

TikTok and Politics: A Bibliometric Mapping of Research Trends

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Abstract

TikTok has evolved from an entertainment platform into a key space for political communication, campaign strategies, and voter engagement. This study uses bibliometric analysis to map research trends on TikTok's role in politics, elections, and digital activism. By analyzing 149 articles from Scopus and Google Scholar using VOSviewer, we found a significant increase in publications since 2020, mainly related to political campaigns, disinformation, influencer marketing, and artificial intelligence. The analysis identified nine major research clusters, including political mobilization, campaign misinformation, and personalization of political messages through algorithms. TikTok has also become important in Southeast Asian politics, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia. Beyond formal campaigns, the platform serves as a space for youth activism and issue-based mobilization. The use of artificial intelligence in political communication raises concerns about algorithmic bias, content moderation, and digital ethics, warranting further research. This study provides a comprehensive overview of the TikTok-and-politics research landscape and proposes further exploration of geopolitical implications, regulations, and long-term impacts on democracy.

Keywords: TikTok, political communication, digital campaigns, disinformation, artificial intelligence, activism, bibliometric analysis

1. Introduction

TikTok has emerged as an important platform for political communication and voter engagement, particularly among younger demographics (Ibrahim et al., 2024; Serrano et al., 2020). Politicians leverage TikTok's unique features to humanize themselves and spread their messages rapidly (Cervi & Marín-Lladó, 2021; Ibrahim et al., 2024). This platform facilitates interactive political discourse and cross-partisan discussions (Ali et al., 2022; Serrano et al., 2020). However, TikTok's rise has sparked geopolitical concerns regarding data security and political influence, particularly in the United States (Jia & Liang, 2021; Liu, 2024). Alleged Chinese ownership of the platform has led to calls for bans and increased surveillance (Bach et al., 2023; Liu, 2024). Despite these challenges, TikTok continues to shape political landscapes globally, offering new opportunities for political engagement, while raising questions about digital sovereignty and the balance between technological innovation and national security (Hindarto, 2022; Liu, 2024).

TikTok has evolved from an entertainment platform into a significant political battleground, with political parties and candidates using it to shape public opinion and garner support (Ali et al., 2022; Serrano et al., 2020). The platform's unique affordances enable interactive political communication among younger users (Cervi & Marín-Lladó, 2021; Hindarto, 2022). Political actors across various countries have adopted TikTok for campaigning, often employing politainment strategies to engage voters (Cervi & Marín-Lladó, 2021; Zamora-Medina et al., 2023). However, TikTok's rise has also sparked geopolitical tensions, with some governments viewing it as a security threat owing to concerns over data privacy and political influence (Gray, 2021; Miao et al., 2023). This shift from a depoliticized business miracle to a repoliticized security issue highlights the complex interplay between digital platforms, political communication, and international relations in the contemporary media landscape.

The fear of TikTok's influence is increasingly evident in the various restrictions that have been imposed, ranging from the discourse of banning to pressure on its parent company, ByteDance, to sell its assets in the United States (Maheshwari & Holpuch, 2025). The US government is concerned that TikTok serves not only as an entertainment tool but also as a medium that can shape people's political perceptions, often in ways that traditional authorities cannot monitor (Filipiak, 2025). In some cases, these platforms have proven to be a key factor in political mobilization, such as in US elections, social movements, and other digital campaigns (Minges, 2025).

Several studies have attempted to understand TikTok's impact on politics, particularly in elections and political campaigns (Febriandy & Revolusi, 2024; Husain et al., 2024). These studies reveal how TikTok is used to appeal to young voters, build candidate images, and amplify emerging political issues (Adam et al., 2024; Moffett & Rice, 2024). Although various studies have provided important insights, many aspects remain unexplored, particularly information security and geopolitical influences (Gray, 2021; Jia & Liang, 2021).

Bibliometric analysis is required to explore recent developments in the relationship between TikTok and politics. Bibliometric studies are crucial for mapping research landscapes and identifying trends in the scientific literature. They provide quantitative insights into influential authors, institutions, and journals across various disciplines (Merigó & Yang, 2017; Zupic & Čater, 2015). These studies employed statistical techniques to analyze large datasets, offering a more objective evaluation of research impact than traditional review methods (Kumar, 2025; Oliveira et al., 2019). Bibliometric analyses have been applied in diverse fields, including finance, accounting, and library science, to reveal emerging topics and collaborative networks (Anyi et al., 2009; A. Khan et al., 2022). Recent advancements in bibliometric tools and methodologies such as science mapping and text mining have enhanced the efficiency and effectiveness of literature reviews (H. Chen et al., 2023). By providing a comprehensive overview of research domains, bibliometric studies support the development of scientific projects and inform academic, policy, and institutional strategies in an increasingly data-driven research landscape (Kumar, 2025; Oliveira et al., 2019).

This study conducts a bibliometric analysis of articles indexed in Scopus and Google Scholar that discuss the role of TikTok in politics, campaigns, and elections. The analysis used the Publish, Perish, Mendeley, and VOSviewer applications. The findings of this study are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the direction of research trends and academic contributions made in this field. The results of this study are expected to provide a strong basis for future research examining more specific and relevant topics related to the impact of TikTok on politics in the digital era.

2. Method

The data were obtained from two primary sources: Scopus and Google Scholar. Both sources were used to obtain comprehensive data coverage. Scopus is a credible academic database that contains rigorous journal indices. At the same time, Google Scholar offers broader coverage, including other research-based literature and articles that may not have been exclusively indexed in Scopus. Combining these two sources is expected to reduce potential information gaps and improve the accuracy of the data collected.

Search results using the keywords “TikTok” AND “politics” OR “election” OR “campaign” returned 152 articles from Scopus and 76 articles from Google Scholar. To avoid incompleteness and duplication of article information that may occur due to data collection from two different sources, the researcher conducted a screening stage using the Mendeley application.

At the screening stage in Mendeley, sorting was performed to remove duplicate articles (duplicate or double) because there may be the same articles from both sources. After the duplicate removal process, further sorting was performed based on the relevance of the articles in the research context. The screening process ensured that only articles that met the research criteria were included in the final analysis. Based on this screening, 149 articles were included in the study.

After the selection stage, the article data were exported in “.ris” and “.csv” formats. Bibliometric analysis was conducted using VOSviewer software. VOSviewer visualizes and analyzes bibliometric data through network mapping, including the number of publications, most productive authors, journals with the highest number of citations, and keywords that often appear. In the visualization process, keywords with a minimum frequency of occurrence of three times were set as the analysis limit, whereas less relevant keywords were eliminated.

3. Results

3.1 Publication Data Search Results

A search of publication data using the keywords “TikTok” AND “politics” OR “election” OR “campaign” in two primary databases, Scopus and Google Scholar, showed that there were 152 articles found in Scopus and 76 articles in Google Scholar. After screening using Mendeley's method to eliminate duplicate articles and sorting based on their level of relevance to this research, 149 articles were used for further analysis. Some sample articles are shown in Table 1, with information components such as authorship, title, year of publication, and number of citations. We sampled based on the highest number of citations; therefore, the attached data comprised 24 articles.

Table 1. Publication data on TikTok and politics

No.	Authors	Title	Year	Cites
1	(Li et al., 2023)	Empathy with influencers? The impact of the sensory advertising experience on user behavioral responses	2023	29
2	(Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024)	From likes to loyalty: Exploring the impact of influencer credibility on purchase intentions in TikTok	2024	28
3	(Zhao & Abidin, 2023)	The “Fox Eye” Challenge Trend: Anti-Racism Work, Platform Affordances, and the Vernacular of Gesticular Activism on TikTok	2023	24
4	(Pan et al., 2022)	Social Media Influencer Viewing and Intentions to Change Appearance: A Large-Scale Cross-Sectional Survey on Female Social Media Users in China	2022	17
5	(Bösch & Ricks, 2021)	Broken Promises: TikTok and the German Election Mozilla Foundation	2021	13
6	(Goodwin et al., 2023)	Political Relational Influencers: The Mobilization of Social Media Influencers in the Political Arena	2023	13
7	(Gounaridis & Newell, 2024)	The social anatomy of climate change denial in the United States	2024	13
8	(Moir, 2023)	The Use of TikTok for Political Campaigning in Canada: The Case of Jagmeet Singh	2023	12
9	(Papakyriakopoulos et al., 2022)	How algorithms shape the distribution of political advertising: Case studies of Facebook, Google, and TikTok	2022	11
10	(Mendoza, 2022)	Philippine Elections 2022: TikTok in Bongbong Marcos Presidential Campaign	2022	10
11	(HUNG, 2022)	TikTok Content in Communication Strategy: Politics of the 15th General Election in Malaysia	2022	10
12	(Ooi, 2022)	How Political Parties Used TikTok in the 2022 Malaysian General Election	2022	10
13	(Seppälä, 2020)	Creative Political Participation on TikTok during the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election	2020	9
14	(Alonso-López et al., 2023)	TikTok and active audiences in processes for political and structural change. An exploratory study based on the Scottish referendum	2023	9
15	(Razali & Abdul Hani, 2022)	“If there is a Declaration of War, We Welcome the War”: Undi-18, TikTok Election and Normalisation of Violence	2022	8
16	(Arnot et al., 2024)	Australian youth perspectives on the role of social media in climate action	2024	8
17	(Subre et al., 2023)	The Use of TikTok Among Millennials During General Election 15 (GE15) Campaign	2023	6
18	(Skinner, 2022)	“Do you want to form an alliance with me?” Glimpses of Utopia in the Works of Queer Women and Non-Binary Creators on TikTok	2022	5
19	(Y. Khan & Thakur, 2022)	Fake News Detection of South African COVID-19 Related Tweets using Machine Learning	2022	5
20	(Lima et al., 2023)	The use and impact of TikTok in the 2022 Brazilian presidential election	2023	5
21	(Febriandy & Revolusi, 2024)	Digital Storytelling As Political Image Construction in the 2024 Presidential Election Campaign: Case Study of the Tiktok Account @Gibran_Rakabuming	2024	5
22	(Schaffar, 2021)	I Am not Here for Fun: The Satirical Facebook Group Royalists Marketplace, Queer TikToking, and the New Democracy Movement in Thailand: An Interview With Pavin Chachavalpongpun	2021	4
23	(Paul, 2022)	We risk another crisis: TikTok in danger of being major vector of election misinformation	2022	4
24	(Pierri et al., 2023)	A Multi-Platform Dataset of Social Media Conversations Around the 2022 Italian General Election	2023	4

The distribution of publication years shows that research on TikTok in politics, elections, and campaigns has increased significantly over the last five years. The graph of publication distribution by year shows that, before 2020, the number of studies addressing this topic was minimal. However, since 2021, there has been a significant surge in the number of publications ahead of elections in various countries and the increasing role of TikTok as a political communication tool (Ali et al., 2022; Cervi et al., 2023; HUNG, 2022).

Table 2. Publication data on TikTok and politics

Year	Number of articles
2020	2
2021	10
2022	18
2023	38
2024	69
2025	12

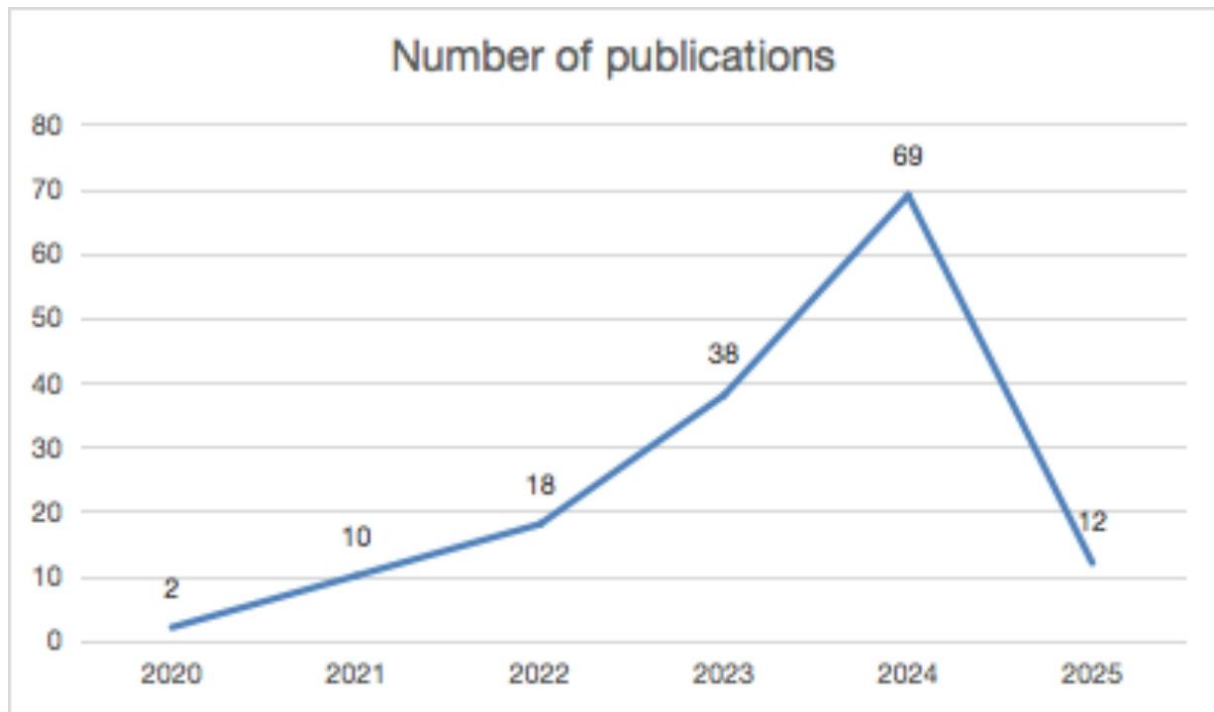


Figure 1. Trends in TikTok and politics research publications (2020–2025)

The number of publications show a significant upward trend from 2020 to 2024. The largest spike occurred in 2024, with the number of publications reaching 69 articles, almost doubling compared to the previous year (38 articles in 2023). However, there is a sharp decline in 2025, with only 12 articles published. However, it should be noted that these data likely only reflect the beginning of 2025; thus, there is still a chance that this figure could increase over time.

3.2 Scope/Subject Distribution in TikTok and Politics Research

Table 3 presents the distribution of research topics based on the scope or subject area of journals that have published studies on TikTok and politics.

Table 3. Scope/Subject distribution in TikTok and politics research

Rank	Scope/Subject area	Number of articles
1	Political Communication	25
2	Social Media Studies	22
3	Journalism & Media	18
4	Digital Politics	15
5	Misinformation & Disinformation	12
6	Election Studies	10
7	Computational Social Science	9
8	Public Opinion Research	8
9	Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning	6
10	Social Movements & Activism	5
11	Policy & Governance	4
12	Digital Ethics & Moderation	3

The data highlight that political communication and social media studies are the most prominent research areas on TikTok.

This finding suggests that the platform's role in shaping political discourse and influencing public opinion is a key area of scholarly interest. Meanwhile, misinformation, disinformation, and Election Studies remain significant, reflecting growing concerns about the spread of false information and the impact of TikTok on political campaigns (Y. Chen, 2022; Moir, 2023). The low number of studies on policy and governance, Digital Ethics, and moderation suggests potential areas for further exploration in future research.

3.3 Country Distribution in TikTok and Politics Research

Table 4 presents the distribution of the countries studied in the context of TikTok and political research.

Table 4. Country distribution of TikTok and politics research

Rank	Scope/Subject area	Number of articles
1	Indonesia	20
2	Malaysia	19
3	Brazil	10
4	United States	9
5	China	7
6	Peru	5
7	Germany	4
8	India	4
9	Australia	4
10	Canada	2
11	France	1

The data indicate that Indonesia and Malaysia were the most studied countries in terms of TikTok and politics, highlighting the significance of the platform in Southeast Asia. Brazil, the United States, and China have also received considerable attention, likely because of their large user bases and the political impact of social media in these regions. The few studies on countries such as France and Canada have suggested potential research gaps that could be explored in future studies.

3.4 Visualization of TikTok and Politics Research Topics using VOSviewer

To visualize research trends and relationships between topics in TikTok and political studies, bibliometric mapping was conducted using VOSviewer. The analysis identified 44 items distributed across 9 clusters, with 177 links and a total link strength of 333.

- 1) Cluster 1 (nine items) is marked in red and includes campaigns, disinformation, electoral campaigns, fake news, gen Z, Instagram, misinformation, politics, and Twitter (X).
- 2) Cluster 2 (seven items) is marked in green and includes artificial intelligence, climate change, communication, elections, machine learning, political campaigns, and social media.
- 3) Cluster 3 (six items) is marked in blue and includes content analysis, electoral campaign, personalization, Peru, political communication, and social network.
- 4) Cluster 4 (six items) is marked in yellow and includes general elections, hate speech, Malaysia, politainment, political campaigns, and presidential elections.
- 5) Cluster 5 (six items) is marked in purple and includes bibliometric analysis, election campaigns, political parties, social media platforms, youth, and YouTube.
- 6) Cluster 6 (four items) is marked in tosca and includes China, content moderation, elections, and platform governance.
- 7) Cluster 7 (three items) is marked in orange and includes activism, TikTok, and young voters.
- 8) Cluster 8 (one item) is marked in brown and includes political marketing.
- 9) Cluster 9 (one item) is marked in pink and includes influencer marketing.

Bibliometric visualization highlights key trends in research on TikTok and politics. One dominant theme is the role of social media in political campaigns, with keywords such as “campaign,” “political campaigns,” and “social media,” indicating that TikTok is increasingly used in political activities, especially those related to elections (Widholm et al., 2024). This research also includes comparisons with other platforms, such as Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, in shaping political discourse. In addition, the issue of misinformation is a primary concern, as seen from the emergence of keywords such as “fake news,” “misinformation,” and “disinformation,” which emphasize the role of misleading information in shaping voter perceptions and political narratives online (Thaker, 2019).

Research has also shown a growing interest in integrating technology and artificial intelligence into the political discourse on TikTok (Santana et al., 2025). Keywords such as “Artificial Intelligence” and “Machine Learning” focus on algorithmic bias, content recommendations, and the role of artificial intelligence(AI) in user interactions with political material. Additionally, this research reflects a specific geographic focus, with countries such as China, Malaysia, and Peru as the objects of study. This study highlighted content moderation, platform governance, and election integrity in various regulatory contexts.

Another interesting aspect is the increasing attention being paid to the role of influencers and political marketing on TikTok. Keywords such as “influencer marketing” and “political marketing” suggest that political campaigns increasingly collaborate with digital content creators to influence public opinion and mobilize voters (Allegrini, 2023). Finally, youth engagement and political activism became significant themes, as indicated by the occurrence of the keywords “young voters,” “activism,” and “TikTok” in one cluster (Moffett & Rice, 2024; Zhao & Abidin, 2023). This confirms that the platform is becoming an important space for young people’s political engagement and the mobilization of sociopolitical issues.

The network visualization image (see Figure 2) from VOSviewer shows the intertopic relationships between TikTok and political research. Larger nodes indicate topics that appear more frequently in the literature, whereas lines connecting nodes reflect the relationships or interrelationships between topics based on their co-occurrence in publications. Different colors mark different clusters, which depict groups of concepts that are more closely related in the research.

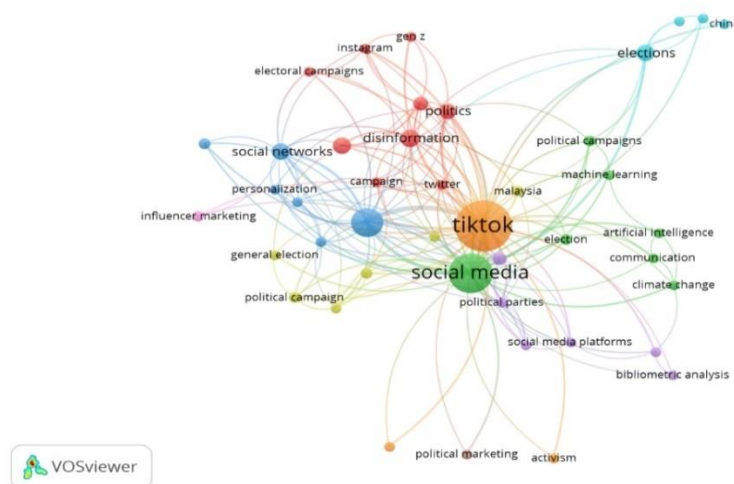


Figure 2. Network visualization of TikTok and politics

Bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer revealed the key themes in TikTok and politics research. At the network’s core, “TikTok” and “social media” dominate, indicating that studies primarily position TikTok within the broader social media landscape. Other prominent themes closely linked to the center include “politics,” “elections,” “political campaigns,” and “disinformation,” highlighting the platform’s role in democratic processes. Visualization further identifies distinct clusters: the green cluster focuses on elections, political campaigns, and the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, reflecting the growing interest in how technology influences political engagement. The red cluster connects politics with misinformation, disinformation, and electoral campaigns, underlining concerns about misleading information and its interaction with platforms such as Twitter and Instagram. Meanwhile, the blue cluster centers on social networks, influencer marketing, and personalization, emphasizing the role of digital influencers in shaping political narratives. Finally, the purple cluster groups social media platforms, bibliometric analysis, and activism, pointing to broader discussions on the impact of social media on political mobilization.

Emerging research trends suggest a shift toward digital political campaigns, with influencer marketing and personalized strategies becoming more prevalent. The increasing presence of AI and machine learning in the green cluster also signals an increasing focus on voter behavioral analytics. Additionally, the presence of content moderation and climate change as keywords reflects the ongoing debates on platform governance and TikTok’s role in global discourse. In summary, TikTok and political research extend beyond election campaigns to include issues such as disinformation, AI-driven political engagement, influencer marketing, and regulatory challenges. Future studies should explore TikTok’s long-term implications for digital democracy, platform policies, and ethical dimensions of AI-driven political content.

This overlay visualization (see Figure 3) from VOSviewer shows the relationships between topics in TikTok research and

politics, focusing on how topics evolve. The colors in this visualization represent the publication years of the relevant studies, with a color scale ranging from blue (early 2020) to yellow (late 2023 to early 2025).

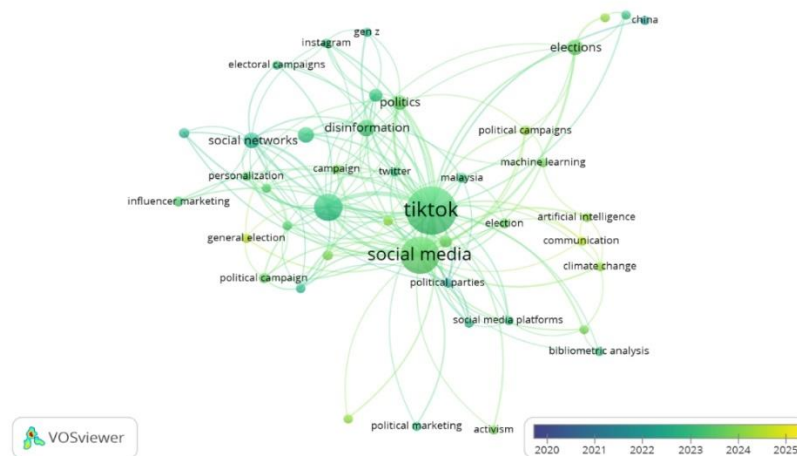


Figure 3. Overlay visualization of TikTok and politics

The results of the bibliometric visualization show that “TikTok” and “Social Media” are central to digital politics research, with keywords such as “disinformation,” “elections,” “political campaigns,” and “social networks” highlighting the role of these platforms in political campaigns and information dissemination (Nurul Fadhilah et al., 2023). Overlay visualization indicates a recent trend of increasingly integrating technology and environmental issues, as keywords such as “machine learning,” “artificial intelligence,” and “climate change” appear (Pera & Aiello, 2024).

The network structure revealed a close relationship between misinformation, politics, and various digital platforms. “Disinformation” correlates with “Twitter,” suggesting that misinformation studies on TikTok are often compared with other social media. “Elections” and “political campaigns” have strong connections with “social media,” emphasizing the role of digital media in political strategy. Influencer marketing” and “personalization” reflect how TikTok is leveraged in targeted political marketing (Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024; Allegrini, 2023).

Another important finding was the link between TikTok and political activism. The keywords “activism,” “young voters,” and “politainment” suggest that the platform is not only used for formal campaigning but also as a space for social movements and political mobilization of young people (Cervi et al., 2023; Moffett & Rice, 2024; Zhao & Abidin, 2023). TikTok is a medium for digital activism that can shape public opinion and increase political participation outside traditional channels.

Recent campaigns illustrate how TikTok functions as both a strategic tool and a cultural space. In Indonesia, *Prabowo Subianto*’s 2024 presidential campaign used humorous and meme-based videos to rebrand him as a “gemoy” (adorable) grandfather figure, resonating strongly with Gen Z (Febriandy & Revolusi, 2024; Indainanto et al., 2025; Wahid, 2024). In the Philippines, *Bongbong Marcos* employed nostalgic and upbeat TikTok content to attract younger voters and rehabilitate his family’s controversial legacy (Mendoza, 2022). In Malaysia, during the 2022 general election, TikTok was used to distribute political messages and counter disinformation, with youth remixing and amplifying content actively (Abdullah, 2023; HUNG, 2022; Husain et al., 2024; Ooi, 2022).

These cases underscore the evolving nature of political communication in the digital era, where platforms such as TikTok are used to disseminate campaigns, shape political identities, engage emotionally with voters, and navigate the generational divide. They also affirmed the urgency for further interdisciplinary research bridging digital media studies, political science, and youth culture to fully understand the implications of algorithm-driven campaigns.

Beyond orchestrated campaigns, TikTok has emerged as a vital tool for grassroots political activism, particularly among the youth. It offers a space for creative and emotionally driven expressions of dissent that often bypass traditional media and institutional structures. In the U.S., during the 2020 election, TikTok users, especially K-pop fans and progressive youth, disrupted a Trump rally by reserving seats en masse with no intention of attending, effectively using the platform for digital protest (Culliford, 2020). In Thailand, pro-democracy activists use satire, memes, and a remixed culture to challenge military rule and mobilize support online (Jalli, 2025; Teeratanabodee, 2025).

Even in Hong Kong, TikTok has been used to assert a local identity and resist authoritarian influence. Amid the 2019 anti-extradition protests, young users deployed sound memes, Cantonese vernacular, and urban imagery to craft a distinct “Hongkonger” identity and express solidarity. These creative acts functioned as subtle forms of resistance, although the platform was later withdrawn in 2020 because of national security concerns (Darvin, 2022).

These examples demonstrate how TikTok supports new forms of political engagement that merge entertainment and resistance. They reveal a broader trend in digital activism in which affect, creativity, and virality have become central tools for political expression and transnational solidarity. Although these developments highlight TikTok's potential to foster innovative political participation, they also raise pressing ethical and regulatory concerns.

In the realm of digital politics, TikTok has become a contested space between state, corporate, and civic interests (Griffin, 2023; Jia & Liang, 2021; Moffett & Rice, 2024). Algorithm design is not neutral; it shapes public opinion, facilitates disinformation, and may even undermine electoral integrity (Gray, 2021). TikTok's recommendation system, driven by opaque logic and proprietary interests, often lacks accountability and transparency, enabling potential abuse by political actors (Papakyriakopoulos et al., 2022; Scalvini, 2023). These risks are compounded by data privacy concerns and geopolitical tensions surrounding platform ownership (Gray, 2021; Jia & Liang, 2021; Juned et al., 2023).

Recent studies (Scalvini, 2023) have shown that ethical responsibility must extend beyond users to the architecture of recommendation systems. Scalvini's notion of *algorithmic pluralism* critiques the narrow definitions of diversity and calls for systems that reflect broader social values and identities. Elliott and MacCarthaigh (2025) cautioned that dominant accountability frameworks should remain procedural and technocratic, leaving structural power asymmetries unchallenged.

These insights underscore the urgent need for a bibliometric research that systematically traces how scholars examine ethical governance, algorithmic accountability, and digital political manipulation in different contexts. Future studies should compare regulatory models, identify gaps in global policy discourse, and promote interdisciplinary frameworks that ensure transparency, protect democratic participation, and align platform governance with the public interest.

This density visualization image (see Figure 4) shows the density of terms frequently appearing in research related to TikTok and politics. Brighter colors (yellow) indicate areas of higher term frequency and stronger relationships, whereas darker colors (blue) indicate areas of lower frequency.

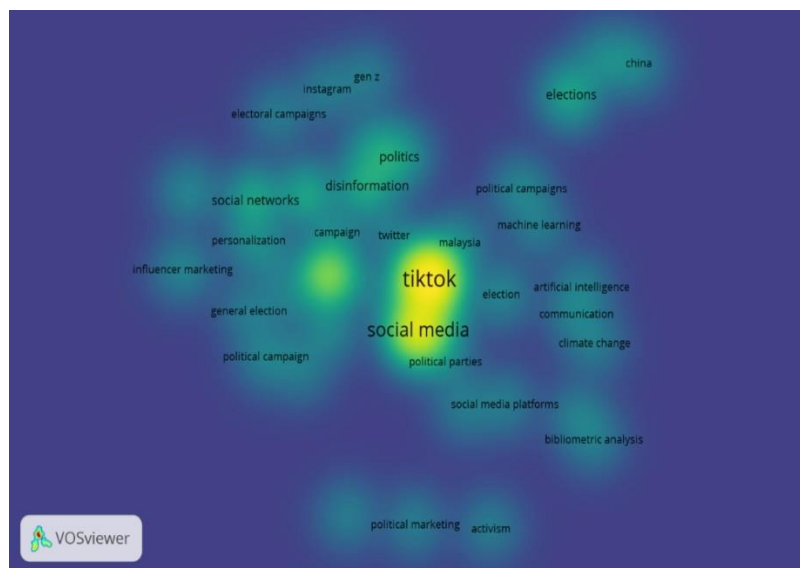


Figure 4. Density visualization of TikTok and politics

This data visualization shows that TikTok and social media are becoming a significant focus in the study of digital politics, especially in the context of campaigns, disinformation, and the personalization of political messages. The keywords "TikTok" and "Social Media" have the highest density, indicating that these platforms increasingly play a role in political communication strategies. Key emerging issues include disinformation, with strong links between "disinformation," "Twitter," and "social networks," suggesting that the spread of misinformation through social media is a primary research concern. In addition, "elections," "political campaigns," and "electoral campaigns" confirmed TikTok's role in electoral politics, where digital campaigns increasingly rely on message personalization and marketing through "influencer marketing."

Recent trends point to the integration of technology in politics, as reflected by the emergence of the keywords "machine learning," "artificial intelligence," and "communication," indicating the use of algorithms for campaign strategy and content moderation. However, the presence of keywords such as "climate change," "activism," and country names such as "Malaysia" and "China" indicates that TikTok is also a tool for mobilizing global social movements and activism. Thus, future research could explore content moderation and digital ethics, the impact of AI on voter behavior, and international comparisons of TikTok use in politics and activism. These trends suggest that TikTok is an entertainment platform and strategic space for contemporary political dynamics.

4. Conclusions

This study demonstrated that TikTok has evolved into a significant platform for contemporary political communication. Through a bibliometric analysis of 149 publications, this study identified key themes, including political communication, disinformation, and digital campaign strategies, with a geographic focus on Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia. TikTok is not merely used by political actors to build public images and engage young voters but also functions as a dynamic arena for digital political activism shaped by algorithmic structures and audience participation.

Network visualization using VOSviewer revealed nine major clusters that reflected the complex interplay between TikTok and politics, including influencer marketing, misinformation dissemination, and youth voter mobilization. These findings underscore that TikTok is not simply a channel of communication but a contested technological and political space that redefines how political influence is exercised and perceived.

Furthermore, this study highlights ethical and regulatory challenges that require urgent attention. Issues such as disinformation, algorithmic bias, and data manipulation vulnerabilities present critical concerns that call for an interdisciplinary inquiry. As a sociotechnological entity, TikTok demands a new understanding of digital democracy and information governance, which is essential for researchers, policymakers, and the public alike.

Nonetheless, this study had several methodological limitations. The reliance on specific keywords and selected databases (Scopus and Google Scholar) may have led to the exclusion of relevant studies. In addition, the bibliometric approach emphasizes quantitative aspects and bibliographic connections without delving into the content and context of individual articles. Future studies should combine bibliometric methods with qualitative approaches to obtain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding.

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Authors contributions

Tonny Pangihutan Situmorang was primarily responsible for the research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation of the findings, and drafting of the manuscript. Alwi Dahlan Ritonga contributed to the development of the theoretical framework, provided critical revisions, and offered conceptual insights during the analysis and discussion. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript prior to submission.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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