



Research Article

AI-Driven Political Communication and Electoral Democracy in Odisha: A Gendered Analysis of Digital Narratives and Voter Engagement

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ABSTRACT



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The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI), social media platforms, and digital technologies has significantly transformed electoral politics and political communication in contemporary democracies. This study examines the impact of AI-driven political communication on electoral democracy in Odisha with particular emphasis on digital narratives, voter engagement, misinformation, political polarisation, and gendered political communication. The study analyses how platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram shape political perceptions and democratic participation through personalised political messaging and algorithmically mediated communication. The study employs a descriptive and interpretive research design, drawing on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire from 52 respondents in Odisha, including 24 males and 28 females. The findings reveal that AI-driven political communication increasingly influences voter behaviour through targeted narratives and personalised political content. Welfare-oriented and regional identity narratives emerged as dominant forms of digital political communication. The study further highlights concerns regarding misinformation, democratic trust, and gendered digital inequality within Odisha's evolving digital electoral environment.

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1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) has fundamentally transformed the nature of political communication in contemporary democracies. Electoral campaigns are no longer dependent solely on conventional methods such as political rallies, newspapers, television broadcasts, posters, and direct interpersonal campaigning (Chadwick, 2017). Instead, political communication increasingly operates through social media platforms, algorithm-driven information circulation, personalised digital messaging, and AI-enabled campaign strategies (Ferrara, 2024). Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) have emerged as major digital spaces where political narratives are created, circulated, amplified, and consumed. AI-driven technologies now enable political actors to analyse voter behaviour, microtarget specific demographic groups, automate campaign outreach, personalise political advertisements, and shape electoral narratives through algorithmically mediated communication systems (Papathanassopoulos & Giannouli, 2025).

The transformation of electoral politics through digital technologies has become particularly visible in India over the past decade. The rapid growth of smartphone penetration, affordable internet services, increasing digital literacy, and expanding social

media usage have accelerated the digitalisation of electoral communication. Political parties increasingly rely on digital campaign strategies to influence voter perception, shape public opinion, and mobilise electoral support. The 2019 Indian General Election demonstrated the growing importance of targeted digital communication, real-time political messaging, and leader-centred social media outreach (Rao, 2019). More recently, the 2024 Indian elections highlighted the integration of generative AI technologies into electoral campaigns through AI-generated speeches, deepfakes, automated messaging, synthetic media, and digitally manipulated campaign content (Dhanuraj, Harilal, & Solomon, 2024). At the same time, these technological developments have generated serious concerns regarding misinformation, political polarisation, algorithmic manipulation, emotional targeting, and declining democratic trust. AI-driven recommendation systems increasingly determine which political narratives become visible, emotionally engaging, and repeatedly circulated within digital environments. Consequently, democratic participation is increasingly shaped not only by political ideology or rational deliberation but also by algorithmic visibility, platform behaviour, and emotionally amplified political content (Huszár et al., 2021; Milli et al., 2025).

Within this broader national transformation, Odisha represents an important regional context for examining the

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relationship between AI-driven political communication and electoral democracy. Traditionally characterised by welfare-oriented politics, leadership-centred mobilisation, and strong regional identity, Odisha has witnessed substantial digital expansion in recent years, particularly among younger voters and semi-urban populations. Social media platforms now play an increasingly significant role in electoral campaigns, with political parties actively using WhatsApp groups, Facebook pages, YouTube videos, and localised digital networks to influence political perception and mobilise voters. The political landscape of Odisha has also seen growing digital competition among major political actors, such as the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Welfare-oriented governance, women-centric programmes, development narratives, leadership imagery, and regional identity politics increasingly circulate through digitally mediated campaign structures. In particular, the narrative of '*Odia Asmita*' has emerged as an important regional political discourse amplified through social media campaigns and emotionally resonant digital messaging (Singh, 2024). Similarly, welfare schemes associated with women's empowerment, self-help groups, healthcare support, and food security are strategically disseminated through targeted digital communication to strengthen electoral support among women voters (Christopher & Bansal, 2024).

The expansion of AI-driven political communication has therefore altered patterns of voter engagement, information exposure, and democratic participation within Odisha. Political information increasingly reaches voters through algorithmically curated digital platforms rather than through conventional media institutions alone (Lakshane, 2024). The circulation of manipulated political videos, misleading campaign narratives, edited speeches, and emotionally persuasive misinformation through WhatsApp and other social media platforms has become a growing democratic challenge. Deepfakes, AI-generated visuals, and automated campaign content further complicate citizens' ability to distinguish authentic political information from manipulated narratives (Shivaraju, 2025).

The gender dimension of digital political communication is particularly significant in this context. Although women's electoral participation has increased substantially in Odisha, digital political participation and access to political information continue to remain uneven across gendered social locations. Political parties increasingly target women voters through welfare-oriented narratives focused on healthcare, food security, household welfare, and women's empowerment programmes (Banaji & Bhat, n.d.). In contrast, male voters are more commonly approached through narratives emphasising development, nationalism, leadership, infrastructure, employment, and security. AI-enabled campaign personalisation strengthens these differentiated communication patterns by enabling political actors to strategically tailor messages based on behavioural data, digital engagement patterns, demographic characteristics, and emotional preferences (Ferrara, 2024; Christopher & Bansal, 2024).

Against this background, the present study examines how AI-driven political communication is reshaping electoral democracy in Odisha through digital narratives, personalised campaigning, misinformation circulation, voter engagement, and gendered political targeting. The study argues that AI-driven political communication is not merely a technological development within electoral politics but a transformative political process that structures political visibility, voter engagement, and democratic participation through algorithmically mediated systems while simultaneously reproducing and intensifying existing gendered inequalities within digital political communication.

2. Review Of Literature

The growing integration of artificial intelligence (AI), digital platforms, and social media into electoral politics has significantly transformed political communication across contemporary democracies. Existing scholarship largely focuses on digital campaigning, algorithmic targeting, misinformation, and platform-based voter engagement. However, comparatively little attention has been paid to the gendered dimensions of AI-driven political communication, particularly in regional contexts such as Odisha.

Scholars of political communication argue that contemporary politics is increasingly shaped by digital platforms and algorithmically mediated communication systems. Papathanassopoulos and Giannouli (2025) explain that political communication has shifted from traditional broadcast-centred systems toward "platformized" political communication, in which social media platforms shape political visibility, public discourse, and civic engagement. According to them, platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and X are not merely communication channels but active political environments shaping electoral behaviour and democratic participation. The role of AI in electoral campaigns has emerged as another major area of academic inquiry. Dhanuraj, Harilal, and Solomon (2024) highlight the growing use of generative AI technologies, such as deepfakes, AI-generated speeches, synthetic media, and automated campaign content, in their analysis of India's 2024 elections. Their study argues that although AI improves campaign efficiency and voter engagement, it simultaneously creates risks related to misinformation, manipulation, and democratic integrity.

Research on digital media and Indian elections further demonstrates the increasing importance of social media in political mobilisation. Rao (2019) observes that digital media transformed the 2019 Indian General Election through targeted messaging, real-time communication, and direct leader-to-voter engagement. Political parties increasingly relied on WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube to bypass traditional media institutions and circulate political narratives directly among citizens. Similarly, Udupa (2019) argues that social media platforms have become influential instruments of political persuasion, particularly among digitally connected youth populations. At the same time, these platforms facilitate the rapid circulation of misinformation, extremist narratives, political propaganda, and emotionally polarised political content within digital communication environments.

The relationship between AI-driven communication and democratic trust has also received considerable scholarly attention. Ferrara (2024) argues that generative AI intensifies political disinformation by enabling the rapid circulation of manipulated videos, synthetic audio, deepfakes, and other forms of misleading political content within digital electoral environments. Jungherr, Rauchfleisch, and Wuttke (2026) further argue that citizens often perceive AI-enabled political manipulation as a threat to democratic norms and electoral integrity. Scholars have also examined how algorithms shape political exposure and selective engagement. Harff and Schmuck (2023) demonstrate that young people increasingly rely on digital platforms and social media influencers for political information, where recommendation systems influence political exposure and participation. Ferrara (2024) argues that AI-driven algorithms and generative AI systems increasingly shape political discourse by influencing the visibility, amplification, and circulation of political content within digital communication environments.

Despite the expanding literature on AI and electoral politics, the gender dimension remains comparatively underexplored.

Existing studies largely focus on campaign technology, misinformation, and voter behaviour without adequately examining how AI-mediated political communication affects men and women differently. Furthermore, there is limited scholarship focusing on regional contexts such as Odisha, particularly in relation to welfare politics, 'Odia Asmita' narratives, and localised digital campaigning. Therefore, the present study seeks to address these gaps by examining AI-driven political communication and electoral democracy within the regional and gendered context of Odisha.

3. Theoretical Framework: Ai-Driven Political Communication and Digital Democracy

This study examines AI-driven political communication and electoral democracy in Odisha through an interdisciplinary theoretical framework combining deliberative democracy, political communication theory, narrative and framing theory, and gendered political communication. These perspectives collectively explain how AI-mediated digital platforms shape political visibility, voter engagement, democratic participation, and gendered experiences of political communication within contemporary electoral politics.

3.1 Deliberative Democracy and the Platformized Public Sphere

The concept of deliberative democracy, most prominently associated with Jürgen Habermas (1991), emphasises rational public discussion, informed participation, and equal communicative access within the democratic public sphere. Democratic legitimacy depends upon citizens' ability to participate in open and reasoned political debate. However, the expansion of digital technologies and AI-driven communication systems has transformed the structure of the contemporary public sphere into what scholars describe as a "platformized" communication environment. Social media platforms increasingly shape political discourse, information visibility, and civic engagement through algorithmic systems (Papathanassopoulos & Giannouli, 2025).

AI-driven recommendation mechanisms prioritise emotionally engaging, sensational, and highly shareable content over rational democratic deliberation. Consequently, citizens are increasingly exposed to fragmented political realities shaped by algorithmic curation and selective exposure. Such developments contribute to misinformation, ideological polarisation, emotionalised political discourse, and declining democratic trust. In Odisha, electoral communication increasingly operates through WhatsApp groups, Facebook campaigns, YouTube videos, and localised digital networks, where welfare-oriented narratives, leadership-centred campaigns, and regional identity politics, such as 'Odia Asmita', circulate rapidly through algorithmically curated communication systems.

3.2 Political Communication, Narrative, and Algorithmic Amplification

Political communication theory explains how political actors strategically use communication to shape public opinion, construct legitimacy, and mobilise electoral support. Contemporary electoral campaigns increasingly rely on AI-driven systems combining predictive analytics, voter profiling, microtargeting, and personalised political messaging. Narrative and framing theory further explains how political meaning is constructed through emotionally resonant stories, symbols, and identity-based communication. Political narratives simplify complex political realities by emotionally connecting voters to themes such as welfare governance, development, nationalism, leadership, and regional identity. AI-driven communication intensifies this process by enabling political actors to circulate

tailored narratives to specific voter groups based on behavioural data and online engagement patterns.

Recent scholarship highlights the growing role of "algorithmic amplification," in which emotionally engaging political narratives receive greater visibility within digital communication environments (Huszár et al., 2021). AI-generated content, manipulated videos, emotionally personalised campaign messages, and algorithmically curated political advertisements intensify voter persuasion and political manipulation. In Odisha, digitally amplified political narratives increasingly revolve around welfare schemes, women-centric programmes, leadership-centred politics, and regional identity narratives.

3.3 Gendered Political Communication, Digital Inequality, and Algorithmic Bias

The gendered political communication framework highlights that digital political communication affects male and female voters differently. Feminist political theorists argue that democratic participation is shaped by inequalities related to gender, representation, communicative access, and political visibility (Fraser, 1990). AI-driven electoral communication frequently reproduces gendered assumptions through differentiated voter targeting and algorithmic segmentation. Women voters are often targeted through welfare-oriented narratives focused on healthcare, food security, women's empowerment, and household welfare. In contrast, male voters are more commonly approached through narratives emphasising nationalism, development, leadership, infrastructure, and security (Christopher & Bansal, 2024; Lakshane, 2024).

Intersectionality further explains that political experiences are shaped not only by gender but also by class, education, digital literacy, and regional location (Crenshaw, 1989). In Odisha, inequalities in digital access and information literacy shape how citizens encounter and verify political information circulating on social media platforms. Women, particularly within rural and semi-urban areas, may face comparatively greater challenges in accessing reliable political information and identifying misinformation. Scholars examining algorithmic bias further argue that AI systems are embedded within existing social hierarchies and behavioural assumptions rather than functioning as neutral technological mechanisms (Ferrara, 2024). Consequently, AI-mediated political communication may reinforce unequal democratic participation by exposing different social groups to different political realities within Odisha's evolving digital political environment.

4. Objectives and Methodology

The present study examines the impact of AI-driven political communication on electoral democracy in Odisha with particular emphasis on digital narratives, voter engagement, misinformation, political polarisation, and gendered political communication. The study focuses on how AI-enabled political campaigns, personalised political messaging, and social media platforms shape political perception and democratic participation within Odisha's evolving digital political landscape.

The major objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the role of AI-driven political communication in shaping voter engagement in Odisha.
2. To analyse the influence of digital political narratives and personalised political content on voter perception and participation.
3. To explore the gendered dimensions of AI-mediated political communication and differentiated voter targeting.

4. To investigate public perceptions regarding misinformation, political polarisation, and democratic trust within digital political environments.

The study employs a descriptive and interpretive research design, drawing on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 52 respondents in Odisha, using purposive sampling: 24 male and 28 female. Respondents were selected from both rural and urban areas, representing different age groups and educational backgrounds. The questionnaire covered themes such as AI awareness, political information sources, digital political exposure, personalised political communication, misinformation circulation, voter engagement, democratic trust, and gendered political targeting.

The collected data were analysed through descriptive tabulation, frequency analysis, percentage analysis, and interpretative discussion. Secondary data were collected from books, journal articles, reports, and scholarly studies related to AI, political communication, electoral democracy, misinformation, and gendered media studies. Although limited by its relatively small sample size and regional scope, the study provides important empirical insights into the growing influence of AI-driven political communication on democratic participation, voter perception, and gendered political experiences within Odisha's evolving digital electoral environment.

5. Analysis and Interpretation

The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI), social media platforms, and digital communication technologies has significantly transformed electoral politics and political communication in contemporary democracies. Political campaigns increasingly rely on algorithmic recommendation systems, personalised political advertising, digital narratives, and platform-based voter engagement to influence public opinion and electoral behaviour. In India, electoral communication has gradually shifted from traditional campaign methods toward digitally mediated political outreach through platforms such as

WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). Political parties increasingly depend upon AI-enabled communication strategies, targeted campaign outreach, and emotionally engaging digital content to shape voter perception and electoral participation.

Within this broader transformation, Odisha represents an important regional context for examining the relationship between AI-driven political communication and electoral democracy. The state has witnessed substantial growth in digital connectivity, smartphone usage, and social media participation, resulting in the increasing digitalisation of electoral campaigns and voter engagement. Political communication in Odisha increasingly revolves around welfare-oriented narratives, development discourse, regional identity politics such as 'Odia Asmita', leadership-centred campaigns, and emotionally amplified political messaging circulated through social media platforms and localised digital communication networks. At the same time, the growing integration of AI into political communication raises important democratic concerns regarding misinformation, political polarisation, algorithmic manipulation, and unequal access to political information. AI-driven recommendation systems influence which political narratives become visible, emotionally engaging, and repeatedly circulated within digital environments. These developments are particularly significant when examined from a gender perspective, as digital political communication frequently targets male and female voters differently through personalised narratives and algorithmic segmentation.

Against this background, the present analysis examines how AI-driven political communication influences voter engagement, political narratives, exposure to misinformation, democratic trust, and gendered political participation in Odisha. The discussion is based on survey responses collected from (N=52) respondents representing different age groups, educational backgrounds, and residential locations across the state.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variables	Categories	Male n (%)	Female n (%)	Total n (%)
Age	18-25	18 (75.0)	21 (75.0)	39 (75.0)
	26-40	5 (20.8)	5 (17.9)	10 (19.2)
	41-60	1 (4.2)	1 (3.6)	2 (3.8)
	Above 60	0 (0.0)	1 (3.6)	1 (1.9)
Educational Qualification	Higher Secondary	2 (8.3)	2 (7.1)	4 (7.7)
	Graduate	8 (33.3)	8 (28.6)	16 (30.8)
	Postgraduate	12 (50.0)	16 (57.1)	28 (53.8)
	Research Scholar	2 (8.3)	2 (7.1)	4 (7.7)
Area of Residence	Rural	17 (70.8)	21 (75.0)	38 (73.1)
	Urban	7 (29.2)	7 (25.0)	14 (26.9)
Total Respondents		24 (46.2)	28 (53.8)	52 (100.0)

The socio-demographic profile of respondents (Table 1) provides important insights into the composition of digitally engaged voters in Odisha's evolving electoral environment. A substantial majority of respondents were in the 18-25 age group, representing 75 per cent of the total sample. The equal proportion of young male and female respondents indicates that younger and technologically active populations strongly influence digital political communication in Odisha. This reflects the growing role of youth participation in digitally mediated electoral politics, where political information, campaign narratives, and voter

engagement increasingly circulate through social media platforms and mobile-based communication systems. The educational profile of respondents further indicates relatively high levels of educational attainment. More than half of the respondents were postgraduates, while a considerable proportion possessed graduate-level education. Such findings suggest substantial familiarity with digital technologies, social media platforms, and online political communication. Higher educational exposure may also contribute to greater awareness regarding AI-driven political communication and misinformation.

Another important feature of the sample is the significant representation of rural respondents. Nearly three-fourths of respondents belonged to rural areas, demonstrating that digital political communication in Odisha is no longer confined to urban

centres. Expanding smartphone usage and affordable internet access have increasingly integrated rural populations into digitally mediated electoral communication and political participation.

Table 2: Sources of Political Information and Digital Political Exposure

Sources/Platforms of Political Information	Male n (%)	Female n (%)	Total n (%)
WhatsApp	16 (66.7)	22 (78.6)	38 (73.1)
YouTube	17 (70.8)	14 (50.0)	31 (59.6)
Facebook	12 (50.0)	12 (42.9)	24 (46.2)
Television	10 (41.7)	9 (32.1)	19 (36.5)
Instagram	8 (33.3)	9 (32.1)	17 (32.7)
Newspapers	7 (29.2)	5 (17.9)	12 (23.1)
Family/Friends	4 (16.7)	6 (21.4)	10 (19.2)
X/Twitter	5 (20.8)	3 (10.7)	8 (15.4)
Other	1 (4.2)	1 (3.6)	2 (3.9)

Note: Multiple responses were permitted.

The findings presented in Table 2 demonstrate the growing centrality of digital platforms in shaping political communication and electoral engagement in Odisha. The increasing dependence on social media platforms reflects the broader transformation of electoral democracy from conventional mass-mediated communication to AI-driven, platformized political communication systems. Political information is increasingly consumed through personalised digital environments where algorithms influence content visibility, political exposure, and voter engagement. WhatsApp emerged as the most dominant source of political information among respondents, with 73.1 per cent reporting dependence on the platform. A gender-wise analysis reveals a comparatively higher dependence on WhatsApp among female respondents (78.6 per cent) than among male respondents (66.7 per cent). This finding is particularly significant because political parties increasingly use WhatsApp groups to circulate welfare-oriented narratives, localised campaign messages, leadership-centred content, and emotionally engaging political communication directly among voters. In Odisha, welfare-related political messaging on women's empowerment, food security, healthcare, and self-help group initiatives frequently circulates through WhatsApp-based networks targeting women voters.

YouTube emerged as the second-most-important source of political information, particularly among male respondents. The popularity of YouTube reflects the increasing importance of visual political communication, including campaign speeches, political debates, leadership imagery, and emotionally amplified political narratives. Facebook and Instagram also continue to function as important platforms for digital political engagement and campaign outreach. The comparatively lower dependence on newspapers and television indicates the declining dominance of conventional media within electoral communication. Political participation increasingly occurs through algorithmically curated digital environments, where recommendation systems shape voter exposure and political perceptions.

From the study's perspective, these findings demonstrate that AI-driven political communication in Odisha increasingly operates through digitally mediated, gendered communication systems. Social media platforms not only distribute political information but also shape political narratives, emotional engagement, and democratic participation through algorithmic visibility and personalised communication strategies.

Table 3: Awareness and Perception of AI-Driven Political Communication

Variables	Categories	Male n (%)	Female n (%)	Total n (%)
Awareness of Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Yes	23 (95.8)	27 (96.4)	50 (96.2)
	No	1 (4.2)	1 (3.6)	2 (3.8)
Perception Regarding AI Use in Political Campaigns	Strongly Agree	8 (33.3)	12 (42.9)	20 (38.5)
	Agree	12 (50.0)	12 (42.9)	24 (46.2)
	Neutral	2 (8.3)	3 (10.7)	5 (9.6)
	Disagree	2 (8.3)	1 (3.6)	3 (5.7)
Perception Regarding Algorithmic Influence on Political Content Visibility	Yes	17 (70.8)	22 (78.6)	39 (75.0)
	No	4 (16.7)	2 (7.1)	6 (11.5)
	Not Sure	3 (12.5)	4 (14.3)	7 (13.5)

The findings presented in Table 3 demonstrate high levels of awareness regarding artificial intelligence and its growing role in electoral communication in Odisha. An overwhelming majority of respondents (96.2 per cent) reported awareness of AI technologies, indicating that digitally active voters increasingly recognise the technological transformation of electoral politics. The high level of awareness among both male and female respondents suggests that AI-driven political communication has become a visible component of contemporary election campaigns

rather than a distant technological concept. The findings further reveal strong public recognition regarding the use of AI in political campaigns. A substantial majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that AI is actively used in electoral communication. Female respondents demonstrated slightly stronger agreement than male respondents, indicating comparatively greater awareness regarding personalised political messaging and targeted campaign outreach. This reflects the increasing use of customised welfare-oriented communication

and localised digital campaigns targeting specific voter groups in Odisha.

Another important finding concerns perceptions of algorithmic influence on the visibility of political content. Three-fourths of respondents believed that algorithms influence the political content they encounter online. This indicates growing

public awareness that social media platforms actively shape political exposure through recommendation systems and engagement-based visibility mechanisms. Overall, the findings demonstrate growing recognition of the role of AI and algorithms in shaping contemporary electoral communication and voter perceptions.

Table 4: Awareness of Personalised Political Advertisements/Content during Elections

Awareness of Personalised Political Advertisements/Content during Elections	Male n (%)	Female n (%)	Total n (%)
Frequently	10 (41.7)	15 (53.6)	25 (48.1)
Sometimes	9 (37.5)	9 (32.1)	18 (34.6)
Rarely	4 (16.7)	3 (10.7)	7 (13.5)
Never	1 (4.2)	1 (3.6)	2 (3.8)
Total	24 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	52 (100.0)

The findings presented in Table 4 demonstrate the growing prevalence of personalised political communication within Odisha’s digital electoral environment. Nearly half of the respondents (48.1 per cent) reported frequently encountering personalised political advertisements or targeted political content during elections, while 34.6 per cent reported encountering such content sometimes. These findings indicate that electoral campaigns increasingly rely on digitally targeted communication rather than generalised mass outreach. Female respondents reported comparatively higher exposure to personalised political content than male respondents. More than half of the female respondents (53.6 per cent) reported frequent exposure to targeted political messaging, compared with 41.7 per cent of male respondents. This reflects the growing use of AI-enabled voter segmentation within electoral campaigns.

Political parties increasingly circulate customised, welfare-oriented narratives on women’s empowerment, healthcare, food

security, and household welfare among female voters through platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. Male respondents, in contrast, appeared comparatively more exposed to political messaging centred around development, leadership, employment, and infrastructure. Although only 16.7 per cent of male respondents reported rarely encountering personalised political content, the overall findings indicate that digitally targeted political communication is now widespread across voter groups. The findings further suggest that political communication in Odisha is gradually shifting toward data-driven campaign structures where algorithms, engagement patterns, and user preferences influence the political content encountered by voters. Personalised political communication thus plays an increasingly important role in shaping voter engagement and political participation within digitally mediated electoral environments.

Table 5: Political Narratives Encountered Online and Political Content Attracting Respondents’ Attention

Political Narratives/Content	Encountering Online n (%)		Total n (%)	Attention n (%)		Total n (%)
	Male	Female		Male	Female	
Welfare-oriented narratives/content	6 (25.0)	9 (32.1)	15 (28.8)	5 (20.8)	8 (28.6)	13 (25.0)
Development-oriented narratives/content	5 (20.8)	4 (14.3)	9 (17.3)	7 (29.2)	5 (17.9)	12 (23.1)
Nationalist narratives/content	4 (16.7)	2 (7.1)	6 (11.5)	4 (16.7)	3 (10.7)	7 (13.5)
Regional identity narratives/content (<i>Odia Asmita</i>)	4 (16.7)	6 (21.4)	10 (19.2)	4 (16.7)	5 (17.9)	9 (17.3)
Leadership/personality-based narratives/content	3 (12.5)	2 (7.1)	5 (9.6)	3 (12.5)	3 (10.7)	6 (11.5)
Anti-corruption narratives/content	2 (8.3)	2 (7.1)	4 (7.7)	1 (4.2)	2 (7.1)	3 (5.8)
Emotional/personalised political messaging	5 (20.8)	6 (21.4)	11 (21.2)	3 (12.5)	5 (17.9)	8 (15.4)
Religious/Cultural narratives/content	1 (4.2)	1 (3.6)	2 (3.8)	1 (4.2)	2 (7.1)	3 (5.8)
Other	0 (0.0)	1 (3.6)	1 (1.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (3.6)	1 (1.9)

The findings in Table 5 demonstrate that digital political communication in Odisha increasingly operates through emotionally engaging, strategically targeted political narratives. Political communication on social media platforms is no longer limited to general political information; instead, it increasingly focuses on issue-specific narratives designed to attract voter attention and strengthen emotional engagement. Welfare-oriented narratives emerged as the most dominant category of political communication encountered online, reported by 28.8 per cent of respondents overall. Female respondents (32.1 per cent) reported greater exposure to welfare-oriented narratives than male respondents (25.0 per cent). Welfare-oriented content also attracted the highest level of attention among respondents, accounting for 25 per cent overall, including 28.6 per cent among female respondents and 20.8 per cent among male respondents. This reflects the growing prominence of welfare-centred electoral politics in Odisha, where political communication increasingly

emphasises women’s empowerment, healthcare support, food security, household welfare, and self-help group initiatives.

Development-oriented narratives emerged as the second-most attention-grabbing category of political communication, attracting 23.1 per cent of respondents overall. Male respondents (29.2 per cent) showed greater attention to development-oriented political content than female respondents (17.9 per cent). Political communication related to infrastructure, employment, governance, and economic development, therefore, appears to resonate more strongly among male voters. Another important finding is the visibility of regional identity narratives associated with ‘*Odia Asmita*’. Nearly one-fifth of respondents (19.2 per cent) reported encountering such narratives online, while 17.3 per cent identified them as politically attention-grabbing. Both male and female respondents demonstrated notable exposure to regional identity-based political communication. The findings further reveal the growing visibility of emotional and personalised

political messaging, encountered by 21.2 per cent of respondents overall. These findings indicate that digital political communication in Odisha increasingly relies on emotional appeal, targeted narratives, and identity-based messaging to shape voter perception and electoral participation.

Table 6: Perception Regarding AI-Driven Political Communication

Perception Regarding AI-Driven Political Communication Increasing Voter Engagement	Male n (%)	Female n (%)	Total n (%)
Yes	13 (54.2)	18 (64.3)	31 (59.6)
No	4 (16.7)	3 (10.7)	7 (13.5)
Partially	7 (29.2)	7 (25.0)	14 (26.9)
Total	24 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	52 (100.0)

The findings presented in Table 6 indicate that a majority of respondents perceive AI-driven political communication as an important factor in increasing voter engagement within Odisha's digital electoral environment. A substantial majority of respondents (59.6 per cent) believed that AI-enabled political communication strengthens voter participation and political

outreach, while only 13.5 per cent disagreed. Another 26.9 per cent of respondents believed that AI-driven communication only partially increases voter engagement. Female respondents demonstrated comparatively stronger agreement than male respondents regarding the role of AI-driven communication in increasing voter engagement. Nearly two-thirds of female respondents (64.3 per cent) believed that AI-enabled political communication increases voter engagement, compared with 54.2 per cent of male respondents. This reflects the growing reach of digitally targeted campaigns among women voters through welfare-oriented messaging, localised communication, and social media-based political outreach. Political parties increasingly use WhatsApp groups, Facebook campaigns, and short-form digital content to engage women voters on issues such as healthcare, food security, and women's empowerment.

Male respondents also strongly agreed that AI-driven communication enhances political participation. However, a higher proportion of male respondents (29.2 per cent) selected "partially" than female respondents (25.0 per cent), indicating greater caution about the effectiveness of digital political engagement. The findings suggest that AI-driven political communication has expanded political visibility and accessibility, particularly among younger and digitally active populations. At the same time, respondents who express partial agreement indicate concerns about selective political exposure, emotionally persuasive messaging, and the overall quality of democratic participation in digital communication environments.

Table 7: Perceived Gendered Targeting of Political Issues

Political Issues/Narratives	Male n (%)	Female n (%)
Welfare schemes	11 (21.2)	40 (76.9)
Employment	38 (73.1)	15 (28.8)
Development	35 (67.3)	18 (34.6)
Healthcare	10 (19.2)	32 (61.5)
Leadership image	30 (57.7)	13 (25.0)
Nationalism	33 (63.5)	9 (17.3)
Food security	6 (11.5)	28 (53.8)
Women empowerment	5 (9.6)	36 (69.2)
Security	24 (46.2)	7 (13.5)
Regional identity	20 (38.5)	11 (21.2)

Note: Multiple responses were permitted

The findings presented in Table 7 demonstrate that AI-driven political communication in Odisha increasingly operates through gendered narrative targeting and differentiated campaign strategies. Respondents perceived that political actor strategically target male and female voters through distinct political issues and emotionally tailored digital narratives. Welfare schemes emerged as the most dominant category associated with female voters, identified by 76.9 per cent of respondents, followed by women's empowerment (69.2 per cent), healthcare (61.5 per cent), and food security (53.8 per cent). These findings reflect the growing significance of women-centred welfare politics in Odisha, where electoral campaigns increasingly focus on household welfare, self-help groups, healthcare assistance, subsidised food programmes, and women empowerment initiatives. Such communication frequently circulates through WhatsApp groups, Facebook pages, and localised digital campaign networks targeting women voters.

In contrast, employment (73.1 per cent), development (67.3 per cent), nationalism (63.5 per cent), leadership image (57.7 per cent), and security (46.2 per cent) emerged as dominant issues perceived as targeting male voters. These findings suggest that male voters are more commonly approached through narratives emphasising governance, infrastructure, economic development, political leadership, and national identity. Regional identity narratives associated with 'Odia Asmita' also demonstrated visibility among both male and female respondents, with 38.5 per cent associating them with male voters and 21.2 per cent with female voters. Political actors increasingly use regional pride, cultural identity, and emotionally resonant symbols to strengthen political attachment and electoral mobilisation. Overall, the findings indicate that digital electoral communication in Odisha increasingly relies on issue-specific, emotionally differentiated political narratives that strategically target distinct voter groups.

Table 8: Gendered Digital Inequality and Information Vulnerability in AI-Driven Political Communication

Variables	Categories	Male n (%)	Female n (%)	Total n (%)
Perception Regarding Differential Targeting of Male and Female Voters in Political Campaigns	Yes	17 (70.8)	24 (85.7)	41 (78.8)
	No	3 (12.5)	2 (7.1)	5 (9.6)
	Not Sure	4 (16.7)	2 (7.1)	6 (11.5)
Difficulty in Verifying Political Information Online	Frequently	6 (25.0)	12 (42.9)	18 (34.6)
	Sometimes	10 (41.7)	12 (42.9)	22 (42.3)
	Rarely	6 (25.0)	3 (10.7)	9 (17.3)
	Never	2 (8.3)	1 (3.6)	3 (5.8)
Perception Regarding Women's Equal Access to Digital Political Information in Odisha	Yes	7 (29.2)	7 (25.0)	14 (26.9)
	No	10 (41.7)	14 (50.0)	24 (46.2)
	Partially	7 (29.2)	7 (25.0)	14 (26.9)
Perception Regarding the Differential Impact of Misinformation on Women and Men Voters	Yes	14 (58.3)	22 (78.6)	36 (69.2)
	No	5 (20.8)	2 (7.1)	7 (13.5)
	Not Sure	5 (20.8)	4 (14.3)	9 (17.3)

The findings presented in Table 8 demonstrate that AI-driven political communication in Odisha is strongly shaped by gendered digital inequality, differential political targeting, and unequal information vulnerability. A substantial majority of respondents (78.8 per cent) believed that male and female voters are targeted differently during political campaigns. Female respondents (85.7 per cent) demonstrated comparatively stronger recognition of differential political targeting than male respondents (70.8 per cent). This reflects the increasing visibility of customised political messaging directed toward women through welfare-oriented narratives, healthcare-related communication, household welfare schemes, and women's empowerment programmes. Such communication is especially prominent within WhatsApp-based political outreach and localised social media networks operating in rural and semi-urban areas of Odisha.

The findings further reveal considerable difficulty among respondents in verifying political information circulated online. More than one-third of respondents (34.6 per cent) reported frequently experiencing difficulty verifying political information, while 42.3 per cent reported sometimes experiencing such difficulty. Female respondents demonstrated greater difficulty verifying political information, with 42.9 per cent reporting

frequent difficulty, compared to 25 per cent of male respondents. This finding is important because digital political communication increasingly involves manipulated videos, edited speeches, AI-generated visuals, and rapidly circulated emotionally persuasive misinformation on social media platforms. Another important finding concerns perceptions regarding women's equal access to digital political information in Odisha. Nearly half of respondents (46.2 per cent) believed that women do not have equal access to digital political information, with 50 per cent of female respondents and 41.7 per cent of male respondents. This reflects the persistence of gendered digital inequality despite expanding internet connectivity and smartphone usage across the state.

The findings also reveal widespread concern regarding the differential impact of misinformation on male and female voters. A significant majority of respondents (69.2 per cent) believed that misinformation affects women differently from how it affects men. Female respondents (78.6 per cent) expressed stronger agreement with this perception than male respondents (58.3 per cent). Overall, the findings indicate that democratic participation within digital political environments increasingly operates through unequal digital experiences shaped by gender, information access, and technological literacy.

Table 9: Exposure to Political Misinformation and Platforms of Circulation

Variables	Categories	Male n (%)	Female n (%)	Total n (%)
Exposure to Fake or Misleading Political Content Online	Frequently	8 (33.3)	14 (50.0)	22 (42.3)
	Sometimes	10 (41.7)	10 (35.7)	20 (38.5)
	Rarely	5 (20.8)	3 (10.7)	8 (15.4)
	Never	1 (4.2)	1 (3.6)	2 (3.8)
Platforms Perceived to Spread Political Misinformation Most	WhatsApp	11 (45.8)	17 (60.7)	28 (53.8)
	Facebook	4 (16.7)	4 (14.3)	8 (15.4)
	YouTube	4 (16.7)	3 (10.7)	7 (13.5)
	Instagram	2 (8.3)	3 (10.7)	5 (9.6)
	X/Twitter	2 (8.3)	2 (7.1)	4 (7.7)
	Other	1 (4.2)	1 (3.6)	2 (3.8)

Note: Multiple responses were permitted for misinformation platforms

The findings presented in Table 9 demonstrate the increasing prevalence of political misinformation within Odisha's digital electoral environment and highlight the growing role of social media platforms in shaping political perceptions through misleading content. A substantial majority of respondents reported exposure to fake or misleading political information either frequently or sometimes, indicating that misinformation has become a common feature of digital political communication. Overall, 42.3 per cent of respondents reported frequent exposure

to misleading political content, while another 38.5 per cent reported encountering it sometimes. Female respondents demonstrated comparatively higher exposure to misinformation than male respondents. Half of the female respondents (50 per cent) reported frequent exposure to misleading political content, compared with 33.3 per cent of male respondents. This finding reflects the growing dependence on social media-based political communication, particularly through closed-network

communication systems where political content circulates rapidly through interpersonal sharing and localised digital networks.

WhatsApp emerged as the platform most widely perceived to spread political misinformation, identified by 53.8 per cent of respondents overall, including 60.7 per cent of female respondents and 45.8 per cent of male respondents. This finding is significant because WhatsApp functions as a highly personalised communication environment where political messages, rumours, edited videos, and emotionally persuasive narratives circulate rapidly with limited opportunities for fact-checking. Facebook

(15.4 per cent) and YouTube (13.5 per cent) also emerged as important platforms for the circulation of misinformation. Misleading political content on these platforms often appears in the form of edited speeches, manipulated visuals, sensationalised claims, and emotionally charged campaign narratives designed to maximise engagement and online interaction. The overall findings indicate that misinformation in Odisha’s digital political environment increasingly spreads through emotionally appealing, rapidly shared content, creating serious challenges for informed democratic participation and political trust.

Table 10: Perceptions Regarding AI-Driven Manipulation and Political Polarisation

Variables	Categories	Male n (%)	Female n (%)	Total n (%)
Perception Regarding AI-Generated Political Content Influencing Voting Behaviour	Strongly Agree	7 (29.2)	11 (39.3)	18 (34.6)
	Agree	10 (41.7)	11 (39.3)	21 (40.4)
	Neutral	3 (12.5)	4 (14.3)	7 (13.5)
	Disagree	3 (12.5)	2 (7.1)	5 (9.6)
	Strongly Disagree	1 (4.2)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.9)
Perception Regarding Digital Political Communication Increasing Political Polarisation	Yes	15 (62.5)	19 (67.9)	34 (65.4)
	No	5 (20.8)	3 (10.7)	8 (15.4)
	Not Sure	4 (16.7)	6 (21.4)	10 (19.2)

The findings presented in Table 10 demonstrate growing public concern regarding the manipulative potential of AI-driven political communication and its broader impact on democratic discourse in Odisha. A substantial majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that AI-generated political content can influence voting behaviour. Overall, 34.6 per cent of respondents strongly agreed with this perception. In comparison, another 40.4 per cent agreed, indicating widespread recognition of the persuasive power of targeted advertisements, edited videos, emotionally persuasive messaging, and digitally amplified campaign narratives. Female respondents demonstrated comparatively stronger agreement regarding the influence of AI-generated political content on voting behaviour than male respondents. Among female respondents, 39.3 per cent strongly agreed, and another 39.3 per cent agreed that AI-generated political content influences voting behaviour. Among male respondents, 29.2 per cent strongly agreed and 41.7 per cent agreed with this perception. This reflects growing awareness among women voters regarding personalised political

communication and emotionally targeted campaign outreach connected to welfare schemes, healthcare, food security, and women’s empowerment initiatives.

The findings further reveal widespread concern regarding political polarisation within digital political environments. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (65.4 per cent) believed that digital political communication increases political polarisation, including 67.9 per cent of female respondents and 62.5 per cent of male respondents. In contrast, only 15.4 per cent disagreed with this perception. Social media platforms frequently expose users to ideologically selective political content, reinforcing existing political preferences while limiting exposure to alternative viewpoints. Political narratives related to regional identity, welfare politics, and nationalism increasingly circulate through segmented digital networks. Overall, the findings indicate that AI-driven political communication functions not only as a tool of electoral outreach but also as a mechanism influencing voter perceptions, political behaviour, and ideological polarisation within Odisha’s digital electoral environment.

Table 11: Democratic Trust and Perceived Electoral Impact of AI

Variables	Categories	Male n (%)	Female n (%)	Total n (%)
Level of Trust in Political Information Shared through social media	Completely	3 (12.5)	2 (7.1)	5 (9.6)
	Partially	12 (50.0)	12 (42.9)	24 (46.2)
	Very Little	7 (29.2)	10 (35.7)	17 (32.7)
	Not at All	2 (8.3)	4 (14.3)	6 (11.5)
Perception Regarding the Impact of AI on Electoral Democracy	Strengthens Democracy	7 (29.2)	6 (21.4)	13 (25.0)
	Weakens Democracy	5 (20.8)	9 (32.1)	14 (26.9)
	Both Strengthens and Weakens Democracy	10 (41.7)	11 (39.3)	21 (40.4)
	Not Sure	2 (8.3)	2 (7.1)	4 (7.7)

The findings presented in Table 11 reflect the growing complexity of democratic trust and electoral perception within AI-driven political communication environments in Odisha. Although social media platforms have become major sources of political information and electoral engagement, respondents demonstrated cautious attitudes regarding the credibility of political content circulated online. Only 9.6 per cent of respondents expressed complete trust in political information shared through social media. In contrast, a substantial majority reported either partial trust (46.2 per cent) or very little trust (32.7 per cent) in this information. Female respondents demonstrated comparatively lower levels of trust than male respondents, with 35.7 per cent reporting “very little” trust and 14.3 per cent reporting “not at all,” compared to 29.2 per cent and 8.3 per cent, respectively, among male respondents. This finding reflects increasing public awareness regarding misinformation, manipulated political narratives, edited videos, and emotionally persuasive campaign communication within digital political environments.

Another important finding concerns respondents’ perceptions regarding the impact of AI on electoral democracy. The largest proportion of respondents (40.4 per cent) believed that AI both strengthens and weakens democracy. Additionally, 25 per cent believed that AI strengthens democracy, while 26.9 per cent believed it weakens democracy. Respondents recognised that AI-driven communication strengthens democracy by expanding political outreach, increasing voter engagement, and improving access to political information. At the same time, respondents acknowledged that AI contributes to misinformation, political manipulation, selective exposure, emotional polarisation, and declining democratic trust. Female respondents demonstrated a comparatively stronger concern about the weakening impact of AI on democracy, with 32.1 per cent selecting “weakens democracy,” compared to 20.8 per cent among male respondents. The overall findings indicate that electoral democracy in Odisha increasingly operates within digitally mediated communication environments where political participation is simultaneously expanded and challenged through AI-driven political communication systems.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study examined the relationship between AI-driven political communication and electoral democracy in Odisha with particular emphasis on digital narratives, voter engagement, misinformation, and gendered political communication. The findings demonstrate that the rapid expansion of digital platforms, social media networks, and AI-enabled communication technologies has significantly transformed electoral politics within the state. Political communication increasingly operates through algorithmically mediated digital environments where voter engagement, political visibility, and democratic participation are shaped through personalised messaging and platform-based communication systems.

The study reveals that platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram have become major sources of political information, particularly among younger and digitally active voters. WhatsApp emerged as the most dominant platform for political communication and misinformation, highlighting the growing role of closed-network communication systems in electoral politics. Respondents also demonstrated considerable awareness regarding AI-driven political campaigns, algorithmic influence on political visibility, and personalised political communication. A major finding of the study is that AI-driven political communication in Odisha increasingly functions through gendered voter segmentation and differentiated political narratives. Women voters are predominantly targeted through

welfare-oriented narratives related to healthcare, food security, women’s empowerment, and household welfare. In contrast, male voters are more commonly approached through narratives emphasising development, nationalism, leadership, employment, and security. The findings further reveal growing concerns regarding misinformation, political manipulation, and declining democratic trust within digital political environments. Female respondents demonstrated comparatively higher exposure to misinformation and greater difficulty in verifying political information circulated online.

It is essential to note that AI-driven political communication simultaneously strengthens and weakens democracy. While AI enhances political outreach and voter engagement, it also contributes to misinformation, polarisation, and unequal digital participation. In light of these findings, the study recommends strengthening digital literacy and fact-checking awareness, particularly among women and rural voters. Regulatory mechanisms should be developed to monitor AI-generated political content, deepfakes, and manipulated campaign material during elections. Social media platforms should strengthen controls over misinformation and transparency regarding political advertisements and algorithmic recommendation systems. Finally, greater emphasis should be placed on ethical AI usage and gender-inclusive digital participation to ensure that technological advancement strengthens rather than weakens democratic processes in Odisha.

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