



The Role of Twitter in Mobilizing Voter Turnout During Local Elections

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to conduct an investigation about how Twitter affected the mobilization of voters to vote when it comes to the local elections. Using a mixed-methods design we were able to provide both a quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative research was conducted through the analysis of the content of 3000 tweets located related to the election and the survey of 500 participants which aims to measure the use of Twitter as an information source in politics and the impact on the voting intentions. The interviews and the case study of the mayoral election in a large city in Indonesia were conducted among the politicians, the campaigns, and the voters who participated in the qualitative analysis complemented by the in-depth interviews. According to the results provided by the content analysis, the influencer endorsements had the highest engagement rates, as they were not as numerous but still very efficient, and direct calls to action were rather effective as well. The results of the survey showed that most of the people surveyed used Twitter as a source of political information frequently and were compelled to vote as a result of their engagement in Twitter. Interviews pointed to the value of the immediate interaction during the time and support of the influencers to raise the profile of a campaign and turnout among the voters. According to the case study, voter turnout increased significantly as the use of Twitter in the campaigning strategy was intensive. These results indicate that Twitter can effectively be relied on to drive voters out, with careful placement of content and use of interconnections as major determinants of successful campaigns. These experiences can be used to provide some recommendations to future political campaigns that can use Twitter to attract voters and to increase voter turnout.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, social media has helped redefine political campaigning approaches and population mobilization. Twitter is one of the many social media platforms that has become a key element in political communication where both politicians and campaign teams are able to have real time discussions with the people. Twitter is one of the appropriate sources to cover and collect support due to

such qualities as hashtags, retweets, and the possibility to follow and communicate with such influential people as influencers.

The political campaigns are managed differently now due to the swift development of digital communications. Tv, radio, and printed media were the traditional sources of a campaign, reaching the voters. But since the internet and social media, the sharing of information is more decentralized and can be more interactive and personal based. Twitter has a unique microblogging structure, and it can be distinguished since such a format provides quick sharing and interaction. Twitter is also used by politicians and campaigns to express their statements, address the questions of voters, and attract on their sides. These platforms are very influential in shaping the opinion and behavior of the masses because of the viral nature and the real-time feature (Lin et al., 2021).

Local elections are the elections that usually have less media coverage and passion of people or voters, than national elections do. The situation with voter mobilization in local elections is quite different. According to research by McDonnell (2020), voter apathy during local elections may result in a drop in the turnout with subsequent implications on the legitimacy and efficacy of elected representatives. With the help of the means of social interaction (such as Twitter), this gap can be overcome, as immediate communication with the voters is possible, and timely release of information can be announced here, creating a feeling of belonging to the rules. The current research relies on the increase in research on the role of the social media in the field of politics, especially focusing on the abilities of Twitter regarding the local elections (Bright et al., 2020).

In particular, local elections offer an interesting background around which social media could be studied (Skogerboe & Krumsvik, 2015). Local elections are associated with low voter turnout unlike national elections, which darkens the process of democracy. In a study conducted by Glovin (2021), it is imperative that including voters in local elections is essential in making representative government and community participation. Thus, information on how Twitter can be used to improve voter involvement and turnout in local elections will be of great benefit to democracy participation and campaign strategy (Opeibi, 2019).

It has not been fully understood the role that a particular social media platform like twitter has on the voter participation especially in local elections as it has been previously studied on how social media has affected voting behavior (Kofi Frimpong et al., 2022). The present research will address this gap, as it will explore the role of Twitter in promoting voters turnout in the case of a local election, as well as what personalities will be the most effective, what are the best possible options in terms of content, and strategies.

Despite the potential of Twitter in political mobilization being glorified, a study that breaks down this type of contribution towards voter turnout in local elections is still required. The issue here is that the specifics of translation of different aspects of the Twitter usage into voter participation and engagement have not been thoroughly studied (Van Vliet et al., 2020).

One of them is that past research studies revealed that content shared on social media could play a significant role in the determination of voting behavior (Kofi Frimpong et al., 2022). Nonetheless, little is known on what particular forms of Twitter content (e.g. informative tweet, call-to-action message, interactive thread) works best towards encouraging local voters to take part in elections. Campaign teams can make their messages more effective by learning more about the features of good Twitter content (Son et al., 2019).

Second, opinion formers have considerable impact in the creation of social media opinion. Within the scenario of elections, the influencers are capable of endorsing a candidate, posting compelling content, and stimulating voters to cast their ballots (Yang & Kang, 2021). The study will focus to determine major shapers in the local elections and how they affect the voters. It can help campaigns formulate superior engagement strategies by knowing how they can be used to affect the behavior of voters by looking at the influence of the influencers (Goodwin et al., 2023).

Third, including Twitter as a component in the general campaign strategy does not mean one sends several messages. This should be with a smart way of timing, treatment of people during campaigns and contact with voters. This study would show the best practice of the use of twitter in local election campaigns and it would show it in a way that would bring some insight to the political strategists and candidates and they could use it.

Considering these arguments, this paper will aid in raising the awareness of the future of Twitter in local elections, with feasible recommendations on how to boost the turnout of voters and their participation on the social media in elections. It is supposed that the proposed research will turn out to be a sort of insight as to the influence of Twitter on voting patterns in the framework of which the subsequent administration of political campaigns and tools designed to enhance the involvement of citizens in a democratic society into the local regions will be elaborated.

METHODS

The research design used in this study will be the mixed-methods research design to provide a thorough investigative study of the existence and contribution of Twitter in voter mobilization during local elections. The study will incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to assess the effects of Twitter on voters not only in the quantifiable context but also in the context it is experienced by the users of the site after interacting with the political content. The twitter content analysis and voter surveys are the two major approaches involved in the quantitative component. The content analysis will require a systematic gathering and data sorting of political tweets made during the time of the elections in order to determine such patterns, subjects, and kinds of messages that are more engaged than others. There will be special focus on tweet design (e.g. text, hashtag, retweet), messaging plans and frequency. At the same time, voter survey questionnaires will be used in a structured manner to evaluate the perceived impact of Twitter exposure to the voting will of the individuals, their degree of political interest, and tendency of voting in the nearest election in the region.

In parallel to these results, the qualitative part is going to involve rich interviews of a few selected Twitter users and the case study analysis of several local campaigns that have extensively used Twitter. The interviews will explore users' motivations, interpretations, and emotional responses to political messaging on the platform. Case studies will provide a detailed look at how political actors craft Twitter strategies, and how these strategies are received and reshaped by audiences in different local contexts. Integration of the two strands will be achieved through data triangulation, allowing for the cross-validation of findings and the development of a more holistic understanding of Twitter's role in the electoral process. This mixed-methods approach ensures both breadth and depth of analysis quantifying the extent of Twitter's influence while also illuminating the underlying mechanisms through which it operates.

This design is intended to provide evidence-based insights that can inform the development of more effective digital political strategies. By combining multiple sources of data and methodological perspectives, the study seeks to enhance the

validity, reliability, and practical relevance of its conclusions for stakeholders engaged in democratic participation and digital campaign planning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Twitter Content Analysis

Data was collected from 3,000 tweets related to local elections during the campaign period using specific hashtags, keywords and official accounts of candidates and political parties. Analysis was carried out using SPSS to determine the type of content that was most effective in mobilizing voters.

Table 1. Types of Content that are Most Effective in Voter Mobilization

Tweet Content Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean Engagement	Std. Deviation
Election Information	1,200	40.0%	150.25	30.50
Call to Action	900	30.0%	200.75	45.80
Interaction with Voters	600	20.0%	180.50	40.25
Influencer Endorsements	300	10.0%	250.00	50.75

This table shows that, for tweets containing information related to election dates, polling station locations, and voting procedures, the average engagement for this type is 150.25 with a standard deviation of 30.50. For tweets inviting voters to come to the polling station and exercise their right to vote, the average engagement was 200.75 with a standard deviation of 45.80. For tweets in the form of replies or direct conversations with voters, the average engagement is 180.50 with a standard deviation of 40.25. As well as tweets from influencers who support certain candidates or parties, the average engagement is 250.00 with a standard deviation of 50.75.

Voter Survey

The survey was conducted on 500 respondents to measure how often they use Twitter for political information and its influence on voting intentions.

Table 2. Voter Survey

Survey Questions	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean	Std. Deviation
Using Twitter for political information	35% (175)	30% (150)	20% (100)	10% (50)	5% (25)	3.80	1.05
Motivated to vote because of Twitter	40% (200)	25% (125)	20% (100)	10% (50)	5% (25)	3.90	1.12

As I mentioned above, in the table above, it can be seen that most of the respondents (65 per cent) tend to use Twitter frequently or extremely frequently to access political information. Standard deviation is 1.05 and mean value of average respondent is 3.80. Up to 65 percent of the respondents were inspired to vote due to their twitter activity. The standard deviation is 1.12 and there being an average of 3.90 among the respondents.

Based on the findings of the Twitter content analysis, it is possible to note that the engagement rate of the influencer endorsement type of content (250.00) is the highest though such percentage is the lowest (10%). This indicates that despite the lack of

significant number of influencer tweets, they are very effective in voter mobilization. Engagement is also very high with the calls to action (200.75), and this means that messages that ask voters directly to take action are also highly effective.

According to survey findings, the majority of survey participants turn to Twitter to seek political information and the activity on it encourages them to vote. The average score achieved in the two survey questions shows a strong percentage that means that Twitter is impactful in the choice of the voters. All in all, these quantitative data indicate that Twitter can be used effectively in the area of voter mobilization, and certain content and influencers contribute to the greater voter turnout.

In a bid to reach the quantitative analysis to its conclusion, in-depth interviews were conducted on different participants who were active users of Twitter in local elections such as politicians, campaign teams, and voters. The qualitative findings were summarized with direct quotes within the interviews as below:

Interviews with Politicians:

"Twitter allows me to directly communicate with voters and answer their questions in real-time, which increases their engagement in my campaign."

"With Twitter, I can send my campaign messages quickly and reach a wider audience, especially the younger generation who are more active on social media."

The strategic importance of direct contact through Twitter promoted by the politician provides an important insight into an overall trend in political campaigning today towards the personal and the immediate. The very existence of this ability to retweet and to tweet the voters directly, in real time, causes the impression of political intimacy and, by extension, of political availability and genuineness. This agrees with the idea of Enli & Skogerb (2013) of personalized political communication, or the possibility to face constituents without going through gatekeepers, offered by the use of the social media platforms by the politicians. This kind of interaction not only brings out the impact on how voters participate but develop feelings of loyalty and trust especially when these voters feel heard or listened to. Besides, Twitter as a massively scalable medium to make messages distributed quickly, particularly among younger and purely digital members, is an indication of the trends economically recorded by Jungherr (2016) who has observed that Twitter is a powerful mobilization tool when deployed as a means of advance campaign messages in real-time.

Notably, such strategical utilization of Twitter is in line with what Gainous and Wagner (2014) posit; that is, voter attitudes and behaviour can change significantly as a result of digital activity during an election, especially in close election races. The usage of Twitter by the politician in attracting the youths is even more evident because the population under the age of 25 years tend to absorb political news by using social media networks instead of using the common news programs (Marquart et al., 2020). It is important to note, though, that although the platform can be used to achieve a wide audience and fast communication, efficient use of such strategy also requires resonance with the content, network multiplication, and the capability to engage in two-way communication instead of the information push mechanism (Jungherr, 2016). Therefore, Twitter is a powerful dissemination channel but its effectiveness is further enhanced when matched with actual interaction and message that is customized in line with the values and words that resonate with the intended audience.

Interview with Campaign Team:

"Our strategy of using specific hashtags and retweets from local influencers proved effective in increasing the visibility of our campaign."

"We frequently hold live Q&A sessions on Twitter to address voters' concerns, which goes a long way in building trust and dispelling their doubts."

The campaign team's emphasis on strategic hashtag use and influencer engagement reflects a deliberate effort to enhance message diffusion and target audience segmentation on Twitter. This strategy is supported by quantitative findings indicating that influencer endorsements can significantly boost political message visibility and credibility, especially among younger voters who are more likely to follow social media personalities than institutional accounts (Muth & Peter, 2020; Cheng et al., 2024). Hashtags, meanwhile, function as tools for agenda-setting and collective identity formation, enabling campaign messages to become part of larger trending conversations and increasing the likelihood of algorithmic amplification (Bruns & Burgess, 2015). Furthermore, the campaign's use of live interactive formats, such as Q&A sessions, aligns with prior studies showing that real-time engagement enhances voters' political efficacy and trust, as it provides a direct channel for clarification and perceived responsiveness (Waldvogel et al., 2021). This two-way communication model contrasts with traditional top-down campaigning and supports findings by Vaccari et al. (2015), who argue that dialogic social media interactions are more likely to stimulate political participation than unidirectional messaging. Thus, the strategic layering of hashtags, influencer networks, and interactive formats appears to form an integrated digital engagement approach that strengthens both visibility and relational trust—two key predictors of voter intent as observed in recent studies on digital political mobilization (Goodwin et al., 2023).

Interviews with Voters:

"I often follow candidate and influencer accounts on Twitter. Through them, I get important information and feel more motivated to exercise my right to vote."

"Twitter helped me feel more connected to the election process. I was able to see the debates, opinions, and facts live, which made me more aware of the importance of my vote."

This study establishes that the voters, who received election-related information on Twitter by political aspirants and social-media stars, later developed an increased desire to vote in local elections. This would show that Twitter can be used not as a media that promotes interchange of information but also as a vehicle that promotes psychological closeness between the voter and the political zone. These findings are consistent with those of Vaccari et al. (2015), which demonstrated that exposure to political content on the social media enhances the political efficacy and engagements of the users. The sense of direct address enjoyed by candidates or trusted digital personalities creates a sense of political inclusion, a factor that Yamin & Nurfadilah (2024) claim is elements to induce participatory behaviour in digital democracies.

Moreover, the feeling of belonging to the process of elections instilled by Twitter goes together with increased civic duty. This finding aligns with that of Campbell (2013) who determined that social-media utilization especially the use of social media, in the aspect of gaining political information is a significant predictor of political engagement given that the use of social media fosters a participatory culture and sense of belonging to the community. Within the framework of the current research, the promptness and interactivity of Twitter would fill the gap between the official political institutions and ordinary citizens recreating the same phenomenon that Enli & Skogerb (2013) described when noting that personalizing politics with the help of social media was capable of making politics less alienating and affective.

However, whereas this perceived connection has the potential of empowering the users, it is worth noting that there are potential limitations involved. This feeling of political intimacy possible on social media might lead to an echo-chamber phenomenon or shallow interaction that does not go into much depth, as Panke & Stephens (2018) warn. Therefore, this emotional attachment might lead to the fact that voters feel more motivated and responsible, but it is not always reflected in the informed choice and prolonged political interest.

However, the findings are consistent with the claim that Twitter is a revolutionary concept in the process of influencing the contemporary voter behaviour not only due to the fact that information is broadcast when it takes place, but because it creates emotional attachments and social systems of influence that trigger voter turnout. This movement alternates the inversion of the classical models of top-down political communication to networked horizontal flows of power as outlined by McDevitt & Chaffee (2002) in his theorization of communication power in the digital age.

Mayoral Election Case

In this context, the election of mayor in a large city in Indonesia with a low level of voter participation in the previous election. The campaign strategy used is where candidates use Twitter to disseminate election information, invite voters, and interact directly with citizens. As a result, voter participation increased by 15% compared to the previous election. Analysis shows that tweets with calls to action and influencer endorsements have the highest engagement.

Candidate Opinion:

"We saw a significant increase in voter participation after we started using Twitter intensively to engage and engage with voters."

This recognition underscores the importance of Twitter to act as a platform that does not just provide information but creates a platform whereby a dialogic process can empower elections. The study by Vaccari et al. (2015) confirms this claim, and it was identified that political involvement on Twitter is positively related to offline engagement among youth voters. In the same way, Enli & Skogerb (2013) noted that candidates that adopted twitter as a two-way interactive tool were likely to mobilize the base and to generate a turnout. The quotation also supports the measurements by Boulianne (2015), who implemented a meta-analysis and found out that social media users impact political engagement in a rather small yet prominent way. Nonetheless, one should critical think of the contextual factors that mediate this effect. To give an example, Theocharis and Lowe (2016) state that the effects of using social media hinge on the political sophistication of people in relation to the credibility of the source. Moreover, the candidate also finds that Twitter usage makes voters more active and thus, without controlling the factors such as spending on campaign, ground mobilization activity or parallel media exposure, it is hard to pick this aspect as a single correlation factor, something that Wu (2024) also note, recommending to combine new social media initiatives with the traditional campaigning approaches. Subsequently, the observation made by the candidate is in line with the bibliography, but should be understood in the context of an ecology of complex media in which various factors promising affect the electoral result.

Voter Opinion:

"Seeing candidates interact live on Twitter made me feel more valued and heard, which motivated me to go to the polls."

Such a feeling of not being ignored contributes to the understanding of how the real-time immediacy between the candidates and the constituency can de-personalize

political leaders and act as a barrier to segments of society. A study by Killian & McManus (2015) confirms that perceived authenticity in online interactions, especially via such communication means as Twitter, leads to building political trust and emotional appeal, without both of which electoral engagement cannot occur. Similarly, Vaccari et al. (2015) revealed that the interactive behaviors of candidates including responding to comments, or taking part in live tweets enhances the political efficacy of voters, thereby boosting their chances of approaching the election polls. It is particularly relevant to younger voters, who can be cynical about conventional politics, but are the ones more open to the digital interaction (Loader et al., 2014). Furthermore, according to Theocharis & Lowe (2016), two-way communication in the social media sites leads to the emergence of what is referred to as participatory affordances whereby the population is no longer a consumer of information or spectator to a specific activity; they have now become part of the democratic arenas. Still, one should consider critically that although direct interaction is able to impact positively on the participation, not every user remains the same in his or her interpretation of the candidate interaction. Boulianne (2015) warns that such interactions must be of high quality and must be authentic, otherwise, they can boomerang, making people feel disillusioned instead of empowered. Consequently, although the experiences of the participant reveals a larger trend in political communication to some extent in the digital era, it will not be successful unless being judged by how interaction is perceived in relation, authenticity, inclusivity, and responsiveness.

The results of the current study support the growing prominence of Twitter as a factor that encourages voter turnout, especially in the case of local elections, where a voter turnout is not as high compared to the national elections. The quantitative findings combined with content analysis and voter surveys prove that Twitter is a lively political space where the types of content and interaction between the reader and the author have a strong bearing on whether citizens cast a vote or not. It is worth noting that influencer endorsed tweets attracted the highest rates of traffic, whereas they were not the most common ones. It is in accordance with Goodwin et al. (2023) who have argued that a “political relational influencer” can build their demand by galvanizing the support of followers with greater success than institutional actors because the influencers are already trusted and relevant to follow among certain segments of the population. The capacity of politicians to communicate with niche segments of society and by doing so that the campaign has high visibility and persuasive capacity is a strength of influencers that is not always available to traditional political communication.

No less significant is the fact that the call to action was also one of the most productive content types in motivating people to take part in the elections. This conforms with the general literature in digital campaigns that denotes that actionable and clear messages are more likely to succeed in the mobilization initiatives. By contrast to an abstract political rhetoric, call to action is performed to reduce the distance, make it feel urgent and immediate to users who move across the high-information social media landscapes. Such findings give empirical credence to the assertion made by Opeibi (2019), who states that Twitter is not merely a hub of information but also an engagement space in which political behavior is not only triggered via a response to interaction, personalization, and socialization.

The qualitative data also show that personal occurrence between the politicians and the voters, more so in the real-time dialogue prods a political closeness and provokes more voter drive. The politicians that have claimed to use Twitter to respond to queries and hold live chats stated that they felt closer to their electorate that eventually reflected at the polls. To a great extent, these results resonate with the findings of Enli & Skogerboe (2013) who point out, the so-called personalization of

political communication on such media as Twitter permits politicians to avoid the traditional media filters and establish direct connection with the voters. This online proximity is part of what Vaccari et al. (2015) call a phenomenon of networked political efficacy, when voters feel more empowered and significant in the democratic years because they find themselves closer to political actors.

In addition, the case study of mayoral election in Indonesian indicates the practical effectiveness of strategic use of Twitter towards voter participation wherein there is a 15 percent turnout as opposed to the last cycle. This should be noted in the context of campaigning on social media, which Bright et al. (2020) pointed out as having measurable impact on the results of electoral contests. Nevertheless, even though the statistics demonstrate obvious relationships between Twitter activity and the turnout, it is necessary to take into account confounding factors, i.e., campaign resources, media coverage, and off-line mobilization. According to Auter & Fine (2016), lack of consideration of the extended dynamics of the campaign may become an overstatement of the effects of social media.

Finally, and though many voters claim that they found themselves connected and politically motivated using Twitter, we need to consider such affective reactions critically. Twitter interactions promote the feeling of political inclusion that proves the meta-analysis conducted by Boulianne (2015), indicating that social media usage does play a positive but small role in affecting the degree of political participation. Nevertheless, like Figa Talamanca & Arfini (2022) point out, the semblance of involvement may lead to minimal involvement or the so-called echo-chamber-effect: most of the content that individuals see reflects what they already know instead of discussion. Therefore, through Twitter, even though it is an important mobilization tool, it is only effective when there is genuineness, interactivity, and legitimacy in message in the campaign communication and the issue needs careful and moral planning by political players.

CONCLUSION

The research has convincing results showing that twitter has a major impact in the mobilization of voter turnout in the local elections. In a mixed-methods design that includes both quantitative systems of content analysis and surveys and qualitative interviews and case studies, the study indicates that strategic Twitter engagements, especially using influencer endorsements, direct call to action, and on time interaction, has the potential to raise awareness, perceived efficacy, and ultimately, political voting. These results help to establish an even broader body of knowledge that social media is not only a venue through which a political message is directed, but rather a platform through which political behavior is crafted, and through which a sense of civic connection is created.

Significantly, the paper notes that quality and authenticity of interaction are the major factors that determine the influence of Twitter among voters. Politicians and campaign teams, which established dialogic communication, listened to voters, and cooperated with trusted figures achieved better turnout stimulation. Nevertheless, this effect is not consistent with different contexts; it is modulated by, among others, the content strategy, digital literacy, and the believability of the messageners. Superficial or tokenistic use of the social media can restrict or even negate the mobilising capability of the same, as the past researchers suggest.

Although the paper has indicated that Twitter can be an effective way of eingaging more people in the democracy, it has also highlighted that ethical and exclusive digital campaigning should be adopted. Political actors need to take a step forward to gain a minimum of being seen to a position involving the establishment of a relevant interaction capable of empowering the voters and motivating them to be well informed and receptive.

The cross-platform comparison and the long-term effects of the social media political involvement on the democratic values and participation tendencies should be a topic of future study. Nevertheless, the present study offers actionable insights for political practitioners: that Twitter, when used strategically and authentically, is not only a broadcasting platform but a mobilizing force in the evolving landscape of electoral politics.

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