content category, accounting for 47.22% of the shares while photo content constitutes the most significant segment of candidates' posts, making up approximately 53% of the overall content posting. Overall, photos and videos are dominant in both content posting and user sharing, while written posts (text) have a smaller presence in comparison. Wittenberg et al. (2021) also stated that video is becoming a more prevalent means of political information. While it is commonly believed that video is significantly more persuasive than other communication forms like text, this notion has rarely been investigated in the political context. Through two extensive randomized experiments, they found that individuals are more inclined to believe that an event occurred when presented with information in video format compared to textual form. However, when it comes to persuasion, the advantage of video over text is notably less pronounced. Regarding Harun and Salam's (2018) study in Bangladesh context, they concentrated solely on exploring the various types of content posted by candidates on social media platforms. In contrast, our research delved into both perspectives, examining the different types of content posted by candidates and the content shared by users on candidates' pages (as shown in Table 1). This study explored the more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of political communication on Facebook during the election campaign in Bangladesh.

Table 2 of this study presents the data on Facebook reactions, revealing a variety of perspectives expressed by users. The most prevalent reaction, "Like," is provided by 81.33% of users, while the least common reaction is "Sad," with only 0.03% of users using it. Additionally, other Facebook reactions, such as Love (15.31%), Care (2.65%), Ha-Ha (0.45%), Wow (0.12%), and Angry (0.11%), were also observed. Jost et al. (2020) conducted a manual content analysis of political parties and their top candidates' posts on Facebook during the 2017 German federal election campaign. The researchers specifically focused on Like, Angry and Love reactions. The results of the analysis showed that negative portrayals of political actors were associated with a higher number of Angry Reactions. On the other hand, depictions of ordinary citizens were linked to more Love reactions.

Table 3 provides insights into the sentiment of users' comments on Facebook. Approximately 90% of the comments are positive, while negative comments are much less common, accounting for only 6% of the total. Surprisingly, out of 3755 comments, around 4% were irrelevant. In another study by Alvarez et al. (2020), which examined Facebook ads during the 2016 election, a strategic variation in the use of positive and negative sentiment was observed. Before the election, sentiment ratings declined, but they rose after the election. The majority of the ad texts were positive, followed by negative, neutral ads. Ads with positive sentiment received more impressions and clicks compared to neutral and negative ones.

The findings of this study (as presented in Table 4) revealed that the mayoral candidate utilized the Facebook platforms to disseminate field campaign activities, theme songs, press conferences, public speeches, and interactions with the public, all of which were presented through Facebook posts. Similarly, Macnamara and Kenning (2011) examined the prevalent use of Facebook by Australian federal politicians, who employed the platform to share speeches, political activities, policy agendas, and content related to election campaigns. The current study and the research conducted by Macnamara and Kenning (2011) revealed the similar findings, demonstrating that Facebook has become a significant communication tool for political candidates across different geographical and political contexts. The platform offers an effective means for politicians to engage with the public, promote their campaign messages, and create an online presence.

Conclusion

Facebook has emerged as a significant tool for political communication in Bangladesh. Specifically, the study aims to assist political candidates in customizing content according to user preferences. Furthermore, it offers direction to policymakers, government officials, and politicians in effectively leveraging social media throughout election campaigns. However, the study's focus is limited to a specific political party, which implies that other parties are

refraining from employing social media for political campaigns. To illuminate this phenomenon, exploring the viewpoint of a candidate from a major opposing party could provide valuable insight. This potential addition could introduce new dimensions for future study by scrutinizing the reasons underlying the absence of specific political groups on social media.

Data Availability Statement: The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in www.facebook.com/ Bangladesh Awami League, www.facebook.com/ Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy, www.facebook.com/ Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy Media Cell

Acknowledgement

We would like to express my gratitude to Narayanganj city mayor Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy for providing the necessary resources, facilities, and support to enable me to conduct this research. We also extend our sincerest gratitude to the editor and reviewers for their diligent review and the significant role they have played in refining and enriching our research. We would also like to acknowledge the 1st International Conference on Social Science Issues' chair, co-chairs, and international advisory panel members for supporting this research pleasantly with their valuable remarks.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Alvarez, G., Choi, J., & Strover, S. (2020). Good News, Bad News: A Sentiment Analysis of the 2016 Election Russian Facebook Ads. *International Journal of Communication*, 3027-3053. <https://doi.org/10.26153/TSW/9852>
- Al-Zaman, M. S. (2020). Digital Media and Political Communication of Bangladesh: A New Wave of Democratic and Pluralistic Politics? *Artha Journal of Social Sciences*, 19(2), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.12724/ajss.53.1>
- Arulchelvan, S. (2014). New media communication strategies for election campaigns: Experiences of Indian political parties. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 4(3), 124-142. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ojcm/2478>
- Chadwick, A. (2006). *Internet politics: States, citizens, and new communication technologies*. Oxford University Press.
- DataReportal. (2022, January 07). Digital 2022: Bangladesh. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-bangladesh>
- Gerodimos, R., & Justinussen, J. (2015). Obama's 2012 Facebook Campaign: Political Communication in the Age of the Like Button. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 12(2), 113-132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681.2014.982266>
- Gibson, R., & McAllister, I. (2015). Normalising or equalising party competition? Assessing the impact of the web on election campaigning. *Political Studies*, 63(3), 529-547. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12107>
- Gil de Zúñiga, H., Jung, N., & Valenzuela, S. (2012). Social media use for news and individuals' social capital, civic engagement and political participation. *Journal of computer-mediated communication*, 17(3), 319-336. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2012.01574.x>
- Green, J., & Hobolt, S. B. (2008). Owning the issue agenda: Party strategies and vote choices in British elections. *Electoral Studies*, 27(3), 460-476. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2008.02.003>
- Harun, A., & Salam, M. A. (2018). Facebook as Political Campaign Tool: A Study on Election 2018 in Bangladesh. *Jagannath University Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(1), 71-84.
- Hong, S., & Nadler, D. (2011). Does the early bird move the polls? The use of the social media tool "Twitter" by U.S. politicians and its impact on public opinion. *Proceedings of the 12th Annual International Digital Government Research Conference: Digital Government Innovation in Challenging Times*, 182-186. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2037556.2037583>
- Ivy wins with 1,59,097 votes. (2022, January 16). *The Daily Star*. <https://www.thedailystar.net/special-events/ncc-polls-2022/news/narayanganj-city-polls-ivy-leading-14-centres-2940416>

- Jost, P., Maurer, M., & Hassler, J. (2020). Populism Fuels Love and Anger: The Impact of Message Features on Users' Reactions on Facebook. *International Journal of Communication*, 14(2020), 2081–2102. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/13400/3043>
- Kalsnes, B., & Larsson, A. O. (2018). Understanding News Sharing Across Social Media: Detailing distribution on Facebook and Twitter. *Journalism Studies*, 19(11), 1669–1688. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1297686>
- Lerman, K., & Ghosh, R. (2010). Information contagion: An empirical study of the spread of news on digg and twitter social networks. *Fourth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1003.2664>
- Lievrouw, L. A., & Livingstone, S. M. (2006). *Handbook of new media: Social shaping and social consequences of ICTs* (Student ed). SAGE.
- Macnamara, J., & Kenning, G. (2011). E-Electioneering 2010: Trends in Social Media Use in Australian Political Communication. *Media International Australia*, 139(1), 7–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X1113900104>
- Narasimhamurthy, N. (2014). Use and rise of social media as an election campaign medium in India. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(8), 202-209. [http://www.ijims.com/use and rise of social media as an election campaign medium in India](http://www.ijims.com/use%20and%20rise%20of%20social%20media%20as%20an%20election%20campaign%20medium%20in%20India)
- Olabamiji, O. M. (2014). Use and misuse of the new media for political communication in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *Developing Country Studies*, 4(4), 92-102. <https://iiste.org/Journals/index.php/DCS/article/view/10363>
- Pudaruth, S., Moheeputh, S., Permessur, N., & Chamroo, A. (2018). Sentiment Analysis from Facebook Comments using Automatic Coding in NVivo 11. *ADCAIJ: Advances in Distributed Computing and Artificial Intelligence Journal*, 7(1), 41–48. <https://doi.org/10.14201/ADCAIJ2018714148>
- Rossini, P., Hemsley, J., Tanupabrunsun, S., Zhang, F., & Stromer-Galley, J. (2018). Social media, opinion polls, and the use of persuasive messages during the 2016 US election primaries. *Social Media+ Society*, 4(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051187847>
- Sharma, S. (2015). Nirbachone Samayik Yogayog Madhyom: Bastobota o Somvabona [Social Media in Election: Reality and Prospects]. *The Chittagong University Journal of Social Sciences*, 33(1), 255-276.
- Shoosmith, B. P., & Mahmud, S. (2013). *From few to many voices: An overview of Bangladesh's media*. In Shoosmith, B., & Genilo, J. W. (Eds.), *Bangladesh's Changing Mediascape: From State Control to Market Forces* (1st ed.), Intellect Books. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv36xvt74>
- StatCounter. (2023, July 01). Social Media Stats Bangladesh. (. <https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/bangladesh>
- Statista. (2022, January 12). Leading countries based on Facebook audience size. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/268136/top-15-countries-based-on-number-of-facebook-users/>
- Stieglitz, S., Brockmann, T., & Xuan, L. D. (2012). Usage of social media for political communication. *PACIS 2012 Proceedings*. <http://aisel.aisnet.org/pacis2012/22>
- Stromer-Galley, J. (2019). *Presidential campaigning in the internet age*. Oxford University Press.
- Taimur loses post in BNP 'for participating in city polls. (2022, May 04). *Financial Express*. <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/national/politics/taimur-loses-post-in-bnp-for-participating-in-city-polls-1641207761>
- Wattal, S., Schuff, D., Mandviwalla, M., & Williams, C. B. (2010). Web 2.0 and politics: The 2008 US presidential election and an e-politics research agenda. *MIS Quarterly*, 34(4), 669-688. <https://misq.umn.edu/web-2-0-and-politics-the-2008-u-s-presidential-election-and-an-e-politics-research-agenda.html>
- Wittenberg, C., Tappin, B. M., Berinsky, A. J., & Rand, D. G. (2021). The (minimal) persuasive advantage of political video over text. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118(47), e2114388118. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2114388118>
- Yang, H. C., & DeHart, J. L. (2016). Social media use and online political participation among college students during the US election 2012. *Social Media+ Society*, 2(1), 2056305115623802. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115623802>