

# Politician Using Tiktok to Garner Voter's Support

Noor Afzaliza Nazira Ibrahim<sup>1\*</sup>, Mohd Sufiean Hassan<sup>1</sup>, Siti Nurshahidah Sah Allam<sup>2</sup>, Zuliani Mohd Azni<sup>1</sup>, Fatimah Yazmin Yahaya<sup>1</sup>, Siti Nur Izyandiyana Ab Hadi<sup>1</sup>, Maizatul Haizan Mahbob<sup>1</sup>, Nazri Kahar<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Melaka  
Kampus Alor Gajah, KM 26 Jalan Lendu, 78000 Alor Gajah, Melaka, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Centre for Research in Media and Communication, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Bangi, Malaysia

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8090151>

Received: 09 September 2024; Accepted: 21 September 2024; Published: 09 October 2024

## ABSTRACT

Politicians are increasingly turning to TikTok to garner voter support, leveraging the platform's extensive reach and strong appeal to younger demographics. By creating short, engaging videos, they have the opportunity to humanize themselves, communicate their policy ideas, and participate in trending challenges, all of which make their messages more relatable and shareable. The format of TikTok allows politicians to showcase a different side of their personalities, using humour, creativity, and authenticity to build a connection with their audience. Through TikTok's algorithm, which favours viral content, these videos have the potential to reach millions of viewers quickly, amplifying the politicians' messages far beyond their immediate followers. This viral potential is crucial in helping politicians connect with voters on a more personal level, as the platform's interactive features—such as duets, stitches, and comment sections—allow for direct engagement and real-time feedback. Furthermore, TikTok's dynamic, participatory nature enables politicians to engage with their audiences more conversationally and informally, which can be particularly appealing to younger voters who are less engaged with traditional media outlets like television or newspapers. By tapping into this method, politicians can mobilize and influence voters more effectively, reaching individuals who may not typically follow politics or participate in elections. This approach not only expands their audience but also builds a sense of community and loyalty among followers, enhancing their overall campaign strategy. As digital platforms continue to shape the landscape of political communication, TikTok stands out as a powerful tool for modern political engagement.

**Keywords:** Politician; Social Media, Tiktok, Voters

## INTRODUCTION

Short-form video is becoming increasingly popular in today's media-dominated world. Any video that is 60 seconds or less is considered a short-form video. Since short-form films let viewers to add various noises and music, "stitch" content generated by other users, and select from several filters and editing tools, many people, especially younger generations, find them more welcoming (Montenegro, 2021). Major social media platforms increasingly offer short-form video content. TikTok is one of the most widely used apps for short-form content (Potrel, 2022). With the help of the software TikTok, users can create, watch, and share short videos on any subject. According to Kemp (2022), 14.59 million TikTok users were 18 years of age or older at the beginning of 2022. Users can view various types of content, including humorous, informational, entertainment, sports, politics, and more.

Social media's ability to disseminate information has drastically changed how young people interact with politics, especially for voting. Young voters may now more readily keep informed about politicians, policies, and election-related news thanks to social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, which serve as hubs for real-time information.

In a time when traditional media outlets might not adequately represent the interests or concerns of younger generations, instant access to information is essential.

Additionally, sharing information through social media is feasible in a multitude of formats, including text, video, infographics, and memes, which can suit different learning preferences and styles. For example, a brief TikTok video or an infographic on Instagram can enlighten a young voter who may not have the time or interest to read a lengthy policy document. A greater level of involvement is encouraged by the variety of content that makes political knowledge more palatable and accessible.

These days, it's usual for young voters to turn to TikTok for political news and information since they enjoy watching short films with famous politicians outlining the platforms of the various parties. This practice has sparked worries it might "brainwash" or influence the sentiments of young people. Therefore, the study's objective is to understand how young voters' voting behaviour is influenced by celebrity politicians' usage of TikTok.

TikTok is becoming more than just a place to unwind and have fun. In Malaysia, it has evolved into a forum for politicians to connect with younger voters and a source of news information for the younger population. Politicians like Syed Saddiq, Khairy Jamaluddin, and Muhyiddin Yassin use TikTok to attract the interest of younger people.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Social Media

Social media is a technique for storing or distributing information in a communication environment. As per Peters et al. (2013), social networks, on the other hand, are intricate social structures that comprise a collection of social actors connected by dyadic associations. Social media are two-way communication channels that allow users to produce, collaborate, and exchange content on the interactive web by forming a virtual community on social media platforms (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

Due to its egalitarian atmosphere and social network structure, social media is fundamentally distinct from all other forms of traditional media (Peters et al., 2013). In a hierarchical '1: n' structure, a brand, according to Peters et al. (2013), is merely a social actor in the network with no authority. A brand is regarded the same as other network users, and it no longer has the traditional marketing advantage of imposing commercial messaging through other media.

According to Zeng and Gerritsen (2014), another way to describe it is as a peer-to-peer communication channel that enables users to collaborate and share information. In the next part, we will look at the role of marketing in social media. According to a recent article by Hainla (2017), social media is still booming and increasing. Using Facebook as an example, in 2015, the social media platform effectively impacted 52% of customers on online and offline purchasing behaviour, up from 36% in 2014. In reality, 50 million small companies use social media channels like Facebook to engage with their clients worldwide.

In February 2016, over 4.4 million videos were submitted to Facebook, resulting in over 199 billion views from social media users worldwide. For example, Twitter has 328 million active users and is quite active in

tweeting among its members. Twitter's influence is seen in the fact that 78% of consumers who complained to a brand on the platform expected a response within an hour. Instagram, a photo- and video-sharing social media site, is popular with companies to communicate with their followers, with 70.7% of users predicted to use it in 2017 (Parker, 2016). According to Parker (2016), more than 80% of users are from countries other than the United States. As a result, it is more than simply a social networking platform for sharing videos and photos; it is also a marketing avenue for companies to connect with their followers.

### **Social Media Change Political Discourse**

Social media has altered how individuals interact and communicate with politicians, governments, and each other, and it has had a tremendous impact on political debate. One of the most significant ways that technology has altered political discourse is by giving people a voice on social media. Social media has provided formerly marginalised people a voice, enabling them to expand their perspectives and bring attention to issues that are important to them. This has encouraged more diversity and inclusivity in political discourse, which has aided in the representation of a larger spectrum of viewpoints.

However, social media has created further barriers to political discourse. One of the hardest things to do is spread false information and misinformation, which spreads on social media sites. As a result, propaganda, fake news, and conspiracy theories have proliferated and become quite prevalent, posing serious challenges to fact-based political debate. Moreover, social media algorithms usually highlight content that supports users' preconceived notions, creating echo chambers that widen party gaps and polarise political discourse.

Despite these obstacles, social media is nevertheless a useful instrument for political communication and engagement. It has enabled people to interact with politicians and government organisations directly, fostering a sense of participation and accountability in the political process. Social media offers politicians access to a larger audience and allows them to engage directly with voters, which has changed the way political campaigns are executed.

However, as social media continues to grow and impact political discourse, it is critical to confront the issues it raises and ensure that technology supports democracy and the common good.

### **Impact of Social Media on Political Participation**

Social media, however, presents several challenges for political participation. Since the spread of inaccurate and misleading information has the potential to have a substantial impact on political decision-making, it is a serious cause for concern. Propaganda, distorted media, and fake news can confuse and mislead people, making it more difficult to make informed decisions. Additionally, social media algorithms can create personalised feeds depending on user activity, which may limit exposure to opposing viewpoints and strengthen preexisting beliefs.

The use of private information for political ends is another problem. Users are concerned about the use of personal data for targeted political advertising because social media businesses typically prioritise data collecting over user privacy. The act of reinforcing preexisting biases and skewing public perception could potentially. Finally, social media might contribute to the decline of traditional means of political participation, such as voting and civic engagement, since individuals depend more and more on it for political information and activities.

### **Benefit of Social Media in Politics**

One of social media's most significant benefits in politics is that it increases accountability and openness. Through social media, public officials and politicians may interact with the public directly, providing

unprecedented transparency into their actions and policies. The ability of citizens to observe firsthand the actions and performance of their leaders fosters confidence and trust. Members of the public can also hold elected officials responsible for their words and actions using social media platforms, ensuring that decision-makers are aware of the wishes of the people.

Social media also provides helpful criticism and insights into the opinions and preferences of the general public. By keeping an eye on social media trends and conversations, politicians and governments can evaluate the effectiveness of their programs and adjust course accordingly. Leaders can be able to address new issues and concerns ahead of time by using social media listening to help identify them. As a result, it is possible to make sure that policies represent the needs and objectives of the broader public as opposed to just a select few.

The structure and purpose of social media are different from those of mainstream media, and their effects on voter interest, knowledge, involvement, and turnout in elections are also distinct. Social media has been found to help voters understand political parties' programs, and voters who use it are more likely to cast a ballot (Kaminska et al., 2017). It has been said that in the social media campaign environment, the campaign is more candidate-driven. Politicians frequently interact with individuals who have very particular demographic traits and political preferences (Diaz et al., 2016).

Social media differs from mainstream media in terms of form and function, and they bring about different effects on the voters' interest, knowledge, engagement, and turnout in elections. According to Kaminska et al. (2017), social media involvement increased voters' likelihood of casting a ballot and helped them comprehend the policy perspectives of the various parties. The campaign appears to be more candidate-driven than issue-driven in the social media campaign atmosphere. Politicians frequently interact with individuals who share their particular interests and demographics (Diaz et al., 2016).

### **Politicians Use TikTok as A Medium to Promote Themselves**

One of the top 8 applications downloaded in Southeast Asia, TikTok, has evolved into a new tactical tool that publicists use to further their political narrative during election season (Jalli, 2022). For example, the Malaysian politician Syed Saddiq has millions of views and followers on TikTok. He frequently shares political content on TikTok to sway his followers, and the content has the potential to affect viewers' voting decisions, particularly among young people (ages 18 to 29). Studies on the impact of celebrity politicians are common in Europe, but there aren't many that concentrate on Malaysia. The effect of TikTok on political involvement in Malaysia has not received significant attention. Due to the lack of studies on the impact of famous politicians using TikTok to sway the voting decisions of younger voters, today's youth depends on social media since it has ingrained itself into their everyday lives. Their primary sources of information are TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. Meanwhile, well-known politicians in Malaysia use social media to raise their profile and sway public opinion. Cybertroopers have been strategically used in many Southeast Asian nations, especially during election seasons. Political actors have attempted to influence public opinion through social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter in order to further their political narrative and win over more people across the country.

### **Individualised Agenda and Algorithms**

Social media enables each politician to advance a more individualised agenda and share a more personal, private, and non-party-focused viewpoint (Vergeer et al., 2013). Through the personalisation of politics on social media, there are three content dimensions: private, emotional, and professional. While emotional personalisation emphasises the politician's feelings on a personal level, private personalisation can be well-defined as intimate knowledge about the private persona. Professional personalisation, on the other hand, addresses attributes and individual activities connected to the official office. Politicians often present

themselves on social media as “ordinary” people—emotional beings with unique traits, emotional narratives to convey, and the ability to freely carry out activities and acts related to politics (Bene, 2017; Metz et al., 2020).

Furthermore, social media algorithms tailor content streams so that users consistently encounter political content according to their interests or past interactions. Although echo chambers may result from this, young voters are also kept up to date on current events by being exposed to pertinent political content regularly.

In conclusion, young voters’ political engagement is significantly shaped by the accessibility of information provided by social media. Social media makes youth more educated, involved, and ultimately more inclined to vote by providing a variety of real-time, diversified content in multiple formats.

### **Viral Growth**

Social media’s capacity for viral growth makes it a valuable tool for influencing public conversation, social movements, and political campaigns—especially those involving youth. The term “viral potential” describes a piece of content’s capacity to quickly go viral on social media and rapidly reach a large audience. Social media’s interconnectedness, which allows users to share, like, and comment on information to spread it far beyond its original producers, is what drives this phenomenon.

The compelling quality of the material is one of the main elements influencing its ability to become viral. Funny, sentimental, or relatable material usually goes viral on sites like TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter. A brief, memorable video that relates to a social issue or popular topic may strike a chord with viewers and encourage them to share it with their networks. Millions of views, likes, and shares could come from this domino effect, making the content viral. Politicians and social activists frequently take advantage of this by producing or supporting content that is likely to become viral, which expands the audience for their message.

Viral potential is also greatly influenced by social media platforms’ algorithmic structure. High-engagement content is given priority by algorithms, which may display it on TikTok’s “For You” page or at the top of users’ feeds. This ensures that vital information stays in the public eye and reaches people who might not have otherwise heard of it. This implies that a well-crafted message can swiftly take centre stage in a political campaign, swaying public opinion and energising supporters.

### **Relatability**

The ability of a politician to relate to voters on a human level and give them a sense of understanding and representation is known as relatability. Social media posts that resonate with the audience’s values, emotions, or shared experiences are often used to achieve this. A politician might, for instance, post a video of themselves preparing food at home, chatting about a pastime, or sharing a personal hardship. These insights into their private lives have the power to humanise them, transforming them from aloof or disconnected figures into “one of us.” Sincerity and a personal connection are important to young voters; therefore, this relatability can foster trust and raise interest in the politician’s message.

### **Impact of Social Media on Political Campaigns**

The usual barriers dividing voters and politicians are undermined by authenticity and relatability, which has a significant effect. Politicians may cultivate a feeling of closeness and trust with their constituents by projecting an approachable and genuine image, which will promote increased political participation. This is crucial since the most popular content on sites like TikTok is frequently genuine, informal, and intimate. Politicians who can successfully convey their relatability and authenticity on social media have a greater chance of gaining a devoted fan base, rallying support, and encouraging young people to cast ballots.

Genuine audience connectors have a clear advantage in a political environment when authenticity is frequently called into question. Politicians looking to get the attention of voters should use creative messaging on social media.

In a digital landscape flooded with content, the ability to communicate political ideas in a fresh, engaging, and memorable way can significantly influence voter engagement and support.

### Impact of TikTok on Politicians

One of the most significant impacts of TikTok on politics is its ability to connect with younger voters. TikTok’s user base skews younger, with a huge portion of its audience under 30. This demographic has historically been trying to reach through traditional media, but TikTok’s format resonates well with them. Politicians have recognised this and increasingly use TikTok to communicate in ways that are relatable and engaging for younger users. By using humor, trends, and challenges, politicians can make their messages more appealing to this group, helping to increase political awareness and participation among younger voters.

Politicians can now show themselves on TikTok in a more approachable and intimate manner. Politicians can exhibit their personalities, provide behind-the-scenes content, and interact with trends that appeal to regular users on this casual, frequently light-hearted site. A closer bond between politicians and citizens can be forged through this humanisation, which makes them seem more relatable and real. To seem more approachable and in tune with the public, politicians could, for instance, release a day-in-the-life video or take part in a popular dancing competition. However, there are risks and difficulties associated with using TikTok in politics. Because the forum is casual, content may occasionally be misunderstood or removed from context, which could cause backlash.

Additionally, the fast-paced nature of TikTok trends can make it difficult for politicians to keep up, and missteps in trying to engage with trends can lead to accusations of inauthenticity. There are also concerns about data privacy and the platform’s ownership, which have led to debates about its use in political campaigning.

### METHODOLOGY

The initial stage of composing a conceptual paper was examining related publications to determine any commonalities among them. Semantic Scholar, Google Scholar, Sage Publications, and Research Gate were among the search engines used by researchers during this era. This technique involved the usage of keywords like “politician using TikTok” and “young voter’s attention social media.” The article is then thoroughly screened by the researcher to ensure that the relevant subject will be used to compose the article.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The key sources for establishing the context of the politicians to gain young voters’ attention were identified with five papers, while the remaining articles included supporting materials for the current study (Table 1). The study’s scope is the aspects of politicians and young voters that affected their voting. These recommendations are thought to be relevant for politicians to gain young voter’s attention.

Table 1. Articles selected in formulating the literature

Authors And Year of Publication	Constructs	Respondents
Shelby Gui Chin Fung (2023)	Celebrity Politician Tiktok’s Towards Behaviour	Young Voters
Nur Syahira, Ahlam Abdul Aziz & Dzaa Imma Abdul Latiff (2023)	Use Of Tiktok Among Millennials During Election Campaign	Millennials

Nur Syakirin Husnal Az Hari (2022)	Social Media Content and Its Influence on Voters Loyalty to Political Readers	Political Leaders
Cheung Et Al., (2022)	“I Follow What You Post!”: The Role of Social Media Influencers’ Content Characteristics in Consumers’ Online Brand-Related Activities (Cobras)	Consumers
Kemp, S (2022)	Digital 2022: Tiktok’s rapid rises continues – data reportal-global digital insights	worldwide

Source: Noor Afzaliza Nazira Ibrahim

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, TikTok has had a significant impact on politics by enabling politicians to reach younger audiences, humanise themselves, and create viral, engaging content. While there are challenges associated with using the platform, its potential to influence public opinion and voter engagement, especially among younger demographics, makes it an increasingly important tool in modern political campaigns. As politicians continue to explore creative ways to leverage TikTok, its role in shaping political discourse and voter behaviour is likely to grow.

Based on Literat, Boxman-Shabtai, Kligler-Vilenchik (2022), and Kaminska et al. (2017), it is evident that social media platforms play a significant role in shaping political discourse and voter behaviour. TikTok, as explored by Literat et al., provides a unique space for media criticism, challenging traditional paradigms of protest coverage and offering a platform for alternative narratives. Meanwhile, Kaminska et al.’s study highlights how social media platforms influenced the dissemination of news during the 2017 UK General elections, underscoring their power in shaping public opinion and political outcomes. Together, these studies illustrate the transformative impact of social media on modern political communication, where platforms like TikTok not only serve as battlegrounds for political messaging but also as critical spaces for media engagement and critique.

Future research could explore this topic with the use of other social media and see the impact on how politicians can attract young voter’s attention to vote for them.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors extend their sincere appreciation to Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Melaka, for the invaluable support provided in the completion of this article.

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