

The Impact of Political Campaigns, Social Media, and Voter Behaviour on Electoral Outcomes in Rohtak: A Comparative Study of the 2024 Elections

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Abstract

The 2024 Indian general election in the Rohtak parliamentary constituency of Haryana produced a decisive reversal of the 2019 outcome: Deepender Singh Hooda of the Indian National Congress defeated the sitting Bharatiya Janata Party member, Dr Arvind Kumar Sharma, by a margin of 345,298 votes (62.9 per cent vote share), compared with a razor-thin 7,503-vote BJP win in 2019. This paper examines the extent to which political campaigning, social media communication and voter-behaviour dynamics contributed to this swing, situating the Rohtak case within the wider comparative literature on digital campaigning in the 2019 and 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Drawing on Election Commission of India constituency data, official campaign chronology reported in the national press, and a synthesis of recent peer-reviewed studies on social media and Indian electoral behaviour, the paper develops a conceptual model linking campaign exposure, social-media usage and political communication (independent variables) through political awareness, trust and engagement (mediators) to voting decisions and electoral outcomes (dependent variables), moderated by age, gender, education and rural/urban residence. A mixed-methods research design combining a structured voter survey, key-informant interviews and social-media content analysis is proposed for empirical testing of the model in Rohtak. Because a completed voter survey for Rohtak was not available at the time of writing, the paper stops short of reporting primary statistical results; instead it presents the verified secondary evidence, the theoretical and conceptual apparatus, and a fully specified methodology, and flags precisely which sections require the author's own field data before the manuscript can be submitted to a Scopus, Web of Science or UGC-CARE-indexed journal. The paper contributes a constituency-level analytical framework for studying digital political communication in a family-dominated, semi-urban north Indian seat, and offers practical and policy recommendations on digital literacy, platform regulation and campaign transparency.

Keywords

Political campaigns; social media; voter behaviour; electoral outcomes; Rohtak; Lok Sabha 2024; digital political communication; India

1. Introduction

Electoral politics in India has, over the last decade, moved decisively into a hybrid communication environment in which door-to-door canvassing, public rallies and print media coexist with WhatsApp broadcast groups, Instagram reels, YouTube speeches and X (formerly Twitter) commentary. The 2024 general election was widely described in the Indian press and in early academic commentary as a further step in this shift, with national parties reported to have allocated a substantially larger share of campaign budgets to digital operations than in 2019 (Karunaratne & Praveena, 2025). Haryana's Rohtak constituency offers an unusually clear test case for examining how this shift interacts with local political structure, because the seat has long been associated with the Hooda family and the Indian National Congress, was narrowly lost to the BJP in 2019, and was then decisively regained by Congress in 2024.

This paper asks a focused question: to what extent, and through what mechanisms, did political campaigning and social-media communication shape voter behaviour and the electoral outcome in Rohtak in 2024, compared with 2019? Answering this question in a rigorous, publishable way requires both

an accurate account of the electoral facts and a properly collected body of primary voter data; the present paper supplies the former in full and lays out, rather than fabricates, the latter.

2. Background of the Study

Rohtak is one of ten Lok Sabha constituencies in Haryana and comprises nine assembly segments — Meham, Garhi Sampla-Kiloi, Rohtak, Kalanaur (SC), Bahadurgarh, Badli, Jhajjar (SC), Beri and Kosli — spanning Rohtak and Jhajjar districts and part of Rewari district (Brutimes, 2024). The seat has been closely associated with the Hooda political family: Deepender Singh Hooda, son of former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, held the seat from 2005 until his narrow defeat in 2019, when BJP's Dr Arvind Kumar Sharma won by only 7,503 votes (573,845 votes, 47.01 per cent, against Hooda's 566,342 votes, 46.23 per cent) (India TV News, 2024; ETV Bharat, 2024). In the 2024 election, held in Phase 6 of the Lok Sabha poll on 25 May 2024, Deepender Singh Hooda reversed this result decisively, winning 783,578 votes (62.9 per cent) against Sharma's 438,280 votes (35.1 per cent), a margin of 345,298 votes, on a turnout of 65.68–66.1 per cent of 1,889,844 registered electors (IndiaVotes, 2024; Vote India, 2024). Table 1 sets out this comparative trend.

Table 1. Rohtak Lok Sabha election results, 2014, 2019 and 2024 (verified, ECI-sourced)

Year	Winner (Party)	Winner votes / share	Runner-up (Party)	Runner-up votes / share	Margin
2014	Deepender S. Hooda (INC)	490,063 (46.9%)	Om Parkash Dhankar (BJP)	—	170,627
2019	Dr Arvind K. Sharma (BJP)	573,845 (47.0%)	Deepender S. Hooda (INC)	566,342 (46.2%)	7,503
2024	Deepender S. Hooda (INC)	783,578 (62.9%)	Dr Arvind K. Sharma (BJP)	438,280 (35.1%)	345,298

Source: compiled by the author from India TV News (2024), ETV Bharat (2024), IndiaVotes (2024) and Vote

India (2024), which in turn aggregate official Election Commission of India returns.

Campaign activity in Rohtak in early 2024 combined conventional and digital elements. Press coverage recorded Sharma launching a door-to-door 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra' campaign in Bahadurgarh and Jhajjar shortly after his renomination, while Hooda continued sustained door-to-door canvassing and public meetings that had begun months earlier (Tribune India, 2024). This matches the wider national pattern described in the literature, in which social media supplemented rather than replaced ground-level campaigning (Shivaraju, 2025).

3. Statement of the Problem

Existing published research on social media and the 2024 Lok Sabha election is overwhelmingly national in scope (Shivaraju, 2025) or focused on other states, notably Karnataka (Karunarathne & Praveena, 2025). No peer-reviewed, constituency-specific study of Rohtak's 2024 campaign and voter behaviour, incorporating primary survey or interview data from the constituency's own electorate, has yet been published. Given the scale of the swing in Rohtak — from a 7,503-vote BJP win in 2019 to a 345,298-vote Congress win in 2024 — and given Rohtak's distinctive status as a dynasty-linked, semi-urban north Indian seat, this absence constitutes a genuine gap that the present study is designed to address once primary data collection is complete.

4. Research Gap

Three gaps in the literature motivate this study. First, constituency-level granularity: national and even state-level studies (e.g., Karunarathne & Praveena,

2025, on Karnataka) cannot capture how family-based political loyalty, caste composition and local issues interact with digital campaigning in a specific Haryana seat. Second, comparative design: few studies compare the same constituency's social-media environment and voter response across two consecutive elections (2019 and 2024) to isolate what changed. Third, mechanism testing: much of the existing literature is descriptive (platform usage statistics, follower counts) rather than testing a mediated model in which campaign exposure and social-media use are hypothesised to work through political awareness, trust and engagement to shape the voting decision — the kind of model this paper proposes but which requires primary data to test.

5. Significance of the Study

- Academic significance: extends constituency-level electoral communication research to an under-studied north Indian seat and offers a testable mediated-moderated conceptual model.
- Practical significance: offers political parties and campaign managers in similar semi-urban, family-legacy constituencies an evidence base for allocating resources between digital and traditional campaigning.
- Policy significance: informs the Election Commission of India and platform companies on digital-literacy and disinformation-management priorities at the constituency level.

6. Research Objectives

- RO1: To document and verify the pattern of political campaigning (traditional and digital)

conducted in Rohtak during the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

- RO2: To examine, once primary data are collected, the extent and manner of social-media usage among Rohtak voters for political information.
- RO3: To test the hypothesised relationships between campaign exposure, social-media usage, political awareness/trust/engagement, and voting decision among Rohtak's electorate.
- RO4: To compare the 2019 and 2024 outcomes in Rohtak and relate the swing to the available evidence on campaign and communication factors.
- RO5: To derive practical and policy recommendations for political communication and electoral governance in comparable constituencies.

7. Research Questions

- RQ1: What forms did political campaigning take in Rohtak during the 2024 election, and how did these compare with 2019?
- RQ2: Which social-media platforms were most used by Rohtak voters for political information, and with what frequency?
- RQ3: Do campaign exposure and social-media usage significantly predict political awareness, trust and engagement among Rohtak voters?
- RQ4: Do political awareness, trust and engagement mediate the relationship between campaign/social-media exposure and voting decision?
- RQ5: Do age, gender, education and

rural/urban residence moderate these relationships?

8. Hypotheses

- H1: Political campaign exposure is positively associated with political awareness among Rohtak voters.
- H2: Social-media usage is positively associated with political engagement among Rohtak voters.
- H3: Political awareness, trust and engagement mediate the relationship between campaign/social-media exposure and voting decision.
- H4: The strength of these relationships is moderated by age, education and rural/urban residence.
- H5: Perceived exposure to political content on social media is positively associated with actual voter turnout.

9. Literature Review

This review synthesises verified, traceable studies directly relevant to social media, political campaigning and voter behaviour in the Indian context, including two studies published in 2025 that specifically analyse the 2024 Lok Sabha election. Given the very recent publication dates of India-specific 2024-election research, the number of directly on-topic peer-reviewed studies currently available is smaller than the 40–60 typically expected in a mature sub-field; rather than pad this list with invented or loosely related citations, the review below is limited to sources the author has individually verified, supplemented by foundational communication-theory

Table 2. Literature review matrix (verified sources only)

Author (Year)	Country	Objective	Method / Sample	Findings (summary)	Limitation	Contribution to this study
Shivaraju (2025)	India	Compare the role of social media in the 2019 and 2024 Lok Sabha elections	Comparative document/secondary analysis; National-level, party digital-strategy documents	Finds a shift from mass, one-way communication in 2019 to data-driven, personalised, influencer-led engagement in 2024; highlights growing misinformation/deepfake risk and calls for stronger ECI-platform regulation	Descriptive/secondary; no primary voter survey	Frames the 2019→2024 shift this paper tests at constituency level
Karunarathne & Praveena (2025)	India (Karnataka)	Examine social media's impact on 2024 Lok Sabha voting behaviour in Karnataka	Quantitative survey (Google Form), convenience sample; n = 72, predominantly 19–24 age group	95.8% used social media; WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube dominant; 43% said social media influenced their own vote, 57% believed it influenced others; 57.7% rated social media campaigns more impressive than traditional methods; two-thirds unsure about content bias	Small convenience sample skewed young/educated; not generalisable nationally	Provides a directly comparable survey instrument and benchmark statistics for the Rohtak questionnaire proposed here
Chadwick (2017)	UK	Theorise how older and newer media logics interact in contemporary political communication	Conceptual / theoretical, 'hybrid media system'; N/A	Political communication now occurs in a hybrid environment where traditional and digital media compete, interact and blend rather than one simply replacing the other	Conceptual; not India-specific	Supplies the theoretical lens for interpreting Rohtak's mixed door-to-door and digital campaign

Castells (1996)	Comparative	Theorise the rise of network-based social and communication structures	Conceptual, sociological theory; N/A	Describes the 'network society' in which decentralised digital networks reorganise political and social power	Broad theory, pre-dates platform-specific social media	Underpins the framing of social media as a structural, not incidental, campaign channel
Sunstein (2001)	USA / comparative	Examine fragmentation of public discourse in internet-mediated environments	Conceptual, legal/communication theory; N/A	Warns that personalised information environments ('Republic.com') can create echo chambers that narrow, rather than broaden, political exposure	Pre-dates social-media algorithms in current form	Motivates the bias/echo-chamber items proposed for the Rohtak survey instrument
Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet (1944)	USA	Explain how voters form electoral decisions during presidential campaign	Panel survey, Erie County, Ohio; Approx. 600 respondents, repeated interviews	Introduced the two-step flow of communication and minimal-effects thesis: media influence is substantially mediated by opinion leaders	Mid-20th-century mass-media context; predates digital platforms	Foundational justification for testing mediating variables (awareness, trust) rather than assuming direct media effects
Noelle-Neumann (1974)	Germany / comparative	Explain public silence around minority political opinions	Theoretical synthesis of survey evidence; N/A	Proposes the 'spiral of silence': fear of isolation leads holders of minority opinions to self-censor, shaping perceived public opinion	Contested generalisability across cultures and online contexts	Relevant to interpreting expressed vs actual political opinion on social media in Rohtak

Note: columns 'Method/Sample' and 'Findings' are compressed to fit table width; full descriptions appear in the narrative synthesis below.

9.1 Critical synthesis

Read together, these sources support three

propositions carried forward into the conceptual framework below. First, the effect of media on voting is very unlikely to be direct; both classical (Lazarsfeld,

Berelson & Gaudet, 1944) and contemporary Indian (Karunaratne & Praveena, 2025) evidence points to mediating variables such as awareness of party positions, trust in the information received and active engagement with content. Second, the Indian 2024 election involved a genuine intensification of digital, personalised campaigning relative to 2019 (Shivaraju, 2025), consistent with Chadwick's (2017) hybrid-media-system account. Third, users' own uncertainty about the reliability of political content on social media — two-thirds of Karnataka respondents in Karunaratne and Praveena's (2025) survey were unsure whether the content they saw was biased — means that any Rohtak-specific study must measure not just exposure but perceived credibility, echoing both Sunstein's (2001) fragmentation thesis and Noelle-Neumann's (1974) spiral of silence.

The clear research gap that follows, and that a completed Rohtak study would fill, is the absence of any published constituency-level test of these mediated relationships in a dynasty-linked north Indian seat that swung by over 300,000 votes between two consecutive elections.

10. Theoretical Framework

The study draws on four established theories from political communication and social psychology, each independently justified in the literature reviewed above.

10.1 Agenda-Setting Theory

McCombs and Shaw (1972) demonstrated that mass media do not tell audiences what to think but strongly influence what they think about, by determining which issues receive prominence. Applied to Rohtak,

this theory frames the question of which issues (local development, family political legacy, national narratives) were foregrounded by each candidate's campaign, on traditional and digital channels alike.

10.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory

Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) argue that audiences actively select media to satisfy specific needs — information, social utility, entertainment, personal identity. This underpins the study's interest in why Rohtak voters chose particular platforms (WhatsApp for direct, personal communication; YouTube and Instagram for visual, candidate-centred content) rather than simply how much media they consumed.

10.3 Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory of mass communication explains how modelled behaviour, observed via media, shapes attitudes and actions through processes of attention, retention, reproduction and motivation — relevant to understanding how influencer-led and candidate-modelled digital content (Shivaraju, 2025) may shape voter attitudes.

10.4 Elaboration Likelihood Model

Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) elaboration likelihood model distinguishes a 'central route' of careful, issue-based persuasion from a 'peripheral route' relying on cues such as candidate likeability or production quality. This is directly relevant to interpreting why a large share of Karnataka respondents in a comparable 2024 survey said social media helped them understand party 'vision' and 'select a candidate' rather than evaluate detailed policy (Karunaratne &

Praveena, 2025) — a peripheral-route pattern the Rohtak instrument is designed to test for.

11. Conceptual Framework

The proposed model links three sets of variables, consistent with the theoretical framework above.

- Independent variables: Political campaign exposure (traditional and digital); Social-media usage (platform, frequency, content type); Political communication style (agenda, framing).
- Mediating variables: Political awareness; Political trust; Political engagement.
- Moderating variables: Age; Gender; Education; Urban/rural residence.
- Dependent variables: Voter behaviour; Voting decision (party/candidate choice); Electoral outcome (turnout, vote share).

A path diagram of this model — independent variables flowing through the three mediators to the dependent variables, moderated by the four demographic variables — should be produced as Figure 1 once the survey instrument is finalised, so that the diagram's variable labels exactly match the questionnaire's construct names. This is a design choice, not a missing step: producing the figure before the constructs are operationalised risks a mismatch between the diagram and the eventual measurement model.

12. Research Methodology

12.1 Research philosophy and approach

A pragmatist research philosophy is proposed,

supporting a mixed-methods approach that combines a quantitative structured survey with qualitative key-informant interviews, allowing statistical testing of the hypothesised model alongside contextual interpretation of Rohtak's distinctive dynastic political culture.

12.2 Research design and strategy

A cross-sectional, explanatory sequential design is proposed: Phase 1, a structured questionnaire survey of Rohtak voters shortly after the reference election period; Phase 2, semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of local campaign workers, journalists and party representatives to help interpret the quantitative findings.

12.3 Study area and population

The study area is the Rohtak Lok Sabha constituency, comprising its nine assembly segments. The population is the constituency's registered electorate (1,889,844 electors at the 2024 election, per ECI-sourced data reported in IndiaVotes, 2024).

12.4 Sampling technique and sample size

A multi-stage stratified random sampling design is recommended: strata defined by assembly segment (urban Rohtak city vs the remaining rural/semi-urban segments) and by age band, with proportional allocation. Using a 95 per cent confidence level, a 5 per cent margin of error and an assumed population proportion of 0.5, the minimum recommended sample size is approximately 385 respondents; a target of 400–450 completed responses is recommended to allow for incomplete returns, following standard survey-sampling formulae (Krejcie

& Morgan-type calculation).

12.5 Questionnaire design, pilot study, reliability and validity

The questionnaire should operationalise each construct in the conceptual framework using previously validated five-point Likert-scale items adapted (with citation) from established political-communication and technology-acceptance instruments, plus demographic items and a recalled-vote item. A pilot study with 30–40 respondents is recommended prior to full deployment, followed by Cronbach's alpha reliability testing (target: $\alpha \geq 0.70$ per construct) and both content validity (expert review) and construct validity (exploratory factor analysis) checks.

12.6 Ethical considerations

The study should obtain informed consent, guarantee anonymity of individual voting-preference responses, and secure Institutional Ethics Committee approval from Baba Mastnath University prior to data collection, given the politically sensitive nature of voting-preference data.

12.7 Data collection procedure and software

Face-to-face and online (Google Forms / structured telephonic) data collection is recommended to cover both urban and rural segments. Proposed software: IBM SPSS for descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation, regression, ANOVA and chi-square tests; SmartPLS or AMOS for confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling of the mediated-moderated model, once sample size requirements are

met.

13. Data Analysis (pending primary data)

Once the survey in Section 12 has been conducted, the following analyses are recommended, in this order: (i) data cleaning and missing-value treatment; (ii) descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) for demographic and usage variables; (iii) Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis per construct; (iv) exploratory factor analysis to confirm the measurement structure, followed by confirmatory factor analysis; (v) Pearson correlation among the study's core constructs; (vi) multiple regression and/or PLS-SEM to test H1–H3; (vii) multi-group analysis or interaction-term regression to test the moderation hypotheses in H4; (viii) chi-square/ANOVA tests comparing subgroups (e.g., urban vs rural, by age band) on key outcome variables.

14. Results (pending primary data)

This section is intentionally left as a template rather than populated with results, since no primary data collection has yet occurred for this manuscript. On completion of data collection, this section should report, in order: sample characteristics; reliability and validity outcomes; descriptive findings by research question; and inferential test results for each hypothesis, each with the appropriate statistic, degrees of freedom, effect size and significance level, presented in numbered, source-noted tables consistent with Table 1 and Table 2 above.

15. Discussion

Even without primary Rohtak-specific survey data, the

verified secondary evidence supports a coherent, if provisional, discussion. The scale of the 2019-to-2024 swing in Rohtak — from a wafer-thin BJP margin of 7,503 votes to a decisive Congress margin of 345,298 votes — is far larger than could plausibly be explained by social-media campaigning alone; it is more consistent with an interaction of local political factors (including the Hooda family's historical association with the seat and prevailing state-level political conditions in Haryana in 2024) with a communication environment that had, in the intervening five years, become substantially more digital and more personalised nationally (Shivaraju, 2025). This is consistent with the hybrid-media-system view (Chadwick, 2017) that digital and traditional campaigning operate together rather than as substitutes, and it is consistent with the pattern observed in the comparable Karnataka 2024 study, where a majority of respondents rated social media more impressive than traditional campaigning while traditional methods were still used and valued by a substantial minority (Karunaratne & Praveena, 2025).

Two provisional inferences follow, both of which the proposed Rohtak survey is designed to test directly rather than assume. First, given the theoretical emphasis on mediation (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1944; Bandura, 2001), any social-media effect on the Rohtak result is more likely to have operated through increased awareness of candidates and issues than through direct persuasion. Second, given the documented uncertainty among comparable Indian voters about the objectivity of political content on social media (Karunaratne & Praveena, 2025), the credibility of the message source — whether the candidate's own verified channel, a party account or

an unverified forward — is likely to be an important, currently untested, moderator of any digital-campaign effect in Rohtak.

16. Practical Implications

- Campaign managers in comparable dynasty-linked, semi-urban constituencies should plan digital and door-to-door campaigning as complementary rather than competing investments.
- Given the youth skew documented in comparable studies, first-time and 18–24-year-old voters are a distinct audience segment meriting platform-specific messaging (short-form video, WhatsApp).
- Because voters report uncertainty about content bias, campaigns and parties that visibly verify and source their claims may build more durable trust than those relying on unattributed viral content.

17. Policy Implications

- The Election Commission of India's existing social-media campaign-expenditure reporting requirements should be extended, with clearer constituency-level disclosure, to allow researchers and the public to audit digital spend against outcomes.
- Digital literacy programmes targeted at first-time voters could reduce vulnerability to misinformation, consistent with recommendations in Shivaraju (2025).
- Platforms operating in India should be encouraged to maintain accessible, constituency-level political-advertising transparency libraries ahead of future

elections.

18. Limitations

- This draft relies on verified secondary sources for the electoral and campaign-context evidence; it does not yet include primary survey or interview data collected directly from Rohtak voters, which is required before the hypotheses (H1–H5) can be statistically tested.
- Comparative inference from the Karnataka study (Karunaratne & Praveena, 2025) is illustrative, not conclusive, given Karnataka's very different linguistic, demographic and political context, and its own small, convenience-sampled dataset (n = 72).
- The scale of the swing observed in Rohtak may reflect state-level and national political dynamics not captured by a constituency-level communication study alone.

19. Future Scope

Future work should complete the primary survey and interview phases specified in Section 12, extend the comparative design to a matched pair of constituencies (one with a comparable swing, one with a stable result) to isolate communication-specific effects from state-level political trends, and consider a panel design tracking the same respondents across the 2024 and next general election.

20. Conclusion

Rohtak's 2024 Lok Sabha result was a decisive reversal of a razor-thin 2019 defeat, occurring within a national campaign environment that had become

markedly more digital, personalised and analytics-driven since 2019. The evidence assembled here — verified constituency election data, documented local campaign activity, and a synthesis of the small but growing body of peer-reviewed research on social media and the 2024 Indian election — supports a plausible but not yet empirically confirmed account in which digital communication supplemented, rather than replaced, traditional campaigning, and likely operated through increased political awareness and engagement rather than direct persuasion. Testing this account rigorously in Rohtak specifically requires the primary voter survey and interview data specified in the methodology; until that data collection is undertaken, this paper should be read as a fully specified research proposal and verified background chapter rather than as a completed empirical study.

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