

The Influence of Political Communication on Youth Voter Decisions in Klang Valley: The Role of Credibility, Informativeness, Interactiveness, and Satire

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ABSTRACT

In the digital age, the factors shaping young voters' decisions are becoming increasingly complex. This study explores the impact of political credibility, political informativeness, political interactiveness, and political satire on the voting decisions of youth in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Utilizing a quantitative approach with a sample of 330 young voters, this research reveals that all four factors positively influence voter decisions, though their effects vary. Political credibility and political informativeness are significant, albeit with modest effects, highlighting their essential roles in shaping voter trust and decision-making. More pronounced impacts are observed with political interactiveness and political satire, which engage voters more dynamically and contribute to more pronounced shifts in voting behavior. These findings underscore the importance of integrating trust, information quality, engagement, and humor into political campaigns. The study provides strategic insights for enhancing political communication, offering a comprehensive understanding of how these key elements influence youth voting behavior in Malaysia and beyond.

Keywords: Political Credibility; Political Informativeness; Political Interactiveness; Political Satire; Youth Voting Behavior

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the digital era has reshaped many aspects of society, with political communication being one of the most profoundly affected areas. In the past, traditional media such as television, radio, and print were the primary channels through which political messages were disseminated to the public. However, the rise of the internet and the proliferation of digital platforms have revolutionized how political actors communicate with voters. Today, social media, blogs, and other online platforms serve as vital channels for political discourse and voter engagement, enabling instantaneous and widespread distribution of political content (Paharuddin, 2024; Barati, 2023).

This transformation is particularly evident among younger populations, who have grown up in an environment saturated with digital technology. Unlike older generations who may still rely on traditional media for news and information, today's youth increasingly turn to digital media as their primary source of political information (Saud et al, 2023). This shift has significant implications for political communication strategies, as it requires politicians and campaigners to adapt their messages to resonate within the fast-paced, interactive, and often fragmented digital landscape.



In Malaysia, the Klang Valley stands out as a region where these dynamics are especially pronounced. As the country's most urbanized and diverse area, the Klang Valley is a microcosm of Malaysia's broader sociopolitical environment. The region's high levels of internet penetration and social media usage make it a fertile ground for online political campaigns, which have become increasingly influential in shaping voter behavior. The youth demographic in the Klang Valley, which includes a large proportion of tech-savvy and politically engaged individuals, represents a critical segment of the electorate. Their voting decisions have the potential to shape the outcomes of both local and national elections, making it imperative for political actors to understand the factors that influence these decisions (ONG, 2020).

Given the pivotal role of youth in the electoral process, it is crucial to explore the various elements of digital political communication that impact their voting behavior. This study aims to investigate four key elements: credibility, informativeness, interactiveness, and satire. These elements are not only integral to the effectiveness of political communication in a digital context but are also increasingly relevant as voters navigate an information-rich yet often overwhelming online environment (Holtz-Bacha, 2023).

Credibility is a fundamental aspect of political communication, as voters are more likely to engage with and trust information from reliable sources. In an age where misinformation and fake news are prevalent, the ability of political actors to establish and maintain credibility can significantly influence voter perceptions and behavior (Hamid, 2022). Informativeness, which pertains to the depth and accuracy of the information provided, is equally important. Voters require comprehensive and factual content to make informed decisions, and political campaigns that fail to deliver such content risk losing credibility and influence (Saud et al., 2023).

Interactiveness, facilitated by the digital nature of modern communication platforms, allows for a two-way exchange between political actors and voters. This element is crucial for engaging younger voters who value dialogue and participation in political discussions. The ability of campaigns to foster such interaction can enhance voter engagement and loyalty (Gulati & Williams, 2023). Lastly, satire, often seen in memes, videos, and other forms of digital content, plays a unique role in political communication. While traditionally seen as entertainment, satire can engage youth by making political issues more accessible and relatable, often serving as a gateway to deeper political engagement (Thorson, 2023).

This study, therefore, seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how these elements of digital political communication influence the voting decisions of youth in the Klang Valley. By doing so, it aims to offer practical insights for political strategists, candidates, and policymakers who are increasingly reliant on digital platforms to connect with the youth demographic in a rapidly evolving political landscape (Ibardeloza et al., 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Credibility

Political credibility is widely recognized as a cornerstone of effective political communication. It encompasses the trustworthiness, reliability, and perceived integrity of political figures and their messages. Credibility is not merely about honesty; it is about the consistency of actions, the alignment of promises with outcomes, and the authenticity perceived by the audience (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). In an era where misinformation and disinformation are rampant, maintaining credibility has become more challenging yet more critical than ever.

Research indicates that credible political figures are more likely to garner trust and support from voters, which in turn influences voting behavior (Berlo, Lemert, & Mertz, 1969). For young voters in the Klang Valley, who are often skeptical of traditional political institutions, credibility is a key determinant in their decision-making process. The digital nature of modern political campaigns allows for real-time fact-checking and widespread dissemination of information, making credibility both easier to challenge and harder to maintain. However,



when successfully established, political credibility can serve as a powerful tool to influence voter loyalty and decision-making (Metzger, 2007).

Political Informativeness

Informativeness refers to the degree to which political campaigns provide voters with relevant, accurate, and timely information. The quality and depth of information disseminated by political campaigns are crucial in enabling voters to make informed decisions (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). In the digital age, where information is just a click away, voters—especially the youth—expect to receive comprehensive and clear information that helps them understand the issues, policies, and candidates.

Informativeness plays a pivotal role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of voters. Well-informed voters are more likely to participate in elections, engage in political discussions, and make decisions that reflect their values and interests (Kim, 2023). For the youth in the Klang Valley, who are highly connected and engaged online, the ability of political campaigns to deliver substantive content is critical. Campaigns that fail to provide sufficient information may be dismissed as lacking depth or sincerity, thereby losing the trust and support of potential voters.

Political Interactiveness

Political interactiveness involves the level of engagement and two-way communication between political campaigns and voters. With the advent of social media and other digital platforms, voters are no longer passive recipients of political messages; they actively participate in political discourse, express opinions, and demand direct interaction with political figures (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010).

The rise of interactive political communication has revolutionized the way campaigns are conducted. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram allow political figures to engage with voters directly, answer questions, and respond to concerns in real-time. This increased interactiveness can foster a sense of involvement and community among voters, making them feel more connected to the political process (Vaccari, 2012). For the youth in Klang Valley, who are digital natives, the ability to interact with political campaigns online is not just a preference but an expectation. Campaigns that successfully leverage interactive platforms can significantly enhance voter engagement and influence voting decisions.

Political Satire

Political satire, characterized by the use of humor, irony, and exaggeration to critique political figures and events, has become a prominent form of political communication, especially among younger audiences. While traditionally seen as entertainment, satire plays a significant role in shaping political perceptions and attitudes (Gray, Jones, & Thompson, 2009).

Satirical content often resonates with youth because it provides a more accessible and engaging entry point into political discourse. It can break down complex political issues into more relatable and digestible content, making it easier for young voters to engage with and understand political messages (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006). Moreover, political satire can be a powerful tool for challenging the status quo and encouraging critical thinking about political issues. In the context of the Klang Valley, where the youth are both politically aware and digitally savvy, satire can influence voting behavior by framing political issues in a way that resonates with their values and experiences.

Hypothesis Development

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed:



H1: Political credibility positively influences voters' decisions among youth in the Klang Valley.

Political credibility, as a measure of trustworthiness and reliability, is hypothesized to be a significant factor in the voting decisions of youth. Given the importance of authenticity and consistency in political communication, higher political credibility is expected to lead to increased voter support among the youth demographic.

H2: Political informativeness positively influences voters' decisions among youth in the Klang Valley.

Informativeness is essential for helping voters make informed choices. This hypothesis suggests that political campaigns that effectively communicate relevant and accurate information will have a stronger influence on the voting decisions of young voters, who prioritize well-informed decision-making.

H3: Political interactiveness positively influences voters' decisions among youth in the Klang Valley.

Interactive political communication is increasingly important in engaging youth voters. This hypothesis posits that higher levels of interactiveness—manifested through social media engagement, direct communication, and participatory platforms—will positively impact the voting decisions of young voters in the Klang Valley.

H4: Political satire positively influences voters' decisions among youth in the Klang Valley.

Satirical content, with its unique blend of humor and critique, is hypothesized to be an influential factor in shaping the voting behavior of youth. By making political issues more relatable and engaging, satire is expected to positively affect the voting decisions of young voters in the region.

METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study is to explore the impact of online political campaigns on voters voting decisions. To accomplish this objective, a quantitative research design was employed, utilizing cross-sectional data collection and a survey questionnaire as the primary research instrument. The survey utilized a 5-point Likert scale to measure responses, with "strongly disagree" (1) and "strongly agree" (5) as the two endpoints of the scale. Convenience sampling was utilized to collect data, given the absence of a comprehensive sampling frame. A total of 384 questionnaires were distributed, with only 330 being deemed eligible for analysis. These data collection techniques and sample size were chosen to ensure the highest levels of validity and reliability for this study. During the process of data collection, participants were given a comprehensive briefing on the aims and objectives of the study. This served as an opportunity to clarify any doubts they may have had about the research. In addition, the confidentiality of the study data was emphasized, with the participants being made aware that the information collected would be used solely for research purposes. This was done to ensure that their privacy and confidentiality were maintained at all times and to encourage honest and accurate responses. The collected data was analysed using SPSS 26. The study employs two types of analyses: descriptive analysis and inference analysis. The researchers used SPSS software to analyse the mean, standard deviation, and percentage to explore and describe the variables in the study model. Additionally, Smart PLS software was used to test the validity and reliability of the research model before testing the research hypothesis. The use of SPSS and Smart PLS software allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the data, helping the researchers to draw meaningful conclusions from the study.

Data Analysis

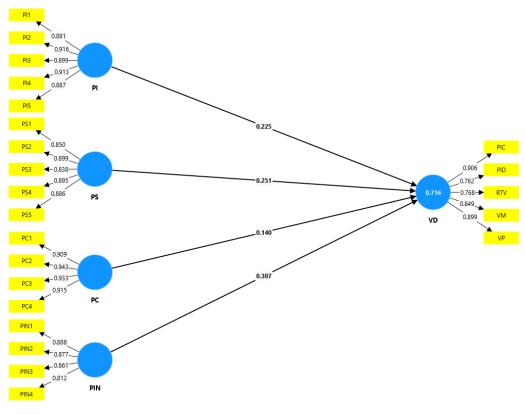
In this study, we employed structural equation modelling (SEM) to evaluate both the measurement and structural models. Specifically, we adopted the component-based partial least squares (PLS) approach, which is widely used for assessing measurement scales and testing research hypotheses. The choice to employ the



PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling) approach for data analysis in our study was driven by the recommendations of Hair et al. (2011). Hair suggests that PLS-SEM is particularly well-suited for researchers seeking to develop and refine theories in their study. By opting for PLS-SEM, we aim to comprehensively capture the intricate relationships within our research model and derive valuable insights to advance theory development. The initial step involves the data filtering process, which entails the identification and removal of problematic data points, such as missing values and outliers. Following the completion of the filtering process, the researcher proceeds to evaluate the validity and reliability of the research instrument to ensure its accuracy and consistency. Following the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2014), it is essential to evaluate the research model from both the measurement model and structural model perspectives.

Measurement model assessment

In the measurement model, it is essential to perform several assessments as proposed by Benitez et al., (2020) such as comprehensive instrument validity testing, which encompasses evaluations of convergent validity and discriminant validity. These critical assessments enable researchers to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the research instrument by examining the degree to which the constructs within the instrument are conceptually distinct and exhibit minimal overlap. By conducting thorough validity testing procedures, we ensure the strength and reliability of our research instrument, thereby enhancing the validity and credibility of our finding. The factor loadings in the measurement model range from 0.76 to 0.94, which aligns with the criteria set by Hair et al. (2021). These loadings indicate a strong relationship between the observed indicators and their corresponding latent constructs. Furthermore, the internal consistency of the measurement scales, Cronbach's alpha value, falls within the range of 0.89 to 0.94, meeting the criteria proposed by (Hair et al., 2020). Figure 2 and Table 1 depict the output of the SmartPLS software, illustrating the findings of the instrument's convergent validity analysis. On the evaluation of discriminant validity, multiple assessment methods, including the Fornell and Larcker criterion, HTMT, and cross-loading, were employed (see Table 2, Table 3, Fig. 3 and Table 4).







Structural model assessment

Benitez et al. (2020) state that the evaluation of the structural model entails assessing various aspects, including the overall fit of the estimated model, the significance and strength of path coefficient estimates, the effect sizes (f^2) , and the coefficient of determination (R^2) . A summary of the steps involved in evaluating the structural model can be found in Table 5. Table 5 provides important insights into the relationship between different factors and voters' voting decisions among youth in Klang Valley. The findings contribute to our understanding of the factors in voters' voting decisions. To determine the value of the path coefficient, researchers commonly employ the Partial Least Squares (PLS) algorithm procedure. By utilizing the PLS algorithm, researchers can estimate the path coefficient, which represents the strength and direction of the relationship between variables in a structural equation model. On the other hand, to determine the significance of a relationship, researchers often employ the bootstrap procedure, which allows them to obtain the corresponding p-value. In this regard, a common approach involves conducting the bootstrapping procedure with a substantial number of iterations, typically utilizing 5000 bootstrap samples (see Fig. 3). Firstly, regarding political credibility, the beta value of 0.14 suggests a positive relationship with a p-value of 0.012 suggests that this relationship is statistically significant, indicating that higher political credibility is associated with a greater voter voting decision. Consequently, the data does provide sufficient evidence to support the hypothesis that political credibility influences the voters' voting decisions. Other than that hypothesis regarding political informativeness also has a positive and significant relationship with a beta value of 0.23 and a p-value of 0.002. Hence there is evidence to support the hypothesis that political informativeness is linked to the voters voting decision. Furthermore, the political interactiveness aspect exhibits a positive and significant relationship with voters' voting decisions. The beta value of 0.31 signifies that increased political interactiveness leads to a higher likelihood of voters deciding to vote. This finding is supported by the statistically significant p-value of 0.002. Likewise, the hypothesis regarding political satire reveals a significant relationship. The positive beta value of 0.25 suggests that a higher political satire in online political campaigns is associated with a higher voter voting decision among youth. This relationship is significant, indicated by the p-value of 0.001. Therefore, there is evidence to support the hypothesis that political satire influences the voting decision among youth. Additionally, it is worth noting that the research model demonstrates a high level of model fit. The SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) value, which measures the standardized root mean square residual, is below the threshold of 0.08 as proposed by (Hu & Bentler, 1998). Furthermore, the analysis reveals that the relationship between political credibility and voter voting decision in Klang Valley, Selangor demonstrates a small effect size of 0.02. Similarly, the relationship between political informativeness and voter voting decision also exhibits a small effect size of 0.06. Additionally, the association between political interactiveness and voter voting decision indicates a slightly larger effect size of 0.06. Notably, the relationship between political satire and voter voting decision reveals a same effect size as political interactiveness with 0.06, suggesting small effect size.

Item	Factor loadings	Cronbach alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Political credibility		0.944	0.944	0.960	0.856
PC1	0.909				
PC2	0.943				
PC3	0.933				
PC4	0.915				

 Table 1 Measurement quality



Political informativeness		0.941	0.942	0.955	0.809
PI1	0.881				
PI2	0.916				
PI3	0.899				
PI4	0.913				
PI5	0.887				
Political Interactiveness		0.883	0.893	0.919	0.739
PIN1	0.888				
PIN2	0.877				
PIN3	0.861				
PIN4	0.812				
Political satire		0.922	0.924	0.942	0.764
PS1	0.850				
PS2	0.899				
PS3	0.838				
PS4	0.895				
PS5	0.886				
Voting decision		0.894	0.905	0.922	0.704
PIC	0.906				
PID	0.762				
RTV	0.768				
VM	0.849				
VP	0.899				

Table 2 Heterotrait-monotrait ratio

	PC	PI	PIN	PS	VD
PC					
PI	0.759				
PIN	0.893	0.860			
PS	0.765	0.793	0.917		
VD	0.750	0.772	0.856	0.804	

Table 3 Fornell & Larcker's 1 Criterion

	PC	PI	PIN	PS	VD
PC	0.925				
PI	0.716	0.899			
PIN	0.816	0.792	0.860		
PS	0.717	0.742	0.835	0.874	
VD	0.729	0.751	0.811	0.774	1.000



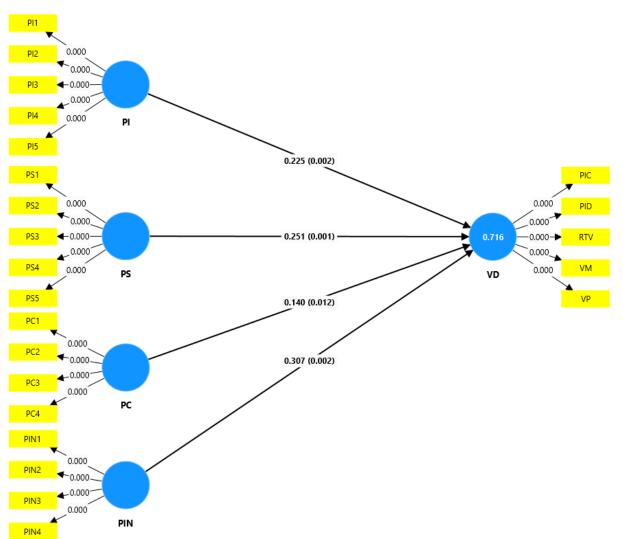


Figure 2 Bootstrapped

Table 4 Cross Loading

	PC	PI	PIN	PS	VD
PC1	0.909	0.692	0.742	0.641	0.669
PC2	0.943	0.674	0.759	0.659	0.683
PC3	0.934	0.627	0.766	0.667	0.676
PC4	0.914	0.655	0.755	0.684	0.668
PI1	0.614	0.881	0.671	0.621	0.624
PI2	0.662	0.916	0.711	0.643	0.663
PI3	0.645	0.899	0.700	0.683	0.704
PI4	0.688	0.913	0.740	0.674	0.673
PI5	0.608	0.887	0.734	0.708	0.704
PIN1	0.763	0.732	0.887	0.775	0.756
PIN2	0.703	0.764	0.876	0.765	0.762
PIN3	0.653	0.631	0.861	0.701	0.658
PIN4	0.685	0.572	0.813	0.610	0.592
PS1	0.511	0.592	0.667	0.850	0.616



PS2	0.585	0.670	0.741	0.899	0.701
PS3	0.721	0.657	0.738	0.838	0.688
PS4	0.622	0.637	0.740	0.895	0.655
PS5	0.678	0.679	0.756	0.886	0.714
VD	0.729	0.751	0.811	0.774	1.000

Table 5 Hyphothesis testing

Hypothesis	Beta value	t-value	p-value	remarks	r2	f2	SRMR
Political Credibility \rightarrow Voting Decision	0.140	2.517	0.012	supported	0.72	0.022	0.067
Political Informativeness \rightarrow Voting Decision	0.225	3.154	0.002	supported		0.061	
Political Interactiveness \rightarrow Voting Decision	0.307	3.133	0.002	supported		0.061	
Political Satire \rightarrow Voting Decision	0.251	3.467	0.001	supported		0.063	

p-values are denoted with asterisks (*)

**p* < 0.05

***p* < 0.01

****p* < 0.001

DISCUSSION

The study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing youth voting behavior in the Klang Valley, particularly focusing on political credibility, informativeness, interactiveness, and satire. Each of these elements was found to have a positive impact on voter decisions, but their influence varied significantly, revealing the complex interplay between different aspects of political communication.

Political Interactiveness emerged as the strongest influencer of youth voting behavior, with a beta value of 0.31 (p = 0.002). This finding underscores the critical role of direct engagement between political figures and young voters, facilitated through digital platforms such as social media. The substantial effect size highlights that youth are not just passive recipients of political messages; they actively seek interaction and dialogue, which enhances their sense of involvement in the political process. This aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the growing importance of participatory communication in modern electoral tactics. However, while interactiveness is highly influential, it also raises questions about the authenticity of such engagements— whether they genuinely represent a two-way dialogue or simply serve as strategic tools for voter manipulation.

Political Satire also showed a notable impact on voting decisions, with a beta value of 0.25 (p = 0.001). Satire plays a unique role by making political messages more relatable and accessible to youth, often breaking down complex issues into digestible, humorous content. This effect suggests that satire does more than entertain; it actively shapes political perceptions and engagement among young voters. Despite this, the effect size remains moderate, indicating that satire alone cannot sustain voter engagement but serves as a complementary element that enhances other communication strategies. The risk here lies in oversimplification or distortion of political realities, which could potentially mislead voters rather than inform them.

Political Credibility was found to positively influence voting behavior, although its impact was relatively modest (beta = 0.14, p = 0.012). Credibility remains a cornerstone of political communication, with trustworthiness and perceived integrity significantly affecting voter decisions. However, the small effect size of 0.02 suggests that credibility, while important, is not the primary driver of youth voting choices. This finding

may reflect the broader context of declining trust in traditional political institutions among young voters, who may prioritize interactive and relatable content over traditional markers of credibility.

Political Informativeness also plays a significant role, with a beta value of 0.23 (p = 0.002), highlighting the importance of delivering accurate and comprehensive information to voters. Well-informed voters are better equipped to make decisions that align with their values and interests. However, the small effect size of 0.06 indicates that informativeness alone is insufficient to drive voter behavior, pointing to a need for integrative communication strategies that combine informative content with interactive and engaging elements. This underscores a critical challenge: the balance between providing depth of information and maintaining voter engagement in an age of information overload.

Overall, the study emphasizes the need for a multifaceted approach to political communication, integrating credibility, informativeness, interactiveness, and satire. Each factor contributes differently to voter behavior, suggesting that no single element can wholly shape voting decisions. The findings highlight the importance of a strategic blend of informative, engaging, and credible communication to effectively influence youth voters. The strong model fit, indicated by the SRMR value below 0.08, reinforces the validity of these conclusions, but future research should explore how these factors interact dynamically in different contexts and how they can be optimized to enhance voter engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study offers valuable contributions to the understanding of voter behavior among youth in Klang Valley, particularly in relation to political communication strategies. The findings confirm that political credibility, informativeness, interactiveness, and satire are all positively associated with voters' decisions, although each factor exhibits a small effect size, suggesting that they are part of a more complex decision-making process.

The significance of political interactiveness, in particular, highlights the evolving nature of political communication in the digital age, where engagement and direct interaction with voters are increasingly crucial. Additionally, the role of political satire suggests that non-traditional forms of political communication can also have a substantial impact on voter behavior, especially among younger demographics.

The study's conclusions emphasize the need for political campaigns to adopt a holistic approach, incorporating credible, informative, engaging, and even humorous elements to effectively influence voter decisions. Future research could further explore the interplay between these factors and other potential influences on voter behavior, particularly in different demographic and geographical contexts. Future research could include qualitative methods such as key informant interviews with political campaigners and youth focus groups to explore how these factors influence voting behavior on a deeper level. This mixed-method approach would provide richer insights and validate quantitative findings, offering a comprehensive view of the youth's political engagement.

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