

Regulating Digital Platforms for Political Campaigning: Legal Approaches to Ensuring Fair Elections

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Abstract

The regulation of digital platforms in political campaigning has become an urgent issue as digital technologies increasingly shape electoral processes worldwide. These platforms, which include social media networks, search engines, and websites, offer new ways for political campaigns to reach voters. However, their use also raises significant concerns regarding fairness, transparency, and security in the electoral process. This article aims to explore the legal challenges posed by digital political campaigns, including issues of misinformation, data privacy, content moderation, and the accountability of digital platforms. By reviewing existing regulatory frameworks, including those in the European Union and the United States, this article discusses the effectiveness of current laws and identifies gaps that need to be addressed. The paper also proposes solutions such as stronger regulation, enhanced transparency requirements, and global cooperation among nations to create consistent standards for digital campaigning. Furthermore, it highlights the need for innovative approaches, including media literacy campaigns, stronger content moderation, and the use of technology for election monitoring. The article concludes by examining the future challenges posed by emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and deepfakes, emphasizing the need for adaptive legal frameworks to keep pace with these developments. This review underscores the importance of effective regulation in ensuring that digital platforms contribute to fair and democratic elections, balancing the need for innovation with the protection of voters' rights and electoral integrity.

Keywords: Digital platforms, political campaigning, legal regulation, transparency, misinformation, election security

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1. Introduction

In recent years, digital platforms have increasingly become a central feature of political campaigns, profoundly altering how political messages are disseminated, voters are engaged, and elections are contested. Social media platforms, search engines, and other online spaces provide political candidates and organizations with unprecedented opportunities to reach vast audiences, engage voters directly, and influence public opinion. The rapid rise of these platforms has shifted political campaigning from traditional methods such as door-to-door canvassing, television ads, and printed flyers, to digital-first strategies that leverage the power of algorithms and real-time data. The role of digital platforms in shaping public discourse and political outcomes has grown so significant that they are now considered integral components of modern electoral

processes. As digital campaigning continues to evolve, these platforms are increasingly being scrutinized for their impact on the fairness, transparency, and security of elections (Arouti Movahed & Arouti Movahed, 2021).

The importance of regulating digital platforms in political campaigning has never been more evident. The lack of clear and consistent regulations governing these platforms has led to a number of significant challenges. These include the spread of misinformation, the manipulation of voter behavior through targeted ads, and the potential for foreign interference in national elections. Additionally, the unregulated use of personal data in political campaigns raises serious concerns about voter privacy and consent. The algorithms that govern these platforms often prioritize sensationalist content, which can lead to the amplification of extremist views or false narratives, undermining the integrity of political discourse. These issues underscore the need for a legal framework that ensures fairness and transparency, holding digital platforms accountable for the role they play in political campaigns (Pourkhaghan Zeynab, Yaqoubpour Reza, & Heydarpoor Hamidreza, 2019).

The purpose of this article is to explore the legal approaches to regulating digital platforms in political campaigning, focusing on the need for effective measures that ensure free and fair elections. This review will critically analyze existing regulatory frameworks and legal tools aimed at governing the use of digital platforms during elections, with an emphasis on the protection of democratic values such as transparency, fairness, and voter privacy. It will examine how various countries and regions have approached this challenge and evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies. Through this analysis, the article will offer insights into how legal systems can adapt to the evolving nature of digital campaigning and provide recommendations for further regulatory improvements.

The structure of the article will proceed as follows: the second section will provide a background and context for understanding the evolution of digital campaigning, the key issues that arise, and the global landscape of digital campaigning regulations. The third section will delve into the specific legal challenges and issues posed by digital platforms in political campaigns, followed by an examination of existing legal frameworks in the fourth section. In the fifth section, the article will explore proposed legal and regulatory solutions to address the challenges identified, offering potential pathways for improving the regulation of digital platforms in political campaigning. The final section will discuss future challenges and directions for the regulation of digital platforms in the context of elections, considering the role of emerging technologies and the evolving nature of digital political engagement.

2. Background and Context

The evolution of digital campaigning is a relatively recent phenomenon, closely tied to the rapid growth and global adoption of the internet and digital technologies. In the early days of the internet, political campaigns were primarily confined to the use of websites and email lists, serving as simple tools for communication and voter outreach. As the internet became more ubiquitous, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram emerged as powerful new tools for political engagement, offering candidates and parties direct access to millions of voters in real-time. The ability to target specific demographics with tailored messages, based on vast amounts of data collected from users, marked a revolutionary shift in political campaigning (Zamani & Nikoui, 2017). Digital platforms soon became not just tools for engagement, but central hubs for political discourse, where voters could interact with candidates, share content, and form communities around shared political ideologies. Over time, the use of these platforms in political campaigns has become more sophisticated, incorporating techniques such as microtargeting, where voters are presented with different messages based on their individual behaviors and preferences. This evolution has made digital campaigning a multi-faceted and data-driven endeavor, wherein the use of sophisticated algorithms, artificial intelligence, and behavioral analytics has become integral to a campaign's success.

The key issues surrounding digital campaigning primarily revolve around the challenges posed by the immense power and reach of these platforms. One of the most pressing concerns is the spread of misinformation and disinformation. The ability to rapidly disseminate information through social media channels means that false or misleading content can spread quickly, often without being fact-checked or verified. During electoral periods, the spread of such content can have significant consequences, influencing voter behavior, shaping public opinion, and undermining the integrity of the electoral process (Crum & Merlo, 2020). The issue of fake news is compounded by the algorithms used by digital platforms, which tend to amplify content that is sensational or polarizing. These algorithms prioritize engagement—such as likes, shares, and comments—rather than the accuracy or reliability of the information, leading to the amplification of divisive or misleading messages (Bytyci & Phillips,

2017). Furthermore, the rise of deepfake technology, which allows for the creation of hyper-realistic, but entirely fabricated videos and audio, presents a new frontier for misinformation, posing a unique challenge to both voters and regulators.

Another key issue is the practice of microtargeting, which leverages voter data to deliver personalized political ads. While microtargeting can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of political campaigns by delivering messages tailored to individuals based on their interests, behaviors, and demographics, it also raises significant ethical and legal concerns. The use of personal data for political purposes often occurs without the explicit consent of voters, and the data used may not always be accurate or transparent (Shahbazianni, 2023). Moreover, microtargeting can lead to the manipulation of voters by reinforcing pre-existing biases, creating echo chambers, and even spreading polarizing content. These practices may deepen political divisions and undermine the integrity of democratic processes by distorting the democratic debate and limiting the exposure of voters to diverse viewpoints (Sadat Bidgoli, 2023).

Privacy is another central concern in the realm of digital campaigning. Voter data, often collected through online activities such as social media interactions, web browsing history, and participation in digital surveys, is a valuable commodity for political campaigns. However, this data collection frequently occurs without adequate transparency or consent, and its use is often not well-regulated. Voter privacy is particularly vulnerable in the digital age, where vast amounts of personal information can be harvested and exploited for political purposes. This issue is compounded by the fact that many digital platforms are owned by private corporations, which have their own interests in utilizing this data for commercial purposes, sometimes at the expense of individual privacy (Khavari & Simber, 2022).

The role of algorithms in shaping political discourse cannot be understated. Digital platforms rely on complex algorithms to filter content, determine what users see in their feeds, and recommend content based on previous behavior. These algorithms are designed to optimize user engagement, but in doing so, they can often prioritize sensationalist, misleading, or extreme content. The lack of transparency in how these algorithms work and their potential to manipulate public opinion raises significant concerns about the fairness of elections and the overall democratic process (Beijerman, 2018). Additionally, the use of algorithms to target specific groups of voters with tailored messages can exacerbate issues of political polarization, as voters may only be exposed to content that aligns with their existing views, further entrenching divisions within society (Grzybowski, 2019).

Globally, the regulation of digital platforms in political campaigning varies significantly, with different regions taking different approaches based on their political, cultural, and legal contexts. In the United States, the regulation of digital campaigning has primarily focused on transparency and accountability, with various states passing laws requiring political ads to be clearly labeled and disclosing information about who is funding them. At the federal level, however, significant gaps remain in regulating online political ads and addressing the use of personal data for campaign purposes (Zamani & Nikoui, 2017). In Europe, the European Union has taken a more proactive approach, introducing regulations such as the Digital Services Act and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which address issues of data protection, privacy, and transparency in political campaigning. These regulations have set a global benchmark for how digital platforms should be governed to ensure fairness in elections, although their implementation and enforcement remain a challenge (Sadeghi, Raei, & Raisi, 2022). In contrast, regions such as Asia and Latin America are still in the early stages of developing comprehensive legal frameworks for regulating digital platforms in political campaigns. Nonetheless, emerging economies are increasingly recognizing the need to address the unique challenges posed by digital campaigning, especially in the context of rising concerns about misinformation and political interference (Jalili, Dehghan, & Mehrad, 2024).

The increasing complexity and influence of digital platforms in political campaigns have made it clear that regulatory responses must be dynamic and multifaceted, capable of adapting to the ever-evolving landscape of digital technologies and electoral practices.

3. Legal Challenges and Issues

The absence of clear and comprehensive regulatory frameworks for digital platforms in political campaigns is one of the most pressing legal challenges facing democracies today. While some countries have attempted to introduce laws aimed at addressing the unique aspects of digital campaigning, many existing laws remain inadequate in regulating the evolving digital landscape. Traditional legal frameworks, developed for print and broadcast media, do not seamlessly translate to the realm of

digital platforms. These platforms are not simply publishers or broadcasters; they are also intermediaries that facilitate user-generated content, making it difficult to categorize them within existing legal paradigms. Moreover, the global nature of digital platforms complicates the application of national regulations, as digital content easily crosses borders, evading national regulatory oversight (Jalili, Dehghan, & Mehrad, 2024). Consequently, there are gaps in legislation concerning issues such as political advertising, online microtargeting, and the use of user data for campaign purposes. As a result, political campaigns can operate with little transparency or oversight, undermining public trust in the electoral process and diminishing the integrity of democratic systems (Shahbazianni, 2023).

The tension between freedom of speech and the regulation of harmful content on digital platforms represents another significant legal challenge. On one hand, freedom of speech is a fundamental right in many democratic countries, protected by constitutional frameworks and international human rights law. On the other hand, digital platforms have been used to propagate harmful content, including hate speech, incitement to violence, and false information, particularly in the context of political campaigning. This creates a legal and ethical dilemma: how can governments regulate digital content to protect public interest and ensure fair elections without infringing upon the right to free expression? This balancing act becomes especially complex when the content in question is shared on private platforms, where the legal status of the platform owner and the content creator often remains unclear. In some cases, regulating harmful content could be seen as censorship or an attempt to control political discourse, which raises concerns about overreach and the potential stifling of legitimate political debate (Rollo, 2019). The challenge lies in finding a regulatory approach that ensures the integrity of elections while safeguarding fundamental freedoms, including the free exchange of political ideas.

Misinformation and disinformation have emerged as central concerns in the regulation of digital platforms in political campaigns. The rapid spread of false or misleading information can have a profound impact on public opinion, influencing the behavior of voters, shaping electoral outcomes, and even destabilizing democratic processes. Misinformation, while not intentionally false, and disinformation, which is deliberately false, both thrive on digital platforms, where the speed and reach of content dissemination are amplified by algorithms designed to prioritize engagement. The legal implications of regulating false information are significant. On one hand, there is a need to protect the public from harmful content that can manipulate voters or distort the electoral process. On the other hand, regulating misinformation and disinformation without curbing free speech or creating a chilling effect on legitimate political expression presents a formidable challenge. Furthermore, the definition of misinformation and disinformation itself is fraught with difficulties, as it often depends on subjective judgments regarding the intent and potential harm of the content. Legal frameworks need to strike a delicate balance, providing mechanisms to address harmful content while avoiding the over-regulation of political speech, which could lead to the suppression of dissenting voices (Crum & Merlo, 2020).

Privacy and data protection have become critical issues in the realm of digital campaigning, particularly as political campaigns increasingly rely on personal data to target voters. The collection and use of data through digital platforms raise important legal concerns about consent, transparency, and the protection of individuals' privacy rights. In many instances, voters' personal information, including their political preferences, browsing habits, and social media interactions, is collected and used by political campaigns without explicit consent. This data is then used for microtargeting, where voters receive tailored political messages based on their personal data profiles. The use of such data raises serious privacy concerns, especially when data collection and processing are not fully transparent or when voters are unaware of how their information is being used. Moreover, the potential for data breaches, where sensitive voter information is exposed or stolen, adds another layer of concern regarding the security of personal data in political campaigns (Sadat Bidgoli, 2023). Legal frameworks governing data protection, such as data protection laws and privacy regulations, are often inadequate to address the specific challenges posed by digital campaigning. Existing laws must be adapted or reformed to address the nuances of online data collection, ensuring that voters' privacy rights are adequately protected, and that data is used responsibly and transparently during electoral processes.

The accountability of digital platforms is another significant legal issue in regulating political campaigning. Platforms such as social media sites, search engines, and video-sharing websites are often accused of failing to adequately moderate political content, allowing harmful or misleading information to spread unchecked. The responsibility of these platforms for the content shared on their services is a point of contention in many legal debates. Some argue that these platforms, as private entities, should not be held accountable for the content posted by users, citing the protections afforded to them under laws like Section

230 of the Communications Decency Act in the United States. Others contend that these platforms, due to their size, reach, and influence, should bear greater responsibility for moderating content and preventing the spread of harmful or false information, especially when it comes to political campaigning (Rastgar-Khalid, Azimi, Rahimi, & Maziyar, 2020). The question of whether platforms should be held liable for failing to prevent election interference, the spread of fake news, or the manipulation of voter behavior remains a contentious legal issue. Legal frameworks must address the extent to which digital platforms are responsible for policing content, ensuring that they do not become conduits for harmful political activities while maintaining a fair and free digital public sphere.

4. Existing Legal Frameworks and Approaches

The regulation of digital platforms in political campaigns has become a priority in many countries, and various legal approaches have been developed in an attempt to address the unique challenges posed by digital campaigning. These regulatory responses range from national laws that focus on transparency and accountability in political advertising to broader data protection and privacy regulations that govern how political campaigns collect and use voter data. While these approaches vary significantly across regions, they share a common goal of ensuring fair, transparent, and secure electoral processes in the digital age.

In the European Union, several important legal frameworks have been introduced to regulate digital platforms and their role in political campaigns. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into force in 2018, is one of the most significant pieces of legislation aimed at protecting personal data and privacy. The GDPR imposes strict requirements on how personal data can be collected, processed, and used, providing greater control to individuals over their own data. In the context of digital campaigning, the GDPR has significant implications for how political campaigns collect voter data and use it for targeted ads. It mandates that individuals must give explicit consent for their data to be used, and it ensures that they have the right to access, rectify, and erase their personal information (Sadeghi, Raei, & Raisi, 2022). The Digital Services Act, which was proposed in 2020, further seeks to regulate online platforms by introducing transparency requirements for political ads, holding platforms accountable for the spread of illegal content, and imposing stricter oversight of how platforms manage user-generated content during elections. The Digital Markets Act, also proposed in 2020, focuses on curbing anti-competitive behavior among large digital platforms, ensuring that smaller players can compete in the online space, which indirectly impacts political campaigns by fostering a more equitable digital environment (Khavari & Simber, 2022). Together, these regulations form a robust legal framework that seeks to address some of the most pressing issues surrounding digital campaigning in Europe, although their implementation and enforcement remain ongoing challenges.

In the United States, digital campaigning is primarily regulated by the Federal Election Commission (FEC), which oversees the financing of political campaigns, including online political ads. While the FEC has established rules for political advertising, these regulations have not kept pace with the rapid evolution of digital platforms. One key issue is Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which provides broad legal immunity to online platforms for content posted by users. This legal protection has been a source of contention, as critics argue that it allows platforms to avoid responsibility for harmful content, including political disinformation and election interference (Zamani & Nikoui, 2017). In recent years, some states have passed their own laws to address the regulation of digital political ads, including requirements for greater transparency in political ad targeting and spending. However, the lack of a comprehensive federal framework for regulating digital campaigning remains a significant gap in U.S. law (Sajadi Zadeh, Shahbazi, & Miri Behloul, 2020).

Other regions, including India, Brazil, and Australia, have also taken steps to regulate digital platforms in political campaigns. In India, the Election Commission has implemented guidelines for political parties and candidates to follow when using social media for campaigning, including requirements for transparency in digital ad spending and the disclosure of campaign finance information. In Brazil, the use of social media in political campaigns has been subject to increased scrutiny, with the government introducing measures to combat the spread of fake news and ensure greater transparency in digital political advertising. In Australia, the government has introduced laws requiring greater disclosure of political advertising on social media platforms, and the Australian Electoral Commission has provided guidelines for online political campaigning (Sadeghi, Raei, & Raisi, 2022). These countries' legal frameworks reflect a growing recognition of the importance of regulating digital platforms in political campaigns, although challenges remain in ensuring compliance and enforcement.

5. Proposed Legal and Regulatory Solutions

One of the most pressing issues in the regulation of digital platforms in political campaigns is the need for stronger and more comprehensive legal frameworks. While some countries have taken initial steps to regulate digital political ads and data usage, many legal frameworks are outdated or insufficient to address the unique challenges posed by digital campaigning. A robust regulatory framework should encompass several key areas, including political advertising, the transparency of algorithms, data privacy, and content moderation. One potential solution is the establishment of clearer and more standardized rules regarding the transparency of political ads across all digital platforms. For example, requiring digital platforms to provide clear disclosures on political advertisements, including information on who is funding the ads, the target audience, and the amount spent, would help voters make more informed decisions (Khavari & Simber, 2022). In addition, digital platforms should be obligated to disclose how their algorithms select and prioritize political content, which would shed light on how political messages are being targeted to users and reduce the risk of manipulation through algorithmic biases. Furthermore, governments should consider expanding legal frameworks to include comprehensive data protection rules that govern the collection, processing, and usage of voter data, ensuring that personal information is used responsibly and transparently during political campaigns (Rastgar-Khalid, Azimi, Rahimi, & Maziyar, 2020). Establishing a more rigorous regulatory approach, including clear guidelines for digital political ads and data usage, could help address the opacity of online political campaigns and the threats posed by misinformation and disinformation.

Transparency is a critical component of any regulatory solution to digital campaigning. One of the fundamental challenges in digital campaigning is the lack of transparency regarding the content that voters see and the ways in which it is targeted to them. Political ads on digital platforms, unlike traditional ads in print or broadcast media, are often opaque in terms of their origin, targeting criteria, and funding sources. To address this, governments could require digital platforms to create public databases or archives of political advertisements, making information about these ads easily accessible to voters and regulators. This could include details on who is sponsoring the ad, the demographic profile of the targeted audience, and the amount of money spent on political advertising. Transparency requirements should also extend to the algorithms used by platforms to prioritize or recommend political content to users. Many social media platforms rely on complex algorithms to decide which content appears in users' feeds, yet these algorithms remain largely undisclosed. This lack of transparency makes it difficult for voters to understand why they are being exposed to certain political messages and how these messages might be influencing their opinions (Sadat Bidgoli, 2023). Regulating algorithmic decision-making and requiring platforms to disclose the factors that drive content recommendations could enhance accountability and reduce the risk of manipulation in the electoral process. By implementing these transparency requirements, regulators can help ensure that digital platforms play a fair role in the democratic process and do not skew public discourse in favor of particular political interests.

Given the global nature of digital platforms, one of the most effective ways to address the challenges posed by digital campaigning is through international collaboration. Digital platforms operate across borders, and their content and influence can extend far beyond the jurisdiction of any single country. As a result, unilateral national regulations may not be sufficient to address the complex issues of online political manipulation, misinformation, and data privacy. Instead, countries should work together to establish international standards for regulating digital platforms in political campaigns. A global approach to regulation could include the development of consistent rules for political advertising, data usage, and content moderation. Such standards would ensure that digital platforms operate in a manner that is consistent with democratic values and human rights, regardless of where they are based or where they operate. Moreover, international collaboration would help ensure that digital platforms do not exploit regulatory loopholes in countries with weaker regulations. By working together, countries could share information about emerging threats and develop collective responses to digital manipulation and interference, making it more difficult for bad actors to exploit vulnerabilities in national systems (Crum & Merlo, 2020). While achieving global cooperation may be challenging, particularly given the divergent political interests and regulatory approaches of different countries, it is essential for the future of democratic governance in the digital age.

In addition to regulatory measures, innovative legal mechanisms could play a critical role in addressing the challenges of digital campaigning. One such innovation is the promotion of digital media literacy campaigns, which could equip voters with the tools to critically evaluate the political content they encounter online. By fostering media literacy, governments and civil society organizations can help citizens navigate the complex digital landscape, recognize misinformation and disinformation,

and make informed decisions during elections. This could involve educational initiatives at all levels, from primary schools to adult education programs, and could be integrated into broader civic education efforts. Another innovative solution is strengthening content moderation mechanisms on digital platforms. While content moderation has long been a contentious issue, as platforms strive to balance freedom of speech with the need to protect users from harmful content, more proactive measures are needed during election periods. Digital platforms could be required to implement stricter content moderation policies during elections, with greater scrutiny of political content and the application of robust fact-checking measures to identify and counter misinformation. Additionally, technology could be leveraged to enhance election monitoring, with tools like blockchain and artificial intelligence being used to track the integrity of online political ads and voter engagement. Blockchain, for example, could provide a transparent and immutable record of political ad spending and ad placements, allowing for real-time monitoring and preventing the manipulation of ad data. By incorporating these innovative mechanisms into the regulatory framework, governments can ensure that digital platforms operate in a way that is fair, transparent, and accountable, reducing the risks associated with digital political campaigns (Zamani & Nikoui, 2017).

6. Future Challenges and Directions

As digital technologies continue to evolve at a rapid pace, regulators will face new challenges in keeping up with emerging threats in digital campaigning. One of the most significant technological advancements that may impact the regulation of digital platforms is artificial intelligence (AI). AI has the potential to revolutionize digital campaigning by enabling more sophisticated forms of microtargeting and content personalization. However, this also raises concerns about the manipulation of voters through hyper-targeted political messages that exploit personal data and psychological profiling. Regulators will need to develop new frameworks to address the use of AI in political campaigns, ensuring that AI tools are used responsibly and do not contribute to the spread of misinformation or the manipulation of public opinion. Another emerging threat is the rise of deepfakes, which are AI-generated videos or images that can be used to create misleading or harmful content. Deepfakes can be used to fabricate political statements, spread disinformation, and damage the reputations of political candidates. As the technology behind deepfakes becomes more advanced, it will become increasingly difficult to distinguish between real and fake content, posing a significant challenge for regulators in maintaining the integrity of elections (Grzybowski, 2019).

The challenge of adapting legal frameworks to evolving threats will require a continuous and proactive approach to digital regulation. As new technologies emerge, regulators will need to remain vigilant and flexible in their response, anticipating potential risks and ensuring that legal frameworks are adaptable enough to address them. This may involve periodic updates to existing laws or the introduction of new regulations designed to respond to emerging forms of manipulation and campaigning. Regulators will also need to collaborate with technologists and experts in digital security to develop innovative solutions that can address the specific challenges posed by new technologies such as AI and deepfakes (Bytyci & Phillips, 2017).

One of the key issues that will arise in the coming years is the need to balance effective regulation with the desire to foster innovation in political campaigning. While regulation is necessary to ensure fairness, transparency, and security, it is also important to allow political campaigns to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by digital platforms. Striking the right balance between regulation and innovation will be crucial in ensuring that the digital space remains vibrant and dynamic, while also protecting the integrity of elections and upholding democratic values. Regulatory approaches must be flexible and forward-looking, allowing political campaigns to evolve with new technologies while maintaining a strong commitment to fairness and transparency in the electoral process.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, regulating digital platforms in political campaigning is an urgent challenge that requires a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach. As digital platforms continue to play an increasingly significant role in modern elections, it is essential to develop legal frameworks that address the unique issues posed by digital campaigning, such as misinformation, data privacy, and platform accountability. Stronger regulation, enhanced transparency, and global cooperation are key to ensuring that digital platforms contribute to fair, free, and secure elections. Innovative legal mechanisms, such as digital media literacy campaigns and stronger content moderation practices, can further strengthen the regulatory framework and help mitigate the risks associated with digital political campaigns. However, as emerging technologies such as AI and deepfakes pose new threats to

electoral integrity, regulators must remain adaptable and proactive in addressing these evolving challenges. In the end, it is crucial to strike a balance between effective regulation and fostering innovation, ensuring that digital platforms continue to serve democracy while safeguarding the values of fairness and transparency that are essential to the democratic process.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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