

A Bibliometric Analysis of Social Media Utilization by Political Parties in the Context of Digital Democracy



Analisis Bibliometrik Penggunaan Media Sosial oleh Partai Politik dalam Konteks Demokrasi Digital

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	
<p>Keywords <i>Social Media;</i> <i>Political Communication;</i> <i>Digital Campaigns;</i> <i>Disinformation;</i> <i>Political Parties;</i></p>	<p>ABSTRACT The growing use of social media by political parties has reshaped the landscape of political communication and campaign strategies in the digital democracy era. This study maps the evolution of scholarly literature on the utilization of social media by political parties from 2015 to 2025. Using bibliometric analysis through VOSviewer and data from the Scopus database, 97 peer-reviewed articles were examined to identify publication trends, dominant keywords, thematic structures, and patterns of author and country collaboration. The results reveal a significant increase in publications after 2019, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting a global shift toward digital campaigning. Key themes include social media, political communication, elections, disinformation, and populism, indicating growing scholarly attention to digital political transformation. The United Kingdom, Germany, and Spain emerged as the most productive contributors to this research field. However, the study is limited by its exclusive reliance on Scopus-indexed English-language publications, potentially overlooking non-English or regional studies, particularly from developing democracies. Future research should incorporate comparative datasets, mixed-method analyses, and deeper explorations of emerging platforms such as TikTok or Telegram to capture the evolving dynamics of algorithmic politics and audience engagement in digital democracy.</p>
<p>Kata Kunci <i>Media Sosial;</i> <i>Komunikasi Politik;</i> <i>Kampanye Digital;</i> <i>Disinformasi;</i> <i>Partai Politik;</i></p>	<p>ABSTRAK Meningkatnya penggunaan media sosial oleh partai politik telah mengubah lanskap komunikasi politik dan strategi kampanye di era demokrasi digital. Penelitian ini memetakan evolusi literatur ilmiah mengenai pemanfaatan media sosial oleh partai politik selama periode 2015–2025. Dengan menggunakan analisis bibliometrik melalui VOSviewer dan data dari basis data Scopus, sebanyak 97 artikel ilmiah</p>

	<p>telah dianalisis untuk mengidentifikasi tren publikasi, kata kunci dominan, struktur tematik, serta pola kolaborasi antarpemulis dan negara. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan publikasi yang signifikan setelah tahun 2019, terutama selama pandemi COVID-19, yang mencerminkan pergeseran global menuju kampanye digital. Tema utama yang muncul meliputi media sosial, komunikasi politik, pemilu, disinformasi, dan populisme, yang menandakan meningkatnya perhatian akademik terhadap transformasi politik digital. Inggris, Jerman, dan Spanyol muncul sebagai negara paling produktif dalam bidang ini. Namun, penelitian ini memiliki keterbatasan karena hanya menggunakan artikel berbahasa Inggris yang terindeks Scopus, sehingga berpotensi mengabaikan kajian lokal atau non-Inggris, khususnya dari negara berkembang. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan untuk memperluas basis data, menggunakan pendekatan <i>mixed methods</i>, serta mengeksplorasi platform baru seperti TikTok dan Telegram guna memahami dinamika politik algoritmik dan keterlibatan pemilih dalam demokrasi digital.</p>
<p>Article History Send 16thSeptember 2025 Review 27th October 2025 Accepted 16th December2025</p>	<p>Copyright ©2026 Jurnal Aristo (Social, Politic, Humaniora) This is an open access article under the CC-BY-NC-SA license. Akses artikel terbuka dengan model CC-BY-NC-SA sebagai lisensinya.</p>



Introduction

The huge digital upheaval that has transpired over the previous two decades has altered the landscape of global politics, especially in Indonesia (Pradana et al., 2023; Sulistijanto et al., 2023), where many political parties use social media for campaigns (Cobis & Rusadi, 2023) and also public service, information dissemination, and Public policy (Habich-Sobiegalla & Plümmer, 2023; Reidy & Suiter, 2023). One of the major shifts is the transition of political communication from traditional to digital, with social media serving as the primary tool. Political parties, as crucial actors in democratic systems, are encouraged to adapt to this new media landscape to preserve relevance, increase reach, and solidify public support, particularly among younger generations who are more technologically proficient (Aziz & Bischoff, 2025; Budiana, 2024; Ernst et al., 2019).

The development of social media has fundamentally changed the way political parties interact with the public. In the context of digital democracy, social media is no longer just an additional communication tool but rather a strategic part of modern political campaigns. Global studies have confirmed that social media allows parties to shape political narratives, increase candidate visibility, and mobilize support directly and efficiently (Alonso-Muñoz et al., 2022; Aziz & Bischoff, 2025). Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok are used not only to spread political messages but also to create an emotional and relational image between parties and voters (Magin et al., 2024; Terradillos et al., 2025).

Several studies show a strong relationship between digital strategy and voter behavior. Lukito et al. (2025) show how a multi-platform approach improves campaign effectiveness and partisan attachment. Meanwhile, Figeac et al. (2024) discuss how user interaction metrics (such as likes, shares, and comments) are used by parties to adjust their communication tactics in real-time. In the context of negative campaigns and framing of issues, research by Tirado-García (2023) and Juhász & Bene (2022) reveals how social media reinforces polarization through strategies of criticism and attacks on political opponents. In developing countries, the role of social media in democratizing information is also a dynamic space for political contestation. Budiana (2024) notes that in the 2019 Indonesian Election, digital actors such as political buzzers played a significant role in shaping public perception, even surpassing the role of the mainstream media.

Social media provides a more open, interactive, and real-time space for political parties to communicate directly with their constituents. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, and TikTok are not only used to disseminate information but also to shape

the party's image, convey political agendas, manage crises, and gauge public responses. This transformation indicates the emergence of digital democracy, where social media has become an integral part of the electoral political ecosystem and contemporary political communication (Alonso & Casero, 2020; Terradillos et al., 2025).

In the Indonesian context, political parties show different patterns and intensities of social media use. Especially in communications way (Andari & Wiguna, 2023), Large parties tend to use digital strategies that are structured and based on central figures, while small and new parties are more innovative and segmented in targeting young voters through visual content, humor, and populist narratives (Budiana, 2024; Pallarés-Navarro & Zugasti, 2022). However, in the midst of the development of this practice, scientific studies on how political parties use social media in Indonesia are still sporadic and have not been systematically mapped. This is where the urgency of this research arises. Various international studies have shown that the use of social media by political parties reflects political strategies, discursive power shifts, and ideological and technological interactions. A study by Ceron et al. (2024) highlights the impact of the crisis on voter engagement in Italian elections.

Lukito et al. (2025) explore cross-platform strategies in the United States midterm elections that show how parties leverage algorithmic advantages to reinforce political polarization. In Asia, Sriyai & Kwanyou (2025) explore persuasive narratives in Thai political campaigns that harness the power of storytelling on social media. These studies confirm that digital strategy is not just a trend but a structural transformation in the way parties build legitimacy and power. Unfortunately, there has not been a comprehensive bibliometric study that maps the dynamics of the scientific literature on the use of social media by political parties globally, especially in the Indonesian context. In fact, the bibliometric approach allows researchers to see trends, patterns of collaboration, dominant keywords, and thematic developments in the literature quantitatively and visually.

Other studies also highlight the rising trend of digital populism (Yavetz, 2025), the use of alternative platforms such as Telegram (Tirado-García, 2023), as well as voters' emotional engagement in the context of sensitive political issues (Ceron et al., 2024). However, there are still a few studies that systematically map the dynamics of this research using a bibliometric approach, especially in the Indonesian context. Therefore, the mapping of the literature carried out in this study is important to understand the developments, thematic tendencies, and main actors in the study of social media and political parties, as well as to identify research gaps for further academic exploration.

In synthesizing previous studies, it is essential to classify the main research themes that have emerged within the literature on social media and political parties. A thematic categorization helps to provide a clearer understanding of how scholarly discussions have evolved from general explorations of digital communication toward more specific topics, such as campaign strategies, voter engagement, populist rhetoric, and issue framing. This classification also highlights how different theoretical and methodological perspectives intersect in explaining the political functions of social media across various democratic contexts. By identifying recurring patterns and thematic clusters, the analysis offers a foundation for mapping the intellectual structure of this field. The following table summarizes the main thematic classifications identified from the reviewed literature, along with representative sources that have contributed to the conceptual development of each theme.

Table 1 Social Media Thematic Classification Table on Political Parties

Theme	Thematic Description	Source
Digital Campaign Strategy	The use of social media by political parties to convey campaign messages and build political image.	(Alonso-Muñoz et al., 2022; Aziz & Bischoff, 2025; Grantham, 2024; Liçenji, 2023; Lukito et al., 2025; Tawiah, 2025)
Public Engagement and Response	The influence of social media on voter participation and engagement during the campaign period.	(Ceron et al., 2024; Figeac et al., 2024; Terradillos et al., 2025)
Framing Negative Issues and Campaigns	The use of social media to spread criticism and negative campaigns against political opponents.	(Juhász & Bene, 2022; Pedipina et al., 2021; Tirado-García, 2023)
Populism and Emotional Politics	Populist strategies and emotional rhetoric in social media campaigns.	(Banerjee & Mitra, 2024; Pallarés-Navarro & Zugasti, 2022; Tolen et al., 2023; Yavetz, 2025)
Developing Context	Studies on the use of social media in campaigns in developing democracies are growing.	(Budiana, 2024; Saktisyahputra, 2019; Sriyai & Kwanyou, 2025; Tsertekidis, 2023)

Source: Processed by author, 2025

Social media in political communication further emphasizes the complexity of its role in shaping electoral dynamics. Darius (2022) demonstrates how Twitter has become a polarized arena in Germany’s federal elections, where partisan groups strategically utilize networked campaigning to amplify ideological divisions. This finding is consistent with broader debates on how digital platforms reinforce political cleavages rather than bridging

them. Similarly, Madariaga et al. (2022) highlight “online political promiscuity” in Spain, showing that citizens and parties alike engage in fluid interactions across ideological lines, a phenomenon that both intensifies polarization and broadens campaign outreach. At the same time, large platforms present significant structural limitations for political communication. Del-Fresno García & Daly, (2019) argue that centralized online platforms constrain pluralism, reinforcing hierarchical patterns of influence while restricting authentic grassroots deliberation.

These constraints suggest that digital democracy remains vulnerable to power imbalances, where political elites and digital amplifiers dominate discourse (Voulgari et al., 2024). Their study of “Twitter amplifiers” in the 2019 European elections reveals that coordinated retweeting strategies magnified partisan visibility, raising questions about authenticity and manipulation in digital campaigning. The role of emotions and media consumption habits is also critical. Young (2023) finds that emotional appeals, particularly under conditions of political threat, mobilize pro-opposition participation online, illustrating the affective dimension of digital democracy. In Kosovo, Fetoshi & Shahini-Hoxhaj (2023) show that during the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional campaigning was replaced by media-driven strategies, which not only disseminated information but also framed political legitimacy through mediated narratives. This trend underscores the dependency of electoral politics on hybrid forms of digital-traditional communication, especially during crises. Finally, computational approaches add further depth. Rita et al. (2023) apply sentiment analysis to electoral tweets, concluding that discourse polarity has measurable effects on voting preferences. Such data-driven insights align with the growing scholarly focus on digital trace analysis to capture electoral sentiment. Collectively, these studies illustrate that social media serves as both a site of innovation and contestation in political campaigns, enabling direct voter engagement but also fostering polarization, strategic amplification, and emotional manipulation.

This study is particularly relevant given the increasing volume of publications related to social and political media since 2015, along with the increasing use of the internet and digital media by the global community, including in developing countries. In addition to mapping the dominant actors and themes, the study also aims to identify the evolution of crucial issues, such as the emergence of digital populism strategies (Yavetz, 2025), the use of alternative platforms such as Telegram (Tirado-García, 2023), as well as negative campaign trends and political emotions (Figeac et al., 2025; Magin et al., 2024). Understanding the digital transformation of political parties through social media is

important, not only for academics, but also for policymakers, election organizers, and civil society who want to ensure that democracy remains healthy amid the rapid flow of political digitalization.

In the context of use so far, social media is not only used to spread information but also as a communication medium (Birkinshaw & Taraporevala, 2023), because the impact is very large, especially in policymaking by the government (Nugroho & Angela, 2024). However, it is not uncommon for social media to be used by several political parties as a tool of polarization in some elections (Darius, 2022; Paatelainen et al., 2021) as in the elections in Spain (Madariaga et al., 2022; Musi et al., 2024), This is because you can easily see election habits through social media (Belcastro et al., 2022). Therefore, this research was conducted to provide a comprehensive mapping of the development of scientific literature that discusses the use of social media by political parties in the context of digital campaigns during the period 2015 to 2025. With a bibliometric approach, this study seeks to identify the most frequently cited keywords, the main themes discussed, and the trends of topics that have experienced significant development in the past decade.

Bibliometric data was extracted exclusively from the Scopus database, which is recognized as one of the world's most comprehensive and credible repositories of peer-reviewed scientific literature. The dataset includes 97 journal articles published between 2015 and 2025, filtered through specific keywords—*social media*, *political party*, and *digital campaign*. These articles represent multidisciplinary perspectives encompassing political science, communication studies, sociology, and information technology. Scopus was selected for its rigorous indexing standards, consistent citation tracking, and structured metadata, which enable accurate bibliometric mapping with *VOSviewer* and *RStudio Bibliometrix*. The inclusion criteria focused solely on final, English-language journal articles to ensure analytical consistency and comparability. This methodological rigor ensures that the data used in this study reflect a validated, high-quality body of global academic discourse concerning the digital transformation of political parties through social media. In addition, this study also analyzes the level of involvement and contribution of authors and institutional affiliations, as well as the countries that are most active in producing scientific publications in this field. Through this analysis, it is hoped that a comprehensive picture of the global knowledge landscape related to the digital transformation of political parties through social media can be obtained in the global academic discourse.

Method

This study uses a bibliometric approach and qualitative research to identify and map research trends related to the use of social media by political parties in digital campaigns in the era of digital democracy. This approach is particularly suitable for use in the problem identification and early literature mapping stages, as it allows researchers to get a comprehensive picture of the development of scientific discourse in a particular field. Bibliometric data were collected from the Scopus database, which was chosen because it is one of the world's leading indexers of scientific journals, with a wide scope and diverse disciplines. The selection of Scopus as the primary source was also based on its credibility in providing scientific documents that have passed the peer review process as well as the availability of metadata that supports bibliometric analysis technically.

The search criteria in Scopus are determined through the use of the following keywords: TITLE-ABS-KEY (social media political party digital campaign) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")). This screening resulted in 97 scientific journal articles that met the inclusion criteria: published between 2015 and 2025, in English, and in the form of journal articles (not book chapters or conference proceedings). These restrictions are intended to ensure only relevant, final, and officially published articles are analyzed, thereby reducing the likelihood of irrelevant documents being entered that could affect the accuracy of the results. Furthermore, this study applies the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol as a guide in the process of screening and selecting documents, so that the literature identification process takes place systematically and transparently (Page et al., 2021). To ensure transparency and reproducibility, the process of data identification and selection in this study follows the **PRISMA** protocol. This framework provides a systematic approach to documenting how articles were retrieved, screened, and included in the final dataset, thereby minimizing potential bias and improving methodological rigor. The PRISMA flow diagram illustrates each stage of the selection process—from the initial identification of documents in the Scopus database, through screening and eligibility assessment, to the final inclusion of studies used for bibliometric analysis. This visualization serves to clarify the logical sequence and quantitative overview of the data filtering process applied in this research.

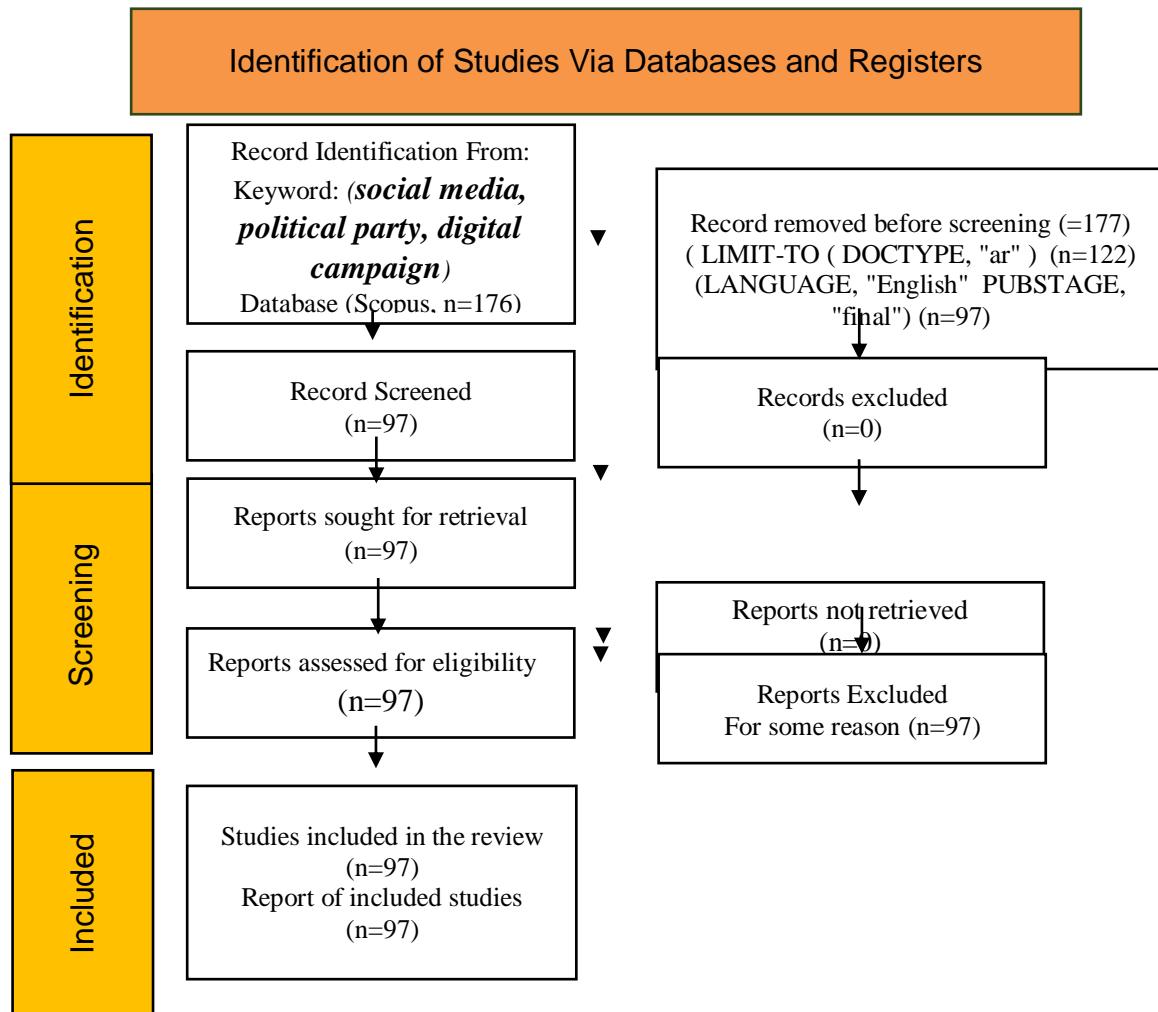


Figure 1: Method Prisma Reporting Protocol (Page et al. 2021)

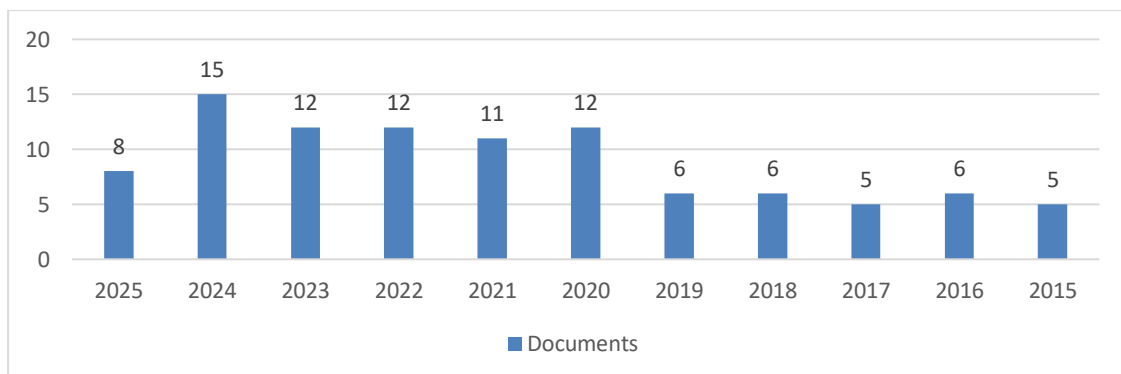
VOSviewer and R Studies (Bibliometrix package) are used to visualize and analyze. VOSviewer is used to view the network of relationships between documents, including co-authorship, co-occurrence keywords, citation analysis, and thematic clustering. VOSviewer generates a bibliometric map that allows researchers to see the relationships between keywords, authors, and the evolution of research topics. Meanwhile, R Studio (Bibliometrix package) is used as an additional tool for bibliometric statistical analysis and more in-depth quantitative visualization. Using the Bibliometrix and Biblioshiny packages, researchers can explore more deeply such as; Annual publication trends, keyword frequency analysis, analysis of the most productive sources and journals, Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), Thematic evolution map and Collaboration map based on country affiliation. The combination of VOSviewer and R Studio provides a holistic picture of the knowledge landscape in this research topic. The resulting visualization shows the pattern of relationships between authors, keywords, and the country of origin of the research, as well as the influence and citations of the analyzed document. Through this approach, this study is not only able to

identify emerging topic trends but also detect potential research gaps in the Indonesian and global digital political contexts.

Result and Discussion

Document by years and trend topics on social media and political parties.

Data on the number of publications shows a trend of increasing scientific interest in the study of social media in political parties over the past decade. From 2015 to 2017, the average article only ranged from 4 to 6 documents per year. However, since 2019, the trend has increased significantly, especially from 2020 to 2024, which consistently recorded more than 11 publications every year. The peak of productivity occurs in 2024 with 15 publications. This reflects the increasing attention to the digital transformation of political parties, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing digital political contestation in various countries. Although 2025 is not over yet, the number of articles that have been recorded shows the potential for the sustainability of this research trend. Before presenting the visualization of annual publication trends, it is essential to understand the temporal dynamics of research development in this field. Analyzing the number of publications over time provides valuable insight into how academic interest in social media and political parties has evolved throughout the past decade. This trend not only reflects technological changes and political events such as national elections and the COVID-19 pandemic but also indicates shifting research priorities within political communication and digital democracy studies. The following graph illustrates the annual growth of scientific publications from 2015 to 2025, showing how the topic has gained increasing relevance in global scholarly discourse.



Graph 1: Documents by years
Source: Processed by author, 2025

The trend of scientific publications per year shows the increasing academic attention to social media issues within political parties over the past decade. This development is then reinforced by the visualization of keyword frequency, which illustrates how the thematic focus in the literature has shifted and deepened over time. Following the analysis of publication trends, it is equally important to examine how the thematic focus of the literature has evolved. The visualization of keyword frequency provides an overview of the most prominent terms used by researchers and how their occurrence patterns have changed throughout the 2015–2025 period. This analysis helps reveal shifts in academic attention—from general discussions of social media and political communication to more nuanced themes such as disinformation, populism, and digital campaigning. By observing these variations, researchers can identify emerging topics, measure the maturity of established concepts, and anticipate new directions for future studies. The following figure illustrates the temporal evolution of keyword frequency within the literature on social media and political parties.

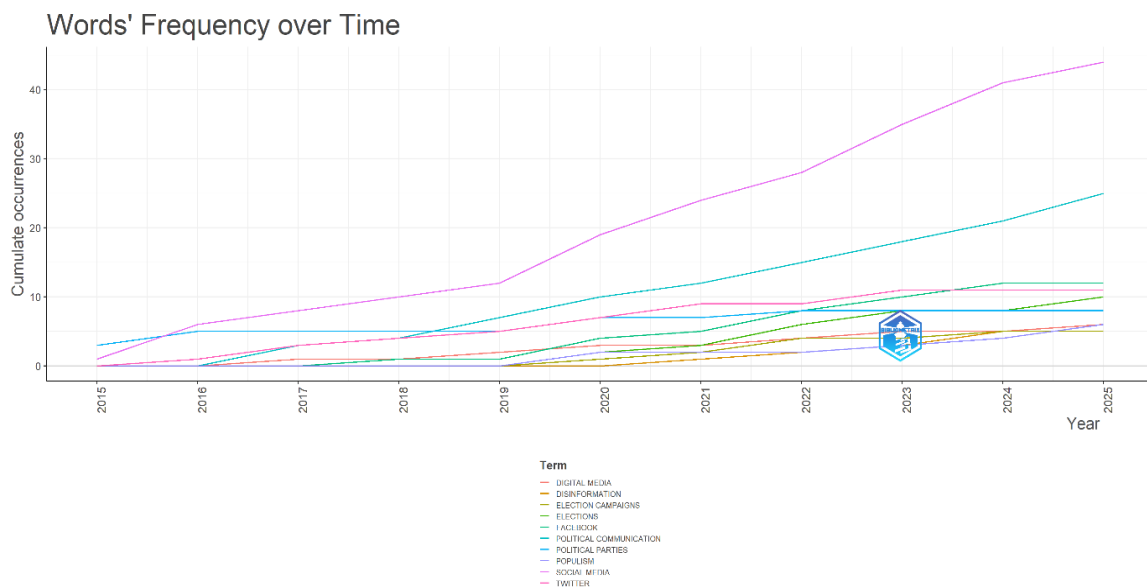


Figure 1. Word Frequency over Time

Source: Processed by author, 2025

The *Words' Frequency over Time* graph shows the cumulative dynamics of the emergence of important keywords in the scientific literature related to social media and political parties during 2015-2025. In general, there has been a clear increase in the use of the terms "Social Media", "Political Communication", and "Political Parties", which occupy the top positions in terms of frequency of appearances. This confirms that these three concepts are the dominant focus in scientific discourse, indicating that social media has been considered a major arena in modern political communication practices and party identity.

The term "Populism" has shown steady growth since 2019, signaling an increase in interest in how political parties leverage populist rhetoric in digital media, especially ahead of elections. Meanwhile, "Election Campaigns" and "Elections" as technical terms tend to increase in line with the momentum of national or regional elections, suggesting that publications are often reactive to the actual political context. The emergence of the terms "Disinformation" and "Digital Media" began to be significant after 2020.

This shows a shift in scientific attention from just discussing campaign strategy to the issue of information quality and the risks of digital manipulation. The terms "Twitter" and "Facebook" have tended to stagnate in recent years, which could reflect the shift of major platforms to TikTok or Instagram, although they are not explicitly shown in this graph. Overall, this graph reflects the evolution of the topic from basic communication issues to the dimensions of ethics, emotions, and digital polarity. These maps are important in helping researchers identify long-term trends, avoid theme repetition, and explore underutilized areas of research, such as the use of new platforms, micro-targeting strategies, and public responses to AI-driven political content. After identifying keyword frequency trends, the next step is to explore how these themes have evolved conceptually within the scientific literature. Thematic evolution analysis provides a comprehensive view of the structural dynamics of research development over time, showing how specific topics emerge, expand, or decline in relevance. This analysis helps to uncover the intellectual progression of studies on social media and political parties, as well as the relationships between foundational, emerging, and motor themes in the field. Through bibliometric mapping using *VOSviewer* and *Bibliometrix*, the evolution of these themes reflects not only the diversification of research interests but also the interdisciplinary convergence between political communication, digital media, and democratic studies. The following figure illustrates the thematic evolution map by R studio, that captures these conceptual transformations from 2015 to 2025.

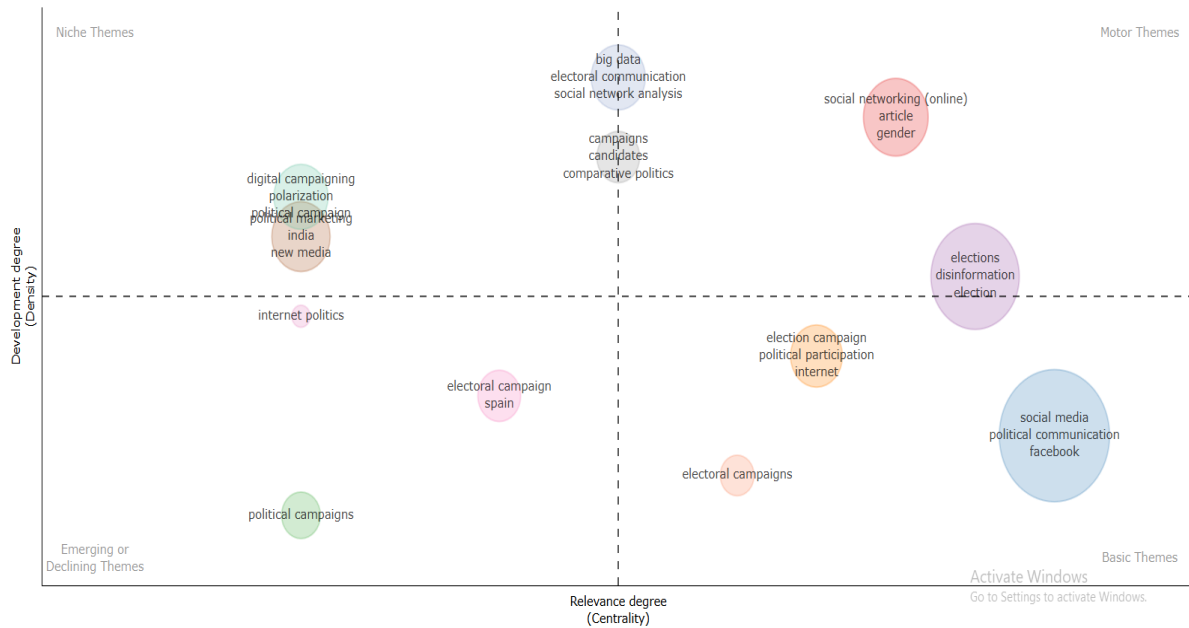


Figure 2. Thematic Evolution theme

Source: Processed by author, 2025

The visualization of *the thematic map* resulting from the bibliometric analysis shows the dynamics of the development of the main themes in the literature on social media and political parties during the period 2015-2025. The map groups topics based on two main dimensions: *centrality* (the topic's relevance to the overall field) and *density* (the level of development or depth of the topic). The visualization results show that the themes that have been the center of scientific attention have shifted over time, reflecting the increasing complexity in the study of digital political communication. In the upper right quadrant, the motor themes category, it appears that topics such as *social networking (online)*, *gender*, and *articles* have high relevance and depth. This theme reflects the increasing focus on the issue of social media-based political participation, particularly related to gender representation and social engagement of users in the digital space. This trend is in line with the increasing number of publications from 2020 to 2024, as shown in a previous analysis, where studies on women's political activism, the use of platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, and the emotional relationship between voters and candidates have increased significantly. Meanwhile, the lower right quadrant contains basic themes such as *social media*, *political communication*, and *Facebook*. Although this topic has a high centrality, it means that it is very relevant and is often used as a theoretical basis in many studies, the level of development is relatively stagnant. This shows that, although social media has been the main object of study since the beginning of the decade, the theoretical approaches and frameworks used still revolve around the old paradigm. Therefore, more contextual and innovative

explorations are needed, such as the study of algorithms, micro-targeting, or the use of AI technology in digital political campaigns. Furthermore, themes such as *elections*, *disinformation*, and *elections* occupy a strategic position as issues that have experienced significant growth. This subject is founded in the growing concern about electoral disinformation and manipulation, especially after 2019. This rise is similar to scientific publications during the worldwide election and COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating digital democracy's vulnerability to systematic information attacks. However, specialist issues include internet campaigning, political marketing, and India. These themes are still emerging in scientific debate, but they have immense potential, especially in developing nations like Indonesia and India. Internet politics and political campaigns are developing or fading issues in the lower left quadrant, signaling the need for a new study approach or perspective. This map of theme evolution illustrates that political social media research is growing numerically and diversifying. This illuminates the new direction of digital political studies and allows for more critical and contextual multidisciplinary research. Building on the thematic evolution analysis, it is also crucial to identify the most frequently discussed and emerging topics that dominate the academic discourse. The trend topic analysis provides insight into how the focus of research has shifted and which issues have gained prominence within a given period. By visualizing the temporal distribution of keywords, this analysis highlights the dynamic nature of scholarly attention toward specific subjects such as elections, digital campaigns, disinformation, and populism. Understanding these topic trends allows researchers to recognize turning points in the development of political communication studies and to trace the influence of global events such as elections or technological shifts on the direction of academic inquiry. The following figure presents the *Trend Topics* visualization, showing the evolution of research interest related to social media and political parties from 2015 to 2025.

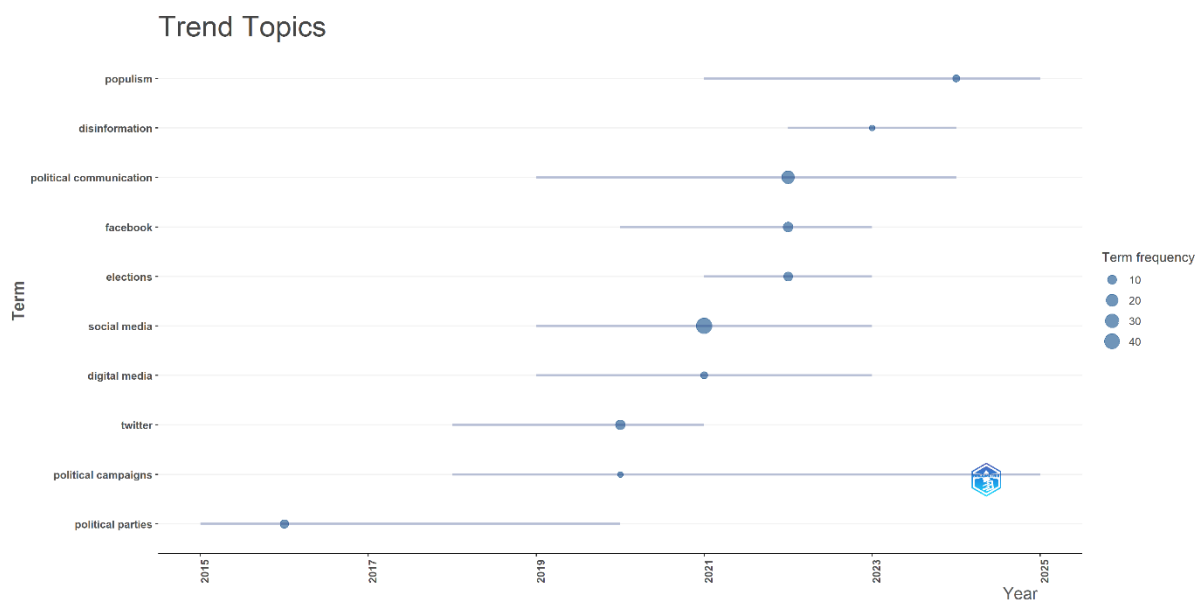


Figure 3. Trend Topics
Source: Processed by author, 2025

The Trend Topics visualization above shows the dynamics of the emergence of the key terms most often used in the scientific literature related to social media in political parties during the period 2015–2025. This analysis is very relevant to the theme and title of the research "Social Media in Political Parties: A Bibliometric Study on the Digital Transformation of Political Parties in the Era of Digital Democracy," because it shows how the focus of research has shifted over time. The terms political parties and political campaigns have been present since the beginning of the period (2015), indicating that the basic issue of the existence and strategy of political parties in the digital space has been a concern since the beginning of the decade. However, topics such as social media, Facebook, Twitter, and political communication began to dominate after 2019, just as the use of social media in political campaigns increased sharply in various countries, including Indonesia. Interestingly, the terms disinformation and populism only emerged more intensively in 2021–2023, signaling a shift in focus towards issues of democratic quality and the risk of information manipulation in the digital age. This reflects scientific concern about the rise of post-truth politics as well as the rise of social media-based populist strategies that highlight emotions and group identities. Meanwhile, the terms elections and digital media also reinforce indications that this study is increasingly pointing to structural and systemic issues in the digital electoral process. Overall, the trend of this topic shows that the literature on political parties and social media is no longer limited to communication strategies, but has

instead evolved towards more critical and interdisciplinary themes, such as disinformation, participation, and digital political ethics. These findings reinforce the urgency of research to understand the digital transformation of political parties in a more in-depth way in the context of an ever-evolving digital democracy.

Document by country and citations

Visualization with VOSviewer establishes a network of collaboration and total link strength and citations by documents (**Tabel 1**) involved in the publication of social media in the context of political parties and digital campaigns. In this study, the United Kingdom ranked first in terms of competitiveness against a number of other countries, including Germany, the United States, Switzerland, India, Australia, and South Africa. This demonstrates that English researchers have a dominant position not just in terms of publication volume (19 documents), but also in terms of working together as a nation, with the highest total link strength of 10. This visual pattern is reinforced by the tabular data, where the United Kingdom also occupies the first position in the number of citations at 719, indicating the high academic influence and scientific reputation of the country's original publications. Germany followed with 15 documents and a total of 309 citations, as well as *high link strength* (6), demonstrating collaborative capacity and substantial contributions in the development of this study, particularly in studies related to disinformation and data-driven political communication (Haßler et al., 2024; Thiele & Seliger, 2025).

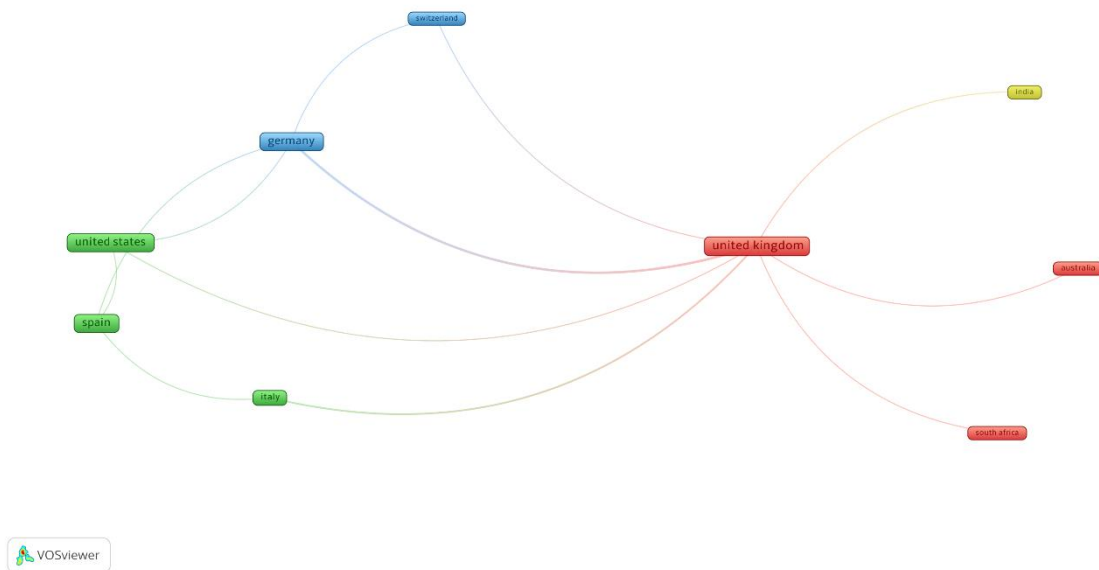


Figure 4. Network Collaboration Countries

Source: Processed by author, 2025

To complement the thematic visualization, the analysis of collaboration and citation patterns across countries offers additional insight into the geographical distribution and academic influence of research in this domain. Examining total link strength and citation counts helps identify which nations contribute most actively to the global discourse on digital politics and how international collaboration shapes knowledge production. This evaluation also reflects disparities between developed and developing countries in terms of research capacity and publication visibility. The following table summarizes the number of documents, total citations, and link strength for each contributing country, providing a quantitative overview of global academic collaboration in this field.

Table 1: Total Link Strength and Citations by Documents

Country	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
United Kingdom	19	719	10
Germany	15	309	6
United States	15	259	3
Spain	15	267	3
Switzerland	4	212	2
Australia	5	191	1
Canada	6	107	0
Italy	9	97	3
South Africa	4	46	1
India	5	38	1

Source: Processed by author, 2025

Spain, Italy, and the United States form separate collaboration clusters that tend to be strong in terms of document quantity (15–8 documents each), but slightly weaker in terms of connections between countries (link strength: 3). Collaboration between Spain–Italy–US shows a regional trend in research but still produces significant contributions, especially in the themes of populism, political framing, and digital voter engagement. Countries such as Switzerland, India, and South Africa have a smaller number of publications (4-5 documents), but remain connected in active collaborative networks, mainly through their relations with the United Kingdom and Germany. This indicates the potential growth of scientific contributions from Global South countries if supported by strategic partnerships and increased research capacity. This visualization as a whole shows that studies on the digital transformation of political parties through social media are still dominated by Western European and North American countries. However, the involvement of developing countries has begun to be seen and has the potential to develop through wider collaboration. In the future, strengthening cross-regional research networks can encourage more inclusive and

contextual perspectives, especially in responding to the challenges of digital democracy in developing countries such as Indonesia, India, and South Africa.

Document by *Three-Field Plot (Author, Keyword & countries) & Treemap*

The three-field plot visualization above presents the relationship between the three main entities in the bibliometric study: keywords, authors, and affiliated countries. This visual is very relevant in supporting the theme of the article "*Social Media in Political Parties: A Bibliometric Study on the Digital Transformation of Political Parties in the Era of Digital Democracy*" because it shows who produces knowledge, about what, and from where. On the left side, it can be seen that keywords such as "social media," "political communication," "Facebook," "elections," and "populism" are the terms most commonly associated in the literature. This confirms that the main focus in digital political discourse is not only on communication platforms but also on the implications of such communication on democracy, political participation, and electoral dynamics. Keywords such as "Instagram" and "disinformation" are also starting to connect with certain authors, indicating the emergence of new themes that develop more specifically. Beyond thematic and geographical analyses, understanding the relationships among authors, keywords, and countries provides deeper insight into how scholarly knowledge is structured and disseminated. The *Three-Field Plot* visualization illustrates the intersection of these three core bibliometric elements, showing which authors contribute most to particular topics and from which countries the dominant research originates. This analysis helps identify influential researchers, collaborative patterns, and emerging thematic networks that define the intellectual landscape of studies on social media and political parties. The following figure presents the *Three-Field Plot*, highlighting the interaction between productive authors, recurring keywords, and their institutional or national affiliations.

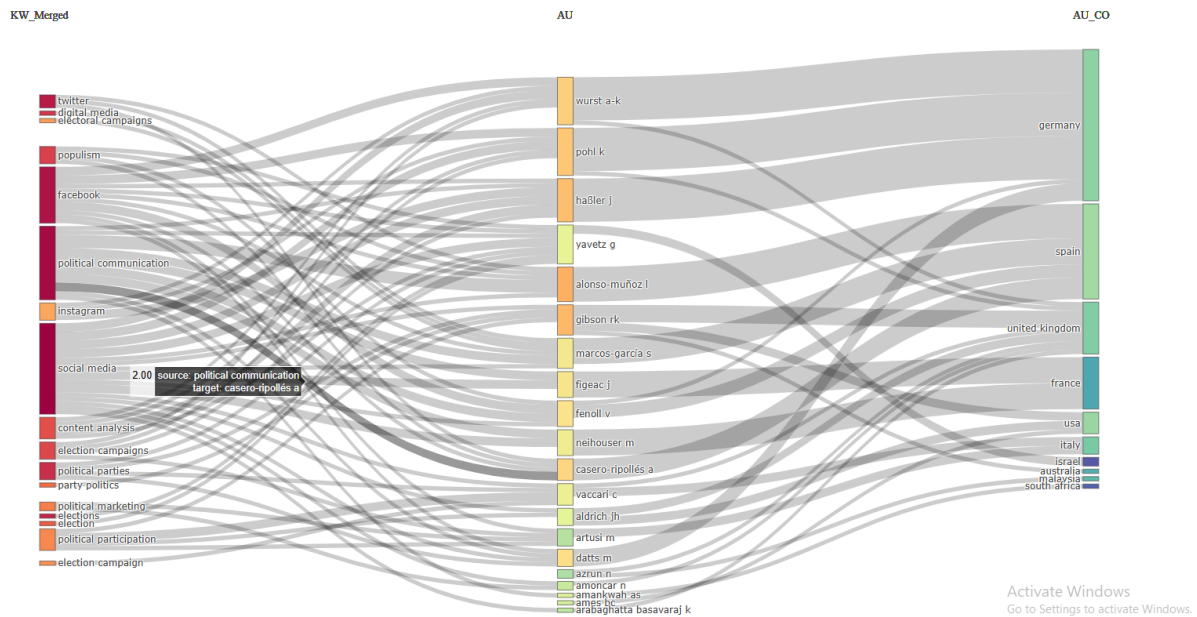


Figure 5. Three-Field Plot
 Source: Processed by author, 2025

In the center, several key writers play a central role in publications themed on social media and political parties. Names such as Wurst A-K, Pohl K, Haßler J, and Yavetz G show a close relationship with key keywords such as *political communication*, *elections*, and *populism*. This indicates that their contribution is quite substantial in shaping the direction of research in this field, both in terms of concept and methodology. Authors such as Casero-Ripollés A and Alonso-Muñoz L show a strong affinity with the theme of *social media* and *Facebook*, which is synonymous with studies in the Southern European region, particularly Spain. In the right column, it can be seen that countries such as Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the USA dominate in terms of institutional affiliation of the main authors. This is in line with previous collaborative analyses that place these countries as the centers of scientific literature production in this field. Global South countries such as Malaysia, South Africa, and India are emerging but are still limited in connections and productivity, indicating the potential for a more inclusive regional perspective expansion in the future. Overall, this visualization reinforces the narrative that academic discourse on the digital transformation of political parties is still dominated by the Western European and North American regions, with a primary focus on issues of political communication, social media platforms, and electoral contests. Nevertheless, emerging trends from other countries point to a shift towards geographical and topical diversification in global digital political studies. In terms of the development of existing keywords, some keywords still dominate the study, as shown in this image.

To complement the relational mapping of authors and countries, keyword frequency analysis offers a macro-level overview of the dominant themes in the literature. The *Treemap of Keywords* visualization provides a proportional representation of the most frequently used terms across all analyzed publications, reflecting the central issues and conceptual emphases that characterize this research field. By examining the relative size and distribution of keywords, researchers can identify the most influential topics and discover emerging areas of scholarly interest. The following figure presents a treemap summarizing the dominant keywords within studies on social media and political parties.



Figure 6. Treemap of keywords
Source: Processed by author, 2025

The treemap above illustrates the distribution of the frequency of keywords used in scientific publications related to "Social Media in Political Parties: A Bibliometric Study on the Digital Transformation of Political Parties in the Era of Digital Democracy." This visualization provides a comprehensive overview of the dominant topics and thematic focuses that have emerged most frequently in academic discourse over the past decade. The keyword "social media" occupies the top position with a frequency of 49 times (20%), confirming that social media is a central concept in the study of digital transformation of political parties. This was followed by "political communication" (23 times or 9%) which showed that the study of political communication is an important element in explaining the strategies and interactions of political parties in the digital space. Specific platforms such as "Facebook" (12 times) and "Twitter" (11 times) also received great attention, indicating that social media is not only discussed in general, but also analyzed based on the role of each platform in the dynamics of political campaigns. In addition, the themes of "elections",

"political parties", and "populism" indicate the focus of the literature on electoral contexts, party identity, and populist rhetoric that is often used in cyberspace. The emergence of keywords such as "disinformation", "microtargeting", "issue salience", and "political marketing" indicates an interdisciplinary approach that includes political psychology, big data, and communication strategies. Terms such as "gender", "personalization", and "voting behavior" show that the sociological dimension and voter behavior are also important academic concerns, especially in mapping the impact of digital transformation on the quality of democracy. Most keywords have a low frequency (1-2%), but their presence indicates a diversity of approaches, including country perspectives (e.g., *Spain, India, Germany*) and research methods such as "content analysis" and "social network analysis." This shows that the study of social media in politics is no longer singular but has developed into an ecosystem of multidimensional studies that continues to grow. Overall, the treemap reinforces previous findings that the topic of "social media in political parties" has evolved from a descriptive study of platform use to a critical study that includes disinformation, political personalization, micro-campaign strategies, and the role of algorithms in influencing public opinion and election outcomes. This is an important foundation for further in-depth and comparative exploration, especially in the context of digital democracy in Indonesia.

Document by Subject

This pie diagram provides an overview of the distribution of disciplines involved in the study themed "*Social Media in Political Parties: A Bibliometric Study on the Digital Transformation of Political Parties in the Era of Digital Democracy.*" From this visualization, it is clear that this study is dominated by the social sciences cluster with a contribution of **67.7%**, confirming that the issue of digital transformation of political parties through social media is still very strongly positioned in the socio-political framework, including communication studies, political science, and sociology. The second position was occupied by *Arts and Humanities* at **11.0%**, showing the relationship between media, political narratives, and cultural dimensions in this study. The significant contributions of this field reflect an approach that considers historical, ethical, and cultural contexts in political digital transformation. *Computer science* emerged as the next major interdisciplinary field with a percentage of **7.9%**, showing the importance of technical and algorithmic aspects in understanding digital political phenomena. This is in line with the increasing attention to big data, machine learning, and network analysis in the study of social media-based political campaigns.

In addition to thematic patterns, it is important to understand the disciplinary distribution of research on social media and political parties. The *Document by Subject* visualization categorizes the analyzed articles based on their Scopus subject classifications, illustrating how different fields contribute to this multidisciplinary area. This perspective highlights the dominance of social sciences while also acknowledging the growing integration of computer science, communication, and management studies. The following figure presents the subject-wise distribution of documents, offering a comprehensive overview of the interdisciplinary nature of this research domain.

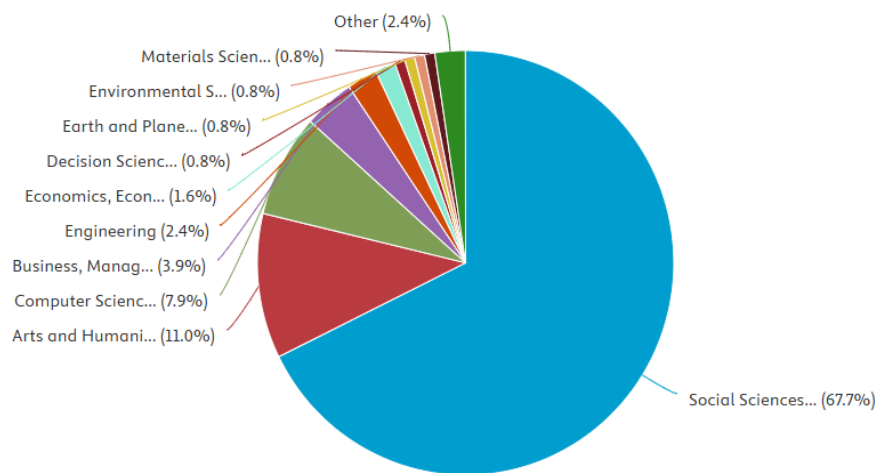


Figure 7. Document by Subject
Source: Processed by author, 2025

Business and Management accounted for 3.9%, which may be related to studies on political marketing, party branding strategies, as well as managerial effectiveness in managing digital campaigns. Meanwhile, *Engineering* (2.4%) and *Economics* (1.6%) show that several studies take quantitative and systemic approaches to voter behavior, the influence of information, and social media optimization as a means of political communication. Other fields such as *Decision Sciences*, *Environmental Science*, *Earth and Planetary Science*, and *Materials Science* accounted for only 0.8% or less each, suggesting that their involvement was sporadic and usually related to specific thematic issues, such as environmental campaigns, the use of technology, or information systems simulations. Overall, this distribution reflects that although research on social media and politics is still heavily dominated by social sciences, there has been a wider engagement from other fields. This signals a shift towards a more interdisciplinary approach to understanding how political parties use digital technology to shape public opinion, expand the reach of campaigns, and build an image in the era of digital democracy. This cross-field integration will become

The green cluster illustrates the linkage between social media and strategic aspects of campaigns, such as *political campaigns*, *content analysis*, and *personalization*, indicating that social media is not only a communication channel but also a tactical tool in the campaign process that is geared towards tailoring messages to audience characteristics. Meanwhile, the red cluster indicates the focus of research on the issues of *disinformation*, *elections*, *political advertising*, and *new media*, highlighting the challenges of digital democracy in terms of information manipulation and political framing. This cluster reflects concerns about the quality of political information that is spread in the digital world. On the other hand, *political communication* as another large node (yellow cluster) shows a close relationship with topics such as *digital campaigning*, *issue salience*, and *polarization*. This indicates that the study of political communication in the digital age also focuses on the dynamics of public opinion, audience fragmentation, and algorithmic effects on political exposure. The blue and purple clusters include terms such as *electoral communication*, *big data*, *comparative politics*, and *internet politics*, reflecting methodological and comparative dimensions in the literature, including the use of big data and cross-border approaches in analyzing the effectiveness of political party digitization. Overall, this visualization shows that research on social media and political parties has evolved into a multidimensional terrain that combines the perspectives of technology, communication, electoral politics, as well as normative challenges such as disinformation and polarization. The close relationship between these topics signals the need for an interdisciplinary and comparative approach to understanding the digital transformation of political parties within the framework of contemporary democracy.

Density Visualization VOSviewer of social media in political parties in campaigns

This heatmap *visualizatio* from VOSviewer illustrates the intensity of the frequency of occurrences and the relationship between keywords in the literature that analyzes the digital transformation of political parties through social media in the era of digital democracy. Yellow indicates the highest density, which means the topic is discussed most often and has the widest conceptual relevance to other terms in the data corpus. It can be seen that "**social media**" and "**political communication**" are the two main hotspots in this map, signaling both as the core of scientific discourse over the past decade. This density shows that social media is not only the object of study but also the dominant medium in the

study of digital political campaigns. Meanwhile, *political communication* describes a theoretical perspective that is widely used to understand the changing dynamics of digitally mediated political communication.

To complement the network mapping, the *Density Visualization* offers a heatmap representation of the intensity and frequency of keyword occurrences within the analyzed corpus. This visualization highlights the core areas of scholarly concentration by identifying “hot zones” where certain topics dominate academic attention. The density map helps researchers recognize which concepts have been most explored and which remain underrepresented, thereby guiding future research directions. The following figure displays the density visualization of keywords related to social media and political parties, reflecting the centrality of social media and political communication within this research field.

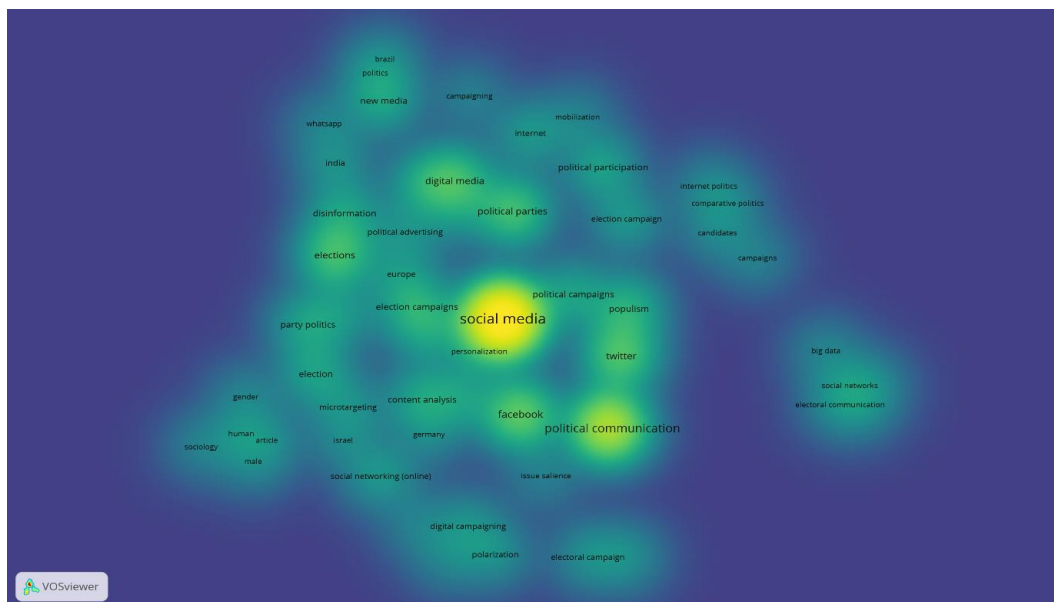


Figure 9. Density Visualization

Source: Processed by author, 2025

Nodes such as "Facebook," "Twitter," and "elections" also show high intensity, signaling the platform and election context as the main space where political parties leverage social media. On the other hand, terms such as "disinformation," "digital campaigning," and "political parties" appear in bright green zones, indicating a significant but slightly lower incidence rate than the center of the map. This shows that disinformation and digital campaign strategies remain important topics, although not as intense as "social media" and "communication." Some terms, such as "big data," "electoral communication," and "comparative politics," are in the dark blue region, indicating these themes have a lower or growing relevance in the literature. However, the existence of this term shows the potential for further studies, such as the exploration of big data to predict voter behavior on social

media or cross-border comparative studies. Overall, the map confirms that the study of social media in the context of political parties has evolved from platform-based topics to more complex analyses, including aspects of communication, campaign strategy, and disinformation threats. Keyword density also indicates a shift in scientific interest that focuses not only on the use of technology, but also the sociopolitical impact of its use in digital democracy. This visualization confirms that *social media* has become the dominant ecosystem in the contemporary political arena, both as a communication channel, a field of competition, and a space for narrative contestation.

Conclusion

This study provides a synthesized understanding of how social media has transformed the strategies, communication models, and public engagement mechanisms of political parties in the era of digital democracy. The bibliometric analysis of 97 Scopus-indexed articles published between 2015 and 2025 shows a sharp rise in academic interest after 2019, reflecting the global shift toward digitally mediated political processes, intensified further by the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings highlight dominant themes such as political communication, disinformation, digital campaigning, and populism, which collectively demonstrate how social media now functions as both a strategic tool and a contested arena in contemporary electoral politics. Collaboration patterns also reveal that the United Kingdom, Germany, and Spain serve as intellectual hubs shaping global discourse on political digitalization. These insights underscore the practical relevance of social media in constructing political narratives, shaping voter perceptions, and influencing campaign effectiveness, while also signaling the need for policymakers, election organizers, and political actors to strengthen digital governance, ethical communication practices, and public digital literacy.

Despite these contributions, this study has **important methodological and analytical limitations**. First, the exclusive reliance on Scopus-indexed, English-language journal articles limits the representativeness of the dataset, potentially excluding significant regional or non-English contributions, particularly from developing democracies where digital political practices may differ substantially. Second, bibliometric analysis focuses on patterns of publication, citation, and keyword relationships; therefore, it cannot fully capture the interpretive depth, contextual nuances, or causal mechanisms underlying digital campaign behaviors. Third, platform-specific dynamics, especially those involving newer platforms such as TikTok, Telegram, or WhatsApp, may be underrepresented because

bibliometric indexing tends to reflect established research areas rather than emerging practices. Fourth, the temporal scope (2015–2025) may miss earlier foundational works or the most recent shifts driven by AI-enabled political communication, microtargeting, or algorithmic amplification. These limitations suggest that while the findings map the broader intellectual landscape, they should not be treated as exhaustive indicators of all global digital political transformations.

Building on these constraints, future research should incorporate **multi-database datasets**, including Web of Science, Dimensions, or local-index repositories, to ensure broader thematic and geographical coverage. Mixed-method approaches combining bibliometrics with qualitative content analysis, ethnographic digital observation, or computational techniques such as sentiment analysis and machine-learning-based discourse mapping would enable more multidimensional insights. Comparative regional studies could also illuminate how political cultures, regulatory environments, and digital infrastructures shape divergent patterns of political party engagement online. Furthermore, emerging areas such as AI-generated political content, influencer-driven campaigning, microtargeting ethics, and platform governance deserve deeper exploration. Overall, this study reaffirms that social media continues to redefine political communication, necessitating ongoing academic inquiry and adaptable policy frameworks to ensure that digitalization contributes constructively to democratic integrity and public trust.

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