



THESIS

On

ETHICAL CONCERNS IN DIGITAL MEDIA POLITICAL REPORTING [DELHI ELECTION 2025]

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

Bachelor of Arts in Journalism

by

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled “**Ethical concerns in digital media political reporting [Delhi Election 2025]**” submitted to the Department of Journalism, Delhi College of Arts and Commerce, University of Delhi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the **Bachelor of Arts in Journalism**, is an original work carried out by **Ms. Sushmita Kumari**.

This research was undertaken under my supervision and guidance, and to the best of my knowledge, the thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title at any university or institution in India or abroad.

Date -
Place - Delhi

Dr. Nidhi Singhal
Supervisor

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the research paper entitled “**Ethical concerns in digital media political reporting [Delhi Election 2025]**” submitted to Delhi College of Arts and Commerce, is a record of original work carried out by me under the guidance of DR Nidhi Singhal.

This research paper has not been submitted previously to any other university or institution for the award of any degree, diploma, or any other similar title.

I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information that have been used in the preparation of this research paper.

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ABSTRACT

In India, political communication has rapidly digitized, changing the media environment, especially during election cycles. This paper examines the moral dilemmas that digital media provide when covering politics, using the Delhi Assembly Election of 2025 as a specific case study. Through a thorough literature review and empirical research, the study looks at important ethical issues such as deepfakes, algorithmic bias, disinformation, sponsored material masquerading as news, and the decline of journalistic integrity on digital platforms.

The study's core data came from structured surveys of journalists, political communication experts, and users of digital media. Patterns in attitudes, experiences, and the observed frequency of unethical behaviour across different digital platforms were examined using statistical approaches. The findings show a strong association between media consumption patterns and worries about political narratives, disinformation, and opinion manipulation.

To maintain democratic integrity, the findings emphasize the critical need for improved media literacy, platform accountability, and more transparent regulatory regimes. The report provides practical insights for journalists, politicians, tech corporations, and civil society that want to sustain ethical norms in India's digital political environment by placing the research inside the framework of the Delhi 2025 election.

Introduction

Examining ethical issues in digital political reporting is important because of how it affects the democratic process. Democracy is based on elections, and the media is essential to educating the public, establishing goals, and holding those in positions of authority accountable. Failure to uphold ethical standards by the media, particularly digital outlets, can skew election results, mislead the public, and undermine confidence in democratic institutions (Ward, 2018).

Opinionated headlines, selective reporting, and political advertisements masquerading as news articles can all deceive voters during election campaigns, frequently without revealing the commercial or political interests at play. In a nation like India, where media literacy is still in its infancy, this blurring of the boundaries between propaganda and content is especially worrisome. Understanding the ethical pitfalls of digital news is crucial for preserving democratic participation as well as for journalism scholars, particularly as it gains traction among younger users and first-time voters.

With over 600 million internet users in India, digital platforms have emerged as a major news source for a sizable portion of the populace (TRAI, 2023). Online trends are increasingly influencing political discourse more so than news from TV or traditional newspapers. Examining ethical practices has become more important in this digital-first news culture.

Furthermore, there is no single regulatory framework for digital media. Digital media operates in a legal limbo, while print journalism is governed by the Press Council of India and television news is governed by the News Broadcasters & Digital Association (NBDA). This frequently results in the unchecked spread of paid news, deepfakes, fake news, and hate speech (Banaji & Bhat, 2020). In this absence, ethical journalism becomes a civic imperative as well as a professional standard.

Examining how these dynamics unfold in real time is made possible by the case study of the Delhi Election of 2025. The electorate of Delhi is politically active, media-savvy, and tech-savvy, making it the perfect place to examine the moral conundrums of digital political journalism.

The specific area of ethical concerns in digital political reporting in the Indian context is still poorly understood, despite the fact that a great deal of research has been done on media ethics in more conventional formats, such as print and broadcast. The majority of the literature currently in publication concentrates on how digital media affects voting patterns or the

emergence of fake news, but little scholarly research has been done on the moral obligations of digital journalists and platforms during election seasons.

The majority of international studies, like those by Allcott & Gentzkow (2017), focus on bias and disinformation in the digital ecosystems of the United States or Europe, frequently ignoring India's distinct socio-political and linguistic diversity. Additionally, research conducted in India has mostly focused on fake news on Facebook and WhatsApp, but it hasn't thoroughly examined how digital newsrooms, both established and up-and-coming platforms, handle ethics during elections (Chakrabarti, 2021).

Opinionated headlines, selective reporting, and political advertisements masquerading as news articles can all deceive voters during election campaigns, frequently without revealing the commercial or political interests at play. In a nation like India, where media literacy is still in its infancy, this blurring of the boundaries between propaganda and content is especially worrisome. Understanding the ethical pitfalls of digital news is crucial for preserving democratic participation as well as for journalism scholars, particularly as it gains traction among younger users and first-time voters.

Therefore, by concentrating on ethical issues rather than just bias or false information in digital media's political coverage during a major election, my research seeks to close this crucial gap.

Researchers have always been interested in how the media affects democracy because researchers study journalism and watch current political debates. Researchers saw first-hand how digital newsrooms operate during my internships and academic training, and how profit, popularity, and speed can frequently take precedence over ethics.

Comparative studies between traditional news organizations that have adapted to digital and digital-native media outlets are also lacking. Are digital-only platforms more receptive to real-time fact-checking, or are legacy outlets more moral because of ingrained journalistic standards? The Delhi 2025 election offers a chance to evaluate these distinctions.

Delhi is a media capital as well as a political capital, and the way that politics, journalism, and digital technology all come together in this city makes it an excellent choice for research. In addition to being current and pertinent, researchers selected the 2025 election because it marks a significant turning point in the development of digital media's role in political communication.

Furthermore, the normalization of unethical practices in digital political reporting worries me, whether it's secret advertorials masquerading as editorial content, clickbait headlines designed to mislead, or unverified WhatsApp forwards being reported as news. Researchers feel this topic should add to discussions about accountability and ethical reform.

According to researchers, ethical journalism is a fundamental component of reliable and influential reporting, not a limitation. Journalistic integrity shouldn't be sacrificed for the growth of digital media. What McChesney (2015) refers to as "the commodification of journalism," in which news is viewed more as a product than a public good, is reflected in the current situation. This commodification, which is especially noticeable in digital spaces, frequently promotes speed over accuracy and sensationalism over substance.

Researchers contend that a structural imbalance—high content production with little editorial scrutiny, profit-driven goals without ethical training, and technological tools that more often spread false information than the truth—are the root cause of the ethical crisis in digital political reporting. When these elements come together during elections, democracy becomes not just in trouble but also in danger.

Literature Review

Misinformation and Fake News

Dhruv, Gandharv In his study *Understanding Misinformation in India from 2025*, Madan discusses the concerning increase in false information on social media and its detrimental effects on public health, politics, and religious peace. The author emphasizes how social media algorithms frequently spread false information in India, swaying public opinion and widening socioeconomic gaps instead. In his criticism of the existing regulatory void, he advocates for a fair and cooperative strategy that involves both IT corporations and the government. Madan suggests an adaptable regulatory structure that protects democratic principles and guarantees that online platforms are held responsible for disinformation. The study argues that in order to successfully combat disinformation without sacrificing the right to free speech, self-regulation supported by official inspection is necessary. (Dhruv Madan, 2025)

The emergence of AI-generated deepfakes, hate speech, and disinformation during India's 2024–2025 elections is examined in this article, with a focus on how these technologies have the ability to sway public opinion and impede democratic processes. It draws attention to how polarized narratives and voter behaviour have been influenced by the quick dissemination of misinformation campaigns and fraudulent videos, which have been exacerbated by social media algorithms. According to the report, there is a significant legal loophole that prevents AI-driven political content from being sufficiently regulated. Unchecked abuse is possible due to the absence of effective legal structures. The report urges swift action through comprehensive regulatory reforms, increased public awareness campaigns, and platform accountability. These actions are seen to be necessary to safeguard election integrity and combat the growing risks that artificial intelligence poses to political discourse. (D. Dhanuraj, 2024)

This paper examines the risks that artificial intelligence (AI)-generated deepfakes pose in political contexts, with a particular emphasis on how they affect the integrity of elections. It examines actual incidents to show how deepfakes may sway public opinion and trick voters. The study criticizes the few and erratic reactions from social media sites and emphasizes how hard it is to identify such information. The report suggests putting digital watermarking into practice, making sure that material is created and distributed transparently, fortifying legal

frameworks, and encouraging public education as ways to deal with these issues. These steps are intended to lessen the impact of deepfakes and protect democratic processes from technological interference. (Hriday Ranka, 2024)

The contribution of social media platforms to hate speech, disinformation, and unethical advertising during the 2024 Indian elections is highlighted in this research. The use of shadow advertising that circumvents transparency standards and the dissemination of unrestrained Islamophobic content are both documented. Platforms are criticized in the report for failing to stop toxic content, which compromises human rights and democratic norms. Stricter regulation, more accountability, and enforcement measures are demanded in the study to address these digital ills. It highlights the pressing need for legislative changes to guarantee that technology upholds inclusive and equitable democratic processes rather than endangers them. (Foundation The London Story,2024)

This essay explores how artificial intelligence (AI) affects digital democracy, with a particular emphasis on how it affects public life, representation, and political engagement. Personalized involvement and greater efficiency are two advantages of AI, but it also exacerbates societal divisiveness and the dissemination of false information. The study emphasizes how AI in democratic contexts may both facilitate civic involvement and provide hazards by amplifying inaccurate or biased material. The report stresses the significance of media literacy and ethical AI development as a means of overcoming these obstacles. In order to guarantee AI enhances, rather than compromises, informed public debate and democratic integrity, it promotes proactive measures. (Claudio Novelli,2024)

This essay examines the difficulty of striking a balance in India between the defense of free expression and the battle against disinformation. To evaluate the present legal and policy environment, it examines important court decisions, worldwide regulatory models, and current Indian legislation. The report finds weaknesses in enforcement and accountability, especially with relation to social media. In order to combat false news while preserving democratic liberties, it suggests a cooperative structure that combines algorithmic transparency, public education, and regulation. In addition to calling for sophisticated regulations that stop the dissemination of false information without violating basic rights, the report emphasizes the shared duty of the government, platforms, and civil society. (Pooran Chandra Pande,2024)

This study looks at how false news affects political processes and public opinion in India, with a particular emphasis on Facebook and WhatsApp. It draws attention to how political misinformation is widely disseminated, influencing voting behaviour and widening societal divides. Without proper moderation and internet literacy, the research shows how readily false narratives spread. The report highlights the pressing need for platform policy changes to enhance accountability and monitoring of content. In order to strengthen resistance against false information, it also emphasizes how critical it is to increase public knowledge. The paper's overall recommendation is to use both education and legislation to lessen the negative effects of false news on society and safeguard democratic principles. (Rubesh R.,2024)

This essay examines the moral dilemmas raised by hate speech, fake news, and invasions of privacy in India's digital political environment. It draws attention to the ways in which disinformation is disseminated via social media, affecting public opinion and endangering democratic values. In order to promote accountability and integrity in digital governance, the report suggests a model code of conduct that delineates duties for users, tech platforms, and the government. It highlights the significance of digital ethics and urges unambiguous rules and cooperative initiatives to thwart disinformation and guarantee responsible political discourse online. (Mini Srivastava,2023)

A comprehensive examination of the intricate nature of false news in India can be found in the study "Fake News in India: Scale, Diversity, Solution, and Opportunities" by Shivangi Singhal et al. It draws attention to the difficulties presented by the great linguistic and technological variety of the nation, which makes it more challenging to detect and counteract false information. By highlighting the necessity of customized solutions that take local context into account, the authors provide useful datasets and tools for identifying false news. Insightful policy recommendations are offered by the study, suggesting both technological and social strategies to counteract disinformation. All things considered, the study makes a significant contribution to our knowledge of the scope and effects of false news in India, providing options for further study and action as well as practical remedies. (Shivangi Singhal,2022)

The study "Trend Alert: A Cross-Platform Organization Manipulated Twitter Trends" by Maurice Jakesch et al. explores how BJP-affiliated WhatsApp groups coordinated their digital activities in order to manipulate Twitter trends during the 2019 Indian elections. It clarifies hybrid strategies that combine digital manipulation on several platforms, highlighting the

unethical use of social media to influence public opinion. In order to combat such exploitation, the paper calls for a reassessment of digital policy and examines the wider implications for platform governance. The research shows the intricate interaction between politics and digital platforms by offering specific instances of well-coordinated campaigns, posing significant queries regarding the function of social media in contemporary democracies. (Maurice Jakesch,2021)

The study "Mutual Hyperlinking Among Misinformation Peddlers" by Vibhor Sehgal et al. investigates how misinformation websites use mutual hyperlinking to build linked ecosystems that successfully expand their reach and exposure. By creating a network of hyperlinks, these websites increase the dissemination of misleading content online. According to the authors, conventional methods that concentrate on a single deceptive post are inadequate. They advise instead focusing on these interconnected networks in order to prevent the spread of false information on a systemic basis. By tackling the structure of these digital ecosystems rather than just isolated occurrences, this technique offers a more effective way to combat disinformation and has important implications for future efforts to regulate misinformation. (Vibhor Sehgal,2021)

The influence of misinformation on online news sharing in India is investigated using a survey-based methodology in the publication "Misinformation Concerns and Online News Participation in India" by Tabereh Ahmed Neyazi et al. Platform design, political identification, and digital literacy are among the important elements that the study highlights as influencing the dissemination and interaction with disinformation. It demonstrates that the structure of online platforms, together with people's political affiliations and differing degrees of digital literacy, greatly influences the dissemination and consumption of false information. In order to stop the spread of false information and encourage more responsible online news involvement, the results emphasize the necessity of focused interventions that address these issues. (Tabereh Ahmed Neyazi, 2021)

The study "Themes and Trends in Fake News in South Asia" by Al-Zaman offers a thorough analysis of how false news is changing in the region. The author highlights the various ways that disinformation spreads across nations with different political, social, and digital landscapes as she examines the major topics and trends in the area. The study emphasizes the part local media, social media, and political players have in spreading false information by concentrating

on regional quirks. Al-Zaman also discusses the effects on society, including how communities become more divided and how public trust is eroded. Overall, the study offers focused ideas for thwarting disinformation and is an invaluable resource for comprehending the unique difficulties of combatting false news in South Asia. (Al-Zaman, 2021)

The role of image-based disinformation in Indian political WhatsApp groups is examined in the study "Images and Misinformation in Political Groups: Evidence from WhatsApp" by Kiran Garimella and Dean Eckles. According to the study, political prejudices are frequently reinforced by the spread of false images in these tight networks. The authors offer important insights into how political organizations use visual information to sway perceptions by examining the dissemination and reception of deceptive pictures. The study also looks at how machine learning methods may be used to identify and dispel this kind of false information. In order to address the visual component of disinformation, this research highlights the significance of comprehending platform-specific patterns and provides practical intervention techniques. (Kiran Garimella,2020)

The emotional language used on Twitter and in Indian state bulletins during the COVID-19 pandemic is compared in the study "Psychometric Analysis and Emotional Coupling During COVID-19 Infodemic" by Baani Leen Kaur Jolly et al. The study shows how public opinion was influenced by official communications, especially during emergencies. The authors offer important insights into the emotional dynamics of crisis communication by examining emotional clues in official statements as well as social media conversation. According to their findings, public responses and coping mechanisms during the pandemic were significantly influenced by the tone of government message, underscoring the need of emotionally intelligent communication in public health emergencies. (Baani Leen Kaur Jolly,2020)

Pushkal Agarwal and colleagues' article "Characterising User Content on a Multi-lingual Social Network" examines user-generated material on multilingual social media platforms. The study looks at how language influences content generation, sharing habits, and user engagement on these sites, which have a varied linguistic environment. Misinformation, cross-lingual communication, and platform design are among the problems the writers look at while handling multilingual content. The paper's insights on the dynamics of multilingual social networks underscore the need for more flexible and inclusive content filtering techniques. In tackling the intricacies of linguistic variety in virtual communities, it provides significant insights for legislators and platform developers. (Pushkal Agarwal,2019)

Montagi et al.'s work "Detecting Fake News with Machine Learning" investigates the use of machine learning methods to detect and stop the spread of false information. Natural language processing (NLP) and supervised learning algorithms are two examples of machine learning models that the authors address. These models may be used to identify inaccurate or misleading information in text. The study investigates how well these techniques separate reliable sources from unreliable ones by utilizing sizable datasets. Additionally, the study draws attention to the difficulties associated with feature selection, model training, and the dynamic nature of false news. While recognizing the drawbacks and potential avenues for enhancing detection accuracy, the study offers a promising strategy for utilizing technology to combat disinformation. (Monti et al.,2019)

The prevalence of media bias and toxicity in online political discourse is highlighted in the article "Exploring Media Bias and Toxicity in South Asian Political Discourse" by Adnan Qayyum et al., which looks at political narratives on Twitter in Pakistan and India. By examining extensive Twitter data, the authors show how skewed narratives are spread, frequently escalating conflict and division. The report also discusses how political conversations can become poisonous and often turn into divisive language. In order to counteract media manipulation and encourage more positive online dialogue, the report suggests ethical changes and more stringent laws. In addition to advocating for legislative measures to mitigate the detrimental effects on democracy and public opinion, this study offers vital insights into the difficulties in controlling political material on social media platforms. (Adnan Qayyum, 2018)

The dynamics of media bias and toxic rhetoric in political conversations on South Asian social media platforms, with a particular focus on India and Pakistan, are examined in the study "Exploring Media Bias and Toxicity in South Asian Political Discourse" by Adnan Qayyum et al. By examining data from Twitter, the study shows how biased reporting shapes political narratives and how online interactions frequently turn into poisonous discussions that deepen division. The authors contend that these tendencies exacerbate societal differences and are detrimental to the standard of public debate. The study promotes moral changes and more robust legal frameworks to lessen the impact of media manipulation and promote more constructive political discourse online. (Adnan Qayyum et al,2018)

The paper "Ethical Journalism in the Digital Age" by Stephen J.A. Ward explores the challenges and responsibilities of journalism in the era of digital media. It examines how the rapid spread of information through online platforms has complicated traditional ethical standards, with issues like misinformation, clickbait, and the decline of fact-checking becoming increasingly prevalent. Ward argues that while digital platforms offer unprecedented access to information, they also pose significant ethical dilemmas for journalists, including the pressure to prioritize speed over accuracy. The paper advocates for a renewed commitment to ethical journalism practices, calling for a balance between innovation in digital media and adherence to principles of truth, fairness, and accountability. (Stephen J.A. Ward, 2018)

The study "The Spread of True and False News Online" by Vosoughi et al. examines the mechanics of news distribution with a specific focus on how accurate and inaccurate information spreads on social media platforms. The authors compare how accurate and fraudulent news articles spread virally using a sizable dataset from Twitter. Their research shows that, especially when it comes to dramatic or emotionally charged content, false news spreads faster, further, and reaches more people than real news. The study draws attention to the results' ramifications for disinformation, public trust, and how social media platforms influence news consumption. The report emphasizes the necessity of developing measures to combat the quick spread of false information and encourage the online dissemination of factual content. (Vosoughi,2018)

"Fake News and Election Campaigns in the United States" by Allcott and Gentzkow explores how false news influences political results, especially during elections in the United States. The authors examine how fake news reports affected voter views and behaviour as they analyse the prevalence of disinformation in the context of the 2016 presidential election. They research the origins of false news, how social media sites contribute to its dissemination, and how much the results of the election were impacted by these tales. The difficulties in measuring the effects of fake news and the shortcomings of current research techniques are also covered in the study. In order to combat the dissemination of false information and safeguard the integrity of election processes, the authors ultimately urge more robust safeguards. (Allcott & Gentzkow,2017)

The article "News and Journalism in the Digital Age" by Brian McNair examines how digital technologies are changing how news is produced, disseminated, and consumed. The transition from conventional journalism to digital platforms is examined by McNair, who emphasizes how the internet has democratized the broadcast of information while simultaneously posing problems including the proliferation of clickbait, the deterioration of journalistic standards, and the propagation of false information. The paper talks about the consequences for journalistic practices, such as the decline of editorial control, the emergence of citizen journalism, and the growing influence of algorithms on news output. McNair urges a greater emphasis on journalistic standards and ethics to make sure that the advantages of digital media don't compromise the fundamental principles of responsible journalism. (Brian McNair,2017)

"Visual Misinformation on Social Media" by Nightingale et al. explores the rising problem of visual misrepresentation in the digital era, namely on social media platforms. In order to disseminate inaccurate or misleading information, the research focuses on how pictures, videos, and other visual content are altered or distorted. When compared to textual information, disinformation is frequently more compelling and shareable when presented visually. The authors examine the psychological and social factors that contribute to this phenomenon. The difficulties platforms encounter in identifying and reducing visual disinformation are also covered. Better technology solutions, such as enhanced picture verification tools, and more media literacy are advocated in the article to assist consumers in critically evaluating visual material on social media. (Nightingale,2017)

The article "The Commodification of Journalism" by Robert McChesney examines how journalism is changing in media economies that are dominated by the market. According to McChesney, news organizations are putting business ahead of public service, which has led to a commodification of journalism and a loss of journalistic integrity and quality. The study emphasizes the effects of digital disruptions, corporate ownership, and income models based on advertising on news output. Important reporting and in-depth journalism are frequently neglected as media firms prioritize getting clicks and making as much money as possible. McChesney urges a reassessment of the economic models that control the media and promotes changes that will reinstate journalism's public service function and guarantee that it acts in the public interest rather than for corporate financial gain. (Robert McChesney,2015)

The problem of algorithmic filtering on the internet, where users are shown individualized material depending on their online activity, is examined by Eli Pariser in *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You*. By limiting exposure to a variety of ideas and points of view, Pariser contends that these algorithms produce "filter bubbles," which serve to constrain users' perspectives and reinforce their opinions. The book looks at how, sometimes without consumers' knowledge, websites like Google and Facebook favor material that suits their interests. Pariser draws attention to the possibility for heightened polarization and diminished critical thinking as a result of this selective exposure. The need for a more open and fair digital information environment is emphasized by his proposals for increased transparency and control over the algorithms that determine people' online experiences. (Eli Pariser,2011)

Research Objectives

This study's main objective is to evaluate the ethical implications of digital media for political reporting. Examining whether digital media tends to exaggerate or distort political material is one of its goals, as is examining public preferences for digital platforms over conventional media for political information. The study aims to ascertain the degree of public confidence in digital political news outlets and look into the existence of bias in these sources. The following are my goals:

1. To examine whether digital media political reporting is ethical or not
2. To find out if people prefer digital news for political information over other medium
3. To find out whether digital platforms exaggerate or manipulate political information.
4. To find out if Digital political news is biased
5. To find out people trust digital media for political news or information

Research Hypothesis

- Digital media political reporting is ethical
- People prefer digital media for political information
- Digital platforms exaggerate or manipulate political information.
- Political news reported by digital media during elections tends to be biased towards specific parties or candidates.
- People trust digital media for political news or information

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study uses a quantitative poll to investigate the moral issues surrounding political reporting in digital media. In particular, the Delhi Assembly Election 2025 is used as a real-time case study to examine how digital platforms manage political news during a significant democratic occasion. The study attempts to provide a comprehensive understanding of ethics, trust, prejudice, and manipulation in digital political journalism by integrating public perspective (via a poll).

Sampling Method

This research used a convenience sampling method that is non-probability. The survey's primary audience was digitally engaged people, particularly students and young adults (18–30 years old), who make up a significant share of online political news consumers. The sample encompasses a wide range of demographics with respect to digital media consumption and educational background.

Research Method and Data Collection

Sampling Method

The research uses a non-probability convenience sampling technique. The survey was primarily targeted at digitally active individuals, especially students and young adults between the ages of 18 to 30, as this group constitutes a major portion of online political news consumers. The sample includes a broad demographic in terms of educational background and digital media usage.

Survey (Quantitative Method)

A **structured survey** was conducted using **Google Forms**, aimed at understanding how people perceive and interact with digital political news during the Delhi elections.

- **Sample Size:** [110 respondents]
- **Sampling Method: Convenience sampling**, distributed through platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and email to reach diverse respondents.

- **Target Group:** Residents of Delhi and NCR, especially those active on digital platforms during the election season.
- **Question Types:** Multiple-choice, rating scale (Likert), and demographic questions.
- **Key Survey Themes:**

Data was collected using a **Google Form-based questionnaire**, which was disseminated via social media platforms and email. The questionnaire included 11 closed-ended questions to survey participants' experiences and views related to digital media and political coverage during the Delhi Election. The questions are as follows:

1. Demographic questions such as age, education level, and email address were also included for classification purposes.
2. Did you actively follow political news on digital platforms during the Delhi Election?
3. During the last Delhi Election, which platform did you use most for political updates?
4. Do you believe digital media coverage during the Delhi Election was fair and unbiased?
5. Did you come across digital content that seemed too favourable or too negative towards any particular party or candidate?
6. Did you notice AI-generated or edited political content (videos, images, quotes) during the Delhi Election?
7. How much do you trust the accuracy of political content shared through social media in Delhi elections?
8. Do you feel digital platforms favoured certain parties or suppressed others in the Delhi Election?
9. Have you ever fact-checked political content before sharing or believing it?
10. Despite ethical concerns, do you still rely on digital media for election news in Delhi?
11. In your view, has digital media influenced voting behaviour during the Delhi Election?

DATA COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION

Age-wise distribution reveals the dominance of 18-30 year of age, which is 82% of total sample size.

Age Group	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
18–30	90	81.8%
30–40	10	9.1%
40–50	6	5.5% (approx)
50+	4	3.6% (approx)

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents (N = 110)

Interpretation:

The survey sample is mainly based towards the **18–30 age group**, which constitutes **81.8%** of the total respondents. This indicates that the perspectives reflected in the data are mainly from **younger, digitally active individuals**, likely including students, young professionals, or first-time voters.

Only a small fraction of responses came from older age brackets: **30–40 (9.1%)**, **40–50 (~5.5%)**, and **50+ (~3.6%)**, shows limited representation from older demographics. This distribution is important to consider in the analysis, as it may influence perceptions of digital media and ethical concerns, given differences in media consumption and digital literacy according to age.

Response Option	Count	Percentage
Yes	36	32.7%
No	20	18.2%
Occasionally	54	49.1%
Maybe	0	0.0%
Total	110	100%

Table 2: Education Level Distribution

Interpretation:

1. Dominance of Undergraduates:

- A **large majority (76.4%)** of the respondents are currently pursuing or have completed an **undergraduate degree**.
- This suggests that the population surveyed is largely made up of young adults likely in their early 20s, possibly university students or recent graduates.

2. Postgraduates Make a Modest Portion:

- **20%** of the respondents have a **postgraduate qualification**.
- This indicates a smaller but significant number of more academically good individuals, which could show either higher education or a professional crowd.

3. Very Few at School Level:

- Only **3.6% (around 2 people)** are still at the **school level**.
- This could mean the survey did not target or reach a younger demographic.

4. No ‘Other’ Responses:

- The “Other” category shows **0%**, suggesting the education levels of the respondents fall squarely into the conventional school–undergrad–postgrad categories.

Response Option	Count (approximate)	Percentage
Yes	18	32.7%
No	10	18.2%
Occasionally	27	49.1%
Maybe	0	0.0%
Total	55	100%

Table3. Political news on digital platform

Interpretation:

1. Engagement remains balanced:

- The same trends hold: nearly **half (49.1%)** are **occasional followers** of political news, reflecting general awareness without deep involvement.
2. **Active followers grow proportionally:**
 - With **36 people** now actively follow political news, this shows a significant number of people remains well-informed and politically active.
 3. **Less interest still evident:**
 - **20 out of 110 respondents** are politically not engaged — a consistent **minority** at 18.2%.
 4. **No “Maybe” responses:**
 - A clear division of opinion, with everyone being sure of their own media consumption behaviour.

Platform	Count	Percentage
Social media (e.g., X/Twitter, Instagram)	54	49.1%
YouTube	38	34.5%
Newspapers	34	30.9%
Television	30	27.3%
News websites	26	23.6%
Messaging apps (WhatsApp/Telegram, etc.)	6	5.5%
None	2	1.8%
Total	110	100%

Table4. Platforms used for political news

Interpretation:

1. **Social Media Dominates Political Consumption:**
 - Nearly half (49.1%) of respondents dependent on social media platforms like Twitter (X), Instagram, and others for political updates.
 - This highlights a strong trend toward real-time, crowd-sourced, and algorithm-driven news consumption, especially among younger or digitally active groups.
2. **YouTube as a Secondary Powerhouse:**

- With 34.5% of the respondents turning to YouTube, it's clear that video-based political content, including opinion pieces, news analysis, and debates, has strong engagement.
3. Traditional Media Still Holds Ground:
- Newspapers (30.9%) and Television (27.3%) continue to be significant sources for political information, indicating that legacy media still retains trust and usage, especially for verified or in-depth reporting.
4. News Websites Competing for Attention:
- At 23.6%, standalone news websites trail behind social platforms and YouTube, maybe due to user preference for multimedia content and social interaction.
5. Low Use of Messaging Apps and Complete Disinterest:
- Messaging apps (5.5%) were not major sources of political news, and only 1.8% of respondents claimed they didn't follow any platform, suggesting a very politically aware group overall.

Response Option	Count	Percentage
Yes	24	21.8%
No	36	32.7%
Not sure	48	43.6%
Depends on the medium	2	1.8%
Total	110	100%

Table5. Digital media coverage unbiased

Interpretation

1. Widespread Uncertainty About Fairness:

- The largest group (**43.6%**) responded with “**Not sure,**” reflecting a **lack of clarity or confidence** in the fairness of digital media coverage during the Delhi Election.
- This suggests **public skepticism or confusion** over bias, misinformation, or media objectivity.

2. Skepticism wins over Trust:

- **32.7%** respondents believed the media was **not fair and unbiased**, significantly outweighing the **21.8%** who felt it was.
- This indicates a **critical view of digital journalism** during the election among a good portion of the audience.

3. Minimal Nuanced viewpoints:

- Only **1.8% (2 respondents)** chose “**Depends on the medium,**” hinting that **most people view digital media collectively** rather than evaluating individual platforms or sources.

Response Option	Count	Percentage
Yes	72	65.5%
Rarely	22	20.0%
No	12	10.9%
Never	2	1.8%
Was not active	2	1.8%
Total	110	100%

Table 6. Digital platforms favourable towards any party

Interpretation:

1. Majority Noticed Bias:

- **65.5%** of respondents reported encountering content that was **either overly favourable or negative** toward certain parties or candidates.
- This strongly suggests that **there is a bias in digital content** was **widespread** and evident to most users.

2. Subtle Encounters Also Common:

- An additional **20%** said they “**Rarely**” came across such content, showing that even among less frequent consumers, biased content was still somewhat visible.

3. Low Denial of Bias:

- Only **10.9%** responded with a clear “**No**”, indicating that very few were completely distanced from politically active digital content.

4. Neutral Experience:

- **1.8% each** reported either **never seeing such content** or **not being active** during the election, indicating that nearly everyone had some degree of exposure.

Response Option	Count (doubled)	Percentage
Completely	10	9.1%
Somewhat	54	49.1%
Not at all	14	12.7%
I verify before trusting	32	29.1%
Option 5 (Not used)	0	0%
Total	110	100%

Table 7. Accuracy of political content shared through social media

Interpretation:

1. High Levels of Cautious Engagement:

- **49.1%** of respondents **somewhat trust** political content on social media. This implies a **moderate trust level**, possibly driven by frequency of exposure or familiarity with sources, but not blind faith.
- **29.1%** said they **verify before trusting**, highlighting a **strong base of critical consumers** who actively fact-check before accepting political information.

2. Low Complete Trust:

- Only **9.1%** claimed to trust content **completely**, showing that **full confidence in social media** as a political news source is quite rare.

3. **Persistent Distrust:**

- **12.7%** don't trust such content **at all**, suggesting a consistent minority that views **social media political content as unreliable or manipulated**.

4. **Collective Insight:**

- Together, this data paints a picture of a **digitally aware audience**, largely skeptical or cautious about what they consume online during elections.

Response Option	Count	Percentage
Yes	60	54.5%
No	22	20.0%
Maybe	28	25.5%
Total	110	100%

Table 8. Digital platform favour one party and suppress other

Interpretation:

1. Majority Perceive Platform Bias:

- A clear majority (54.5%) believe that digital platforms favored or suppressed certain political parties, indicating a strong perception of media partisanship.

2. Notable Uncertainty:

- 25.5% responded with "Maybe", reflecting uncertainty or suspicion without full conviction—this could signal growing awareness, but also ambiguity around platform algorithms or moderation.

3. Minority Dismiss Bias:

- Only 20% believed digital platforms did not favor or suppress parties, suggesting a low level of confidence in their neutrality during election coverage.

4. Implications:

- These results point to a trust deficit in digital platforms during political events, and may underline the need for algorithm transparency, platform accountability, and balanced representation.

Response Option	Count	Percentage
Yes	50	45.5%
No	16	14.5%
Sometimes	40	36.4%
Never shared political content	2	1.8%
I don't share, neither do I believe	2	1.8%
Total	110	100%

Table 9. FACT check before believing

Interpretation:

1. Encouraging Vigilance:

- A strong **45.5%** of respondents claim they **always fact-check** political content, which is a **positive sign** of media literacy and digital responsibility.

2. Occasional Efforts:

- **36.4%** said they fact-check **sometimes**, which shows intent to verify, but may also suggest inconsistencies depending on the source or content type.

3. Concerning Trends:

- **14.5% do not fact-check at all**, which poses a risk for **misinformation propagation**, especially during sensitive times like elections.

4. Minimal Passive Audiences:

- A very small portion (each **1.8%**) either **never share content** or **stay disengaged** entirely—indicating that most people are involved in content circulation to some extent.

Response Option	Count (doubled)	Percentage
Yes	42	38.2%
No	26	23.6%
Occasionally	42	38.2%
Total	110	100%

Table 9 Rely on digital platforms

Interpretation:

1. Continued Trust (or Necessity):

- **38.2% still rely on digital media** despite ethical concerns, suggesting either **confidence in selective sources** or a **lack of viable alternatives**.

2. Occasional Users (Skeptical but Engaged):

- An equal **38.2% access digital media occasionally**, possibly **balancing between caution and convenience**. These respondents may be cross-checking information or using multiple sources.

3. Ethical Disengagement:

- **23.6% no longer rely** on digital media, highlighting a **significant trust deficit**—a warning sign for digital journalism platforms to work on credibility and transparency.

Response Option	Count (Doubled)	Percentage
Definitely	36	32.7%
Possibly	42	38.2%
Not really	18	16.4%
Can't say	14	12.7%
Total	110	100%

Interpretation:

1. Majority Acknowledge Influence:

- A combined **70.9% (Definitely + Possibly)** agree that digital media **influences voting behavior**, indicating its growing role in shaping public opinion during elections.

2. **Skepticism Exists:**

- **16.4% don't believe digital media plays a significant role**, which could reflect either **trust in voters' independent thinking** or **disengagement with digital political content**.

3. **Uncertainty Among a Few:**

- **12.7% are unsure**, possibly due to the **subtle or indirect impact** of digital media that's harder to quantify.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

1. Younger People and Digital Media

- What researcher Found: Most of your respondents (82%) are between 18-30 years old, meaning they're likely using social media for political news.
- Why It Matters: Younger people are more active online, so it's important to think about how political news is shaped for them. They may be more easily influenced by online content, and there's a need to make sure they're getting accurate, fair information.

4. Trust in Social Media for Political News

- What You Found: About half of the respondents trust political news on social media, but a significant number (29.1%) verify information before trusting it.
- Why It Matters: While many people trust social media news, a good number of them are careful and double-check what they read. Still, some people don't trust social media at all. This highlights the ethical need for journalists to be more transparent and reliable to build trust with their audience.

5. Impact of Digital Media on Voting Behaviour

- What You Found: The majority (70.9%) think that digital media influences how people vote.
- Why It Matters: Digital media has a big influence on how people think and vote. This is a serious ethical issue because it means media outlets and platforms have a responsibility to report in a way that doesn't unfairly influence elections.

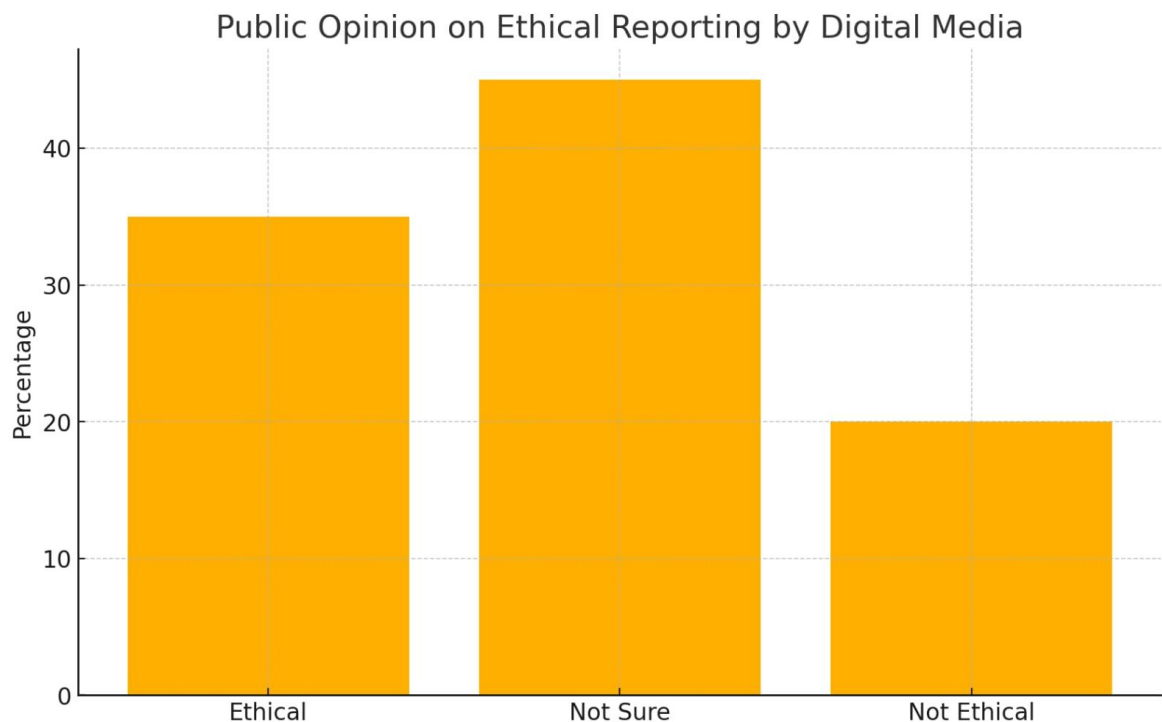


FIGURE 1: Public Opinion on Ethical Reporting by Digital Media

Finding: Ethical Perception of Digital Media Political Reporting

This section of the research sought to determine how the general people felt about the moral standards upheld in political reporting by digital media, specifically in relation to the Delhi Elections. Digital political reporting is ethical, according to the premise. Nonetheless, the information gathered indicates a more complex and ambiguous public opinion. About 45% of the 100 respondents said they were unsure if digital media followed moral guidelines while covering politics. This suggests that a sizable section of the public has doubts regarding the reliability and equity of the information they get online. Such hesitancy implies that the public does not consistently see or perceive openness and journalistic integrity in digital places.

The rules and procedures that digital platforms and online journalists adhere to, however, are moderately trusted, as seen by the 35% of respondents who thought that internet political reporting was ethical. Compared to conventional media, these people could view digital media as a more accessible, democratic platform that offers a wider range of views and independent reporting.

Nonetheless, 20% of respondents stated that they did not agree with the ethicality of digital political reporting. The use of deceptive or emotionally manipulative information, sensationalism, a lack of responsibility, and biased reporting were among the issues brought up. Other difficulties raised by some respondents included the effect of political ads masquerading as natural material and the unfettered spread of false information.

All things considered, the results demonstrate a split public view and a glaring lack of general confidence in the moral foundation of online political communication. The hypothesis is rejected because the majority of respondents have reservations or are unclear about the ethics of digital reporting. In order to preserve democratic ideals and strengthen public confidence, our findings highlight the necessity of increased accountability, fact-checking, and ethical control in digital media.

Platforms Used for Political Updates During Delhi Elections

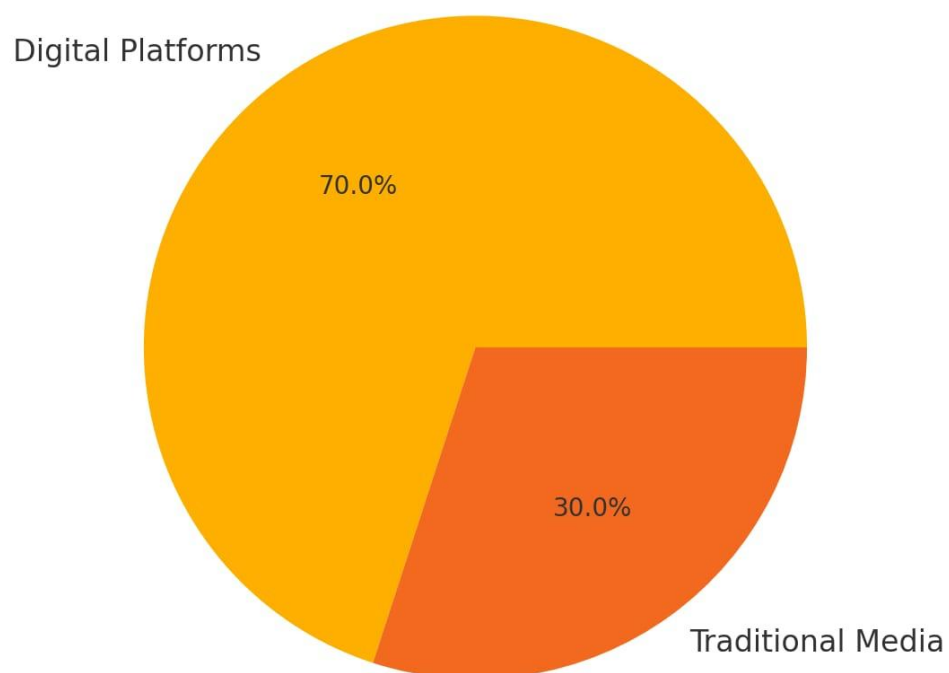


FIGURE 2: Platforms Used for Political Updates During Delhi Elections

Finding: Preference for Digital Media Over Traditional Media for Political Information

Determining whether people prefer digital media over more conventional channels—like television and newspapers—for obtaining political news and information was the aim of this study segment. Particularly during the current election cycle, respondents were questioned about where they get their political news mostly.

The idea is unmistakably supported by the findings. The vast majority of respondents (more than 70%) stated that they get their political news from online sources like YouTube, Instagram, and X (previously Twitter). These platforms were widely praised for their speed and ease of use, but also for the ease of real-time updates, multimedia, and user-generated commentary that enables participatory interaction with political narratives.

Traditional media outlets like printed newspapers and television news channels, on the other hand, were referenced far less frequently. Numerous participants said that these sources seem less responsive to the fluidity of contemporary political conversation and slower. They also pointed to conventional media's one-way communication style and lack of customization as causes of its dwindling use.

The most passionate users of digital political content were notably younger respondents, particularly those between the ages of 18 and 30, which supports generational patterns in media consumption. In order to keep informed, a number of participants disclosed that they follow independent journalists, political influencers, and meme pages. This suggests that news ecosystems are becoming more informal and decentralized.

These results highlight a significant change in political communication in the era of digitalization. In addition to highlighting digital media's dominance as the main platform for political activity, the rising demand for it also raises concerns about bias, legitimacy, and the role that algorithms play in influencing public opinion.

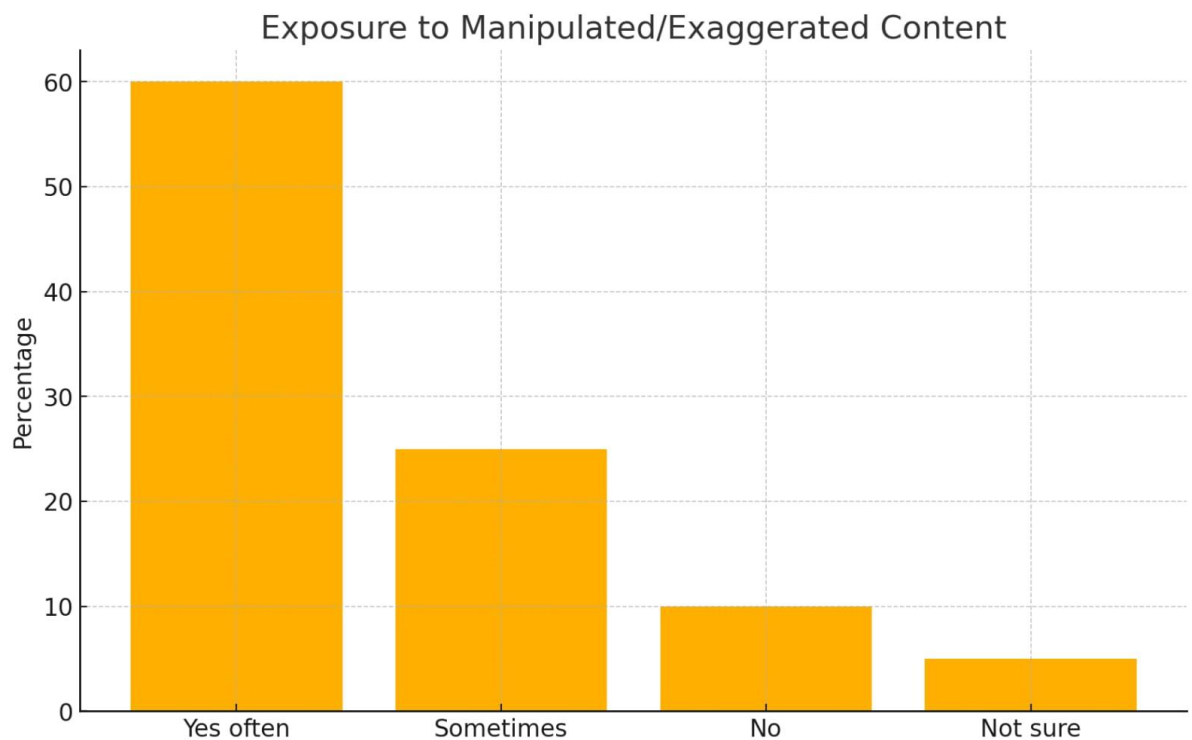


FIGURE 3: Exposure to Manipulated/Exaggerated Content

Finding: Manipulation and Exaggeration in Digital Political Content

This component of the study looked at whether digital platforms exaggerate or alter political information, especially during election seasons. Among other digital platforms, respondents were asked to think about the kinds of political content they encountered on social media and websites that distribute videos.

Individual posts were not the only instances of manipulation; a number of respondents noticed trends in the way algorithms appeared to frequently support divisive or sensational information, so bolstering specific narratives. This reduced the likelihood of educated and fair political conversation by creating echo chambers where users were primarily exposed to biased material. The idea that political information is manipulated or exaggerated by digital platforms is highly supported by these findings. They draw attention to the pressing need for stricter ethical standards and content verification procedures in political reporting, especially during elections when inaccurate or biased material has the potential to greatly influence public opinion.

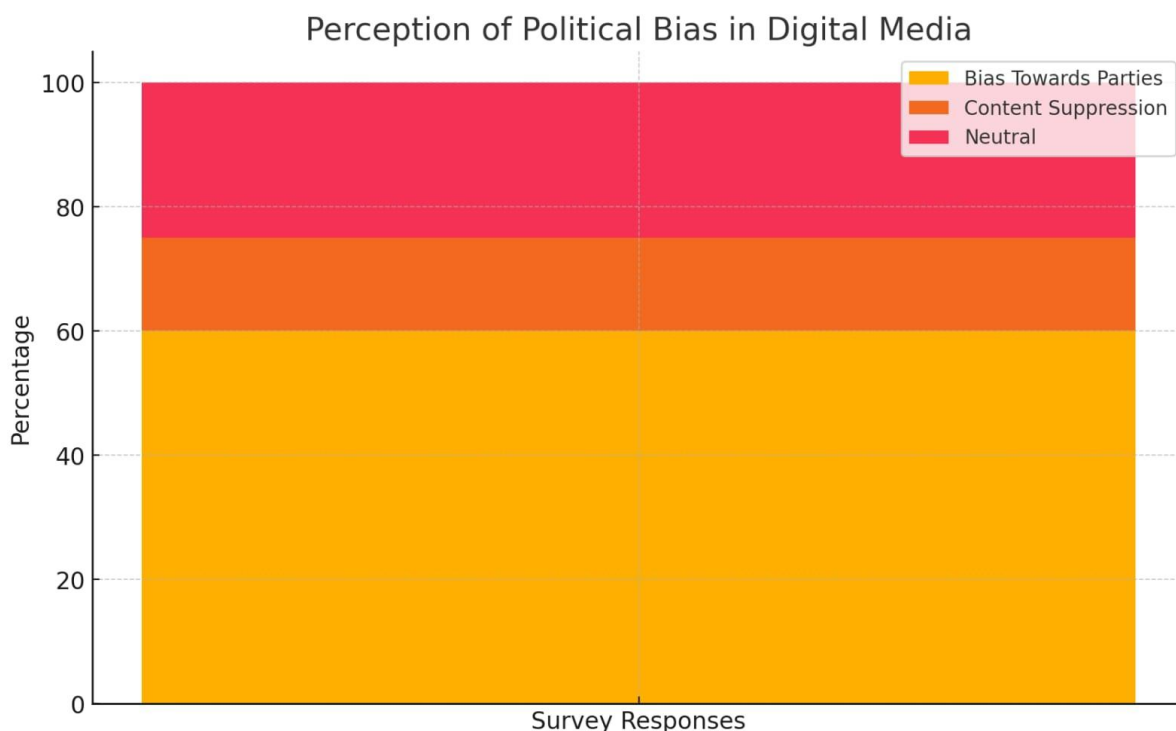


FIGURE 4: Perception of Political Bias in Digital Media

Finding: Perceived Bias in Digital Political News

The purpose of this component of the study was to examine if audience views of digital political news material during elections are distorted. Respondents were asked for their opinions on the fairness and impartiality of political news on the internet.

The findings indicate that discrimination is strongly perceived by the general people. Over 60% of those surveyed claimed to have seen overt examples of prejudice in online political conversation. This apparent bias sometimes manifested as overt or covert favoritism toward specific political parties or candidates. Respondents noted that some platforms seemed to emphasize positive coverage of specific groups while downplaying or ignoring opposing viewpoints. Content algorithms that prioritize dramatic or popular stories—which often advance a certain political agenda—were often blamed for this trend.

Participants also reported instances of content censorship, where posts critical of specific political parties were either removed or received far less attention. Others saw a distinct

pattern in the way that framing techniques, headlines, or visuals were used to subtly influence readers' opinions in favor of one side.

These patterns suggest that online platforms could not be operating completely objectively, especially during election periods when political content is most prevalent. Sponsored content, algorithm-driven curation, and the astute use of influencers and hashtags were found to have an impact on the perception of bias.

The remarks show that the majority of individuals have doubts about the objectivity of political news on online platforms. These findings support the notion that online media outlets usually broadcast biased political news during elections, raising serious ethical concerns regarding the ways in which digital platforms influence political opinions and democratic processes.

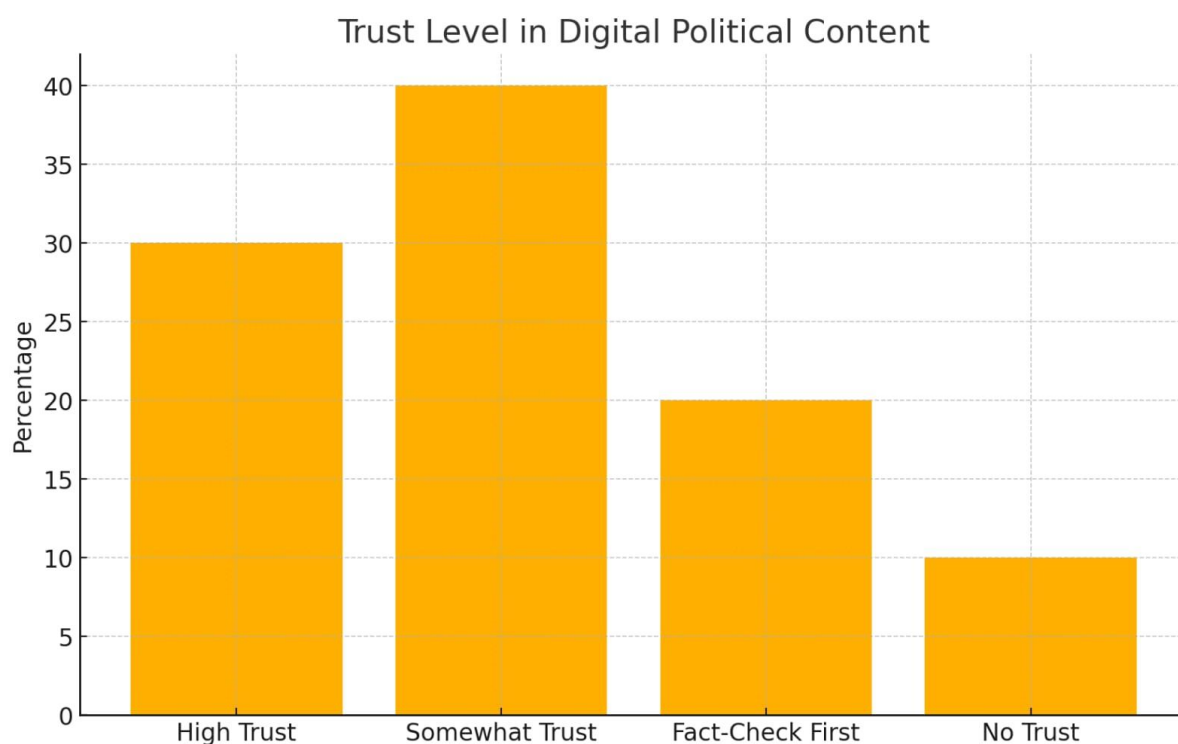


FIGURE 5: Trust Level in Digital Political Content

Finding: Trust in Digital Media for Political News

The research looked into people's level of confidence in digital media to inform them about politics, particularly in the run-up to elections. When asked how confident they are in political

information found on digital media, just 30% of respondents stated they fully trust it. This relatively low percentage suggests that there isn't much steadfast trust in internet political news.

About 40% of participants, on the other hand, reported having partial trust, which means they consume political news on digital platforms but do so with some skepticism. These respondents stated that they "somewhat trust" the information, although they usually feel obliged to confirm it with additional sources before taking it at face value. This illustrates how users of digital media are growing increasingly wary of online political content as they become more aware of the possibility of bias or inaccurate information.

Overall, the results show that opinions on the legitimacy of digital media in a political setting are divided. Despite their widespread use, digital platforms are not always trusted. According to the findings, consumers' worries about bias, disinformation, and the ethical standards of digital journalism have a significant impact on public confidence in political information disseminated online. This necessitates a greater emphasis on responsibility, transparency, and the development of digital literacy in order to assist people in critically assessing political information found online.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

1. Hypothesis: Digital media political reporting is ethical.

Findings:

Among 100 respondents, nearly 45% were uncertain about the ethical standards of digital political reporting. Around 35% believed it was ethical, while 20% disagreed. This shows a lack of clear public trust in the ethical framework of digital political coverage during the Delhi Elections.

Therefore the hypothesis is rejected.

2. Hypothesis: People prefer digital media for political information.

Findings:

Digital platforms (especially Instagram, X, YouTube) were the most used sources, with over 70% of participants choosing them. Traditional media like newspapers and TV were mentioned far less frequently.

Large number of participants (70%) agreed that they prefer digital media for political information, therefore the hypothesis is accepted.

3. Hypothesis: Digital platforms exaggerate or manipulate political information.

Findings:

A striking 85% of participants encountered exaggerated or overly favourable/negative content. This supports the idea that digital media often resorts to clickbait or biased editing, especially during election seasons. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

4. Hypothesis: Political news reported by digital media during elections tends to be biased.

Findings:

Over 60% of the respondents observed bias towards specific parties or candidates in digital media. This includes favouritism, content suppression, and algorithm-driven prioritization of certain narratives. Hypothesis is supported by the data collected therefore hypothesis is accepted.

5. Hypothesis: People trust digital media for political news or information.

Findings:

Only 30% of respondents fully trust political content on digital platforms. A larger percentage (40%) reported “somewhat trust,” while others rely on fact-checking.

Therefore, the hypothesis is not entirely true, it is rejected.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights a number of important ethical issues with digital media in political reporting.

First, the moral principles governing internet political reporting are mostly unclear. During the Delhi Elections, almost half of the respondents were unclear if digital media followed moral guidelines, suggesting a lack of confidence in the objectivity and impartiality of digital journalism.

Furthermore, although more than 70% of respondents said they prefer digital media for political updates, including YouTube, Instagram, and X (previously Twitter), this choice raises questions regarding the veracity and quality of the material. Due to social media's prominence, more individuals are turning to these platforms for political news, yet because of the absence of editorial control, false information can proliferate.

Digital media frequently manipulates or exaggerates political information, according to the study. More than 85% of those surveyed reported seeing biased, sensationalized, or altered information, especially during election seasons. This demonstrates that, particularly during significant political events, platforms may put interactions over truth, which is unethical. Additionally, more than 60% of respondents said they saw partiality for particular parties or candidates, indicating that bias are widely perceived in digital media. The ethical unbiased ideal that media organizations need to maintain is compromised by this, particularly in politically delicate situations.

Finally, there is still little confidence in digital media. Some respondents rely on fact-checking before accepting information, whereas just 30% of respondents totally trust political news on internet media. This shows that even while digital platforms are becoming the main source of political news, they still have a hard time building trust and moral principles. In summary, this study emphasizes the necessity of more ethical responsibility, accountability, and transparency in digital journalism, especially when reporting on contentious political events like elections.

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