



## The Role of Influencers in Political Communication: Influence and Challenges of Collaboration with Public Figures

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### ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of influencers in political communication has undergone development in the digital era. The use of influencers as a medium to convey political messages not only changes the paradigm of traditional communication but also creates new dynamics in the interaction between the public and political figures. The involvement of influencers in political campaigns shows great potential in influencing public opinion. This research aims to examine the role of influencers in political communication, particularly in the context of their influence on public opinion and the challenges faced in collaboration between influencers and public figures or politicians. The main focus is to understand how influencers influence political decisions and the implications of using influencers in political communication strategies. This study uses qualitative methods with a case study approach. The results show that influencers play a crucial role in shaping political narratives and influencing public opinion. Their influence is particularly evident in raising awareness of political issues and mobilizing young voters. However, the study also reveals significant challenges, including credibility issues and potential information bias that can affect public trust in the political process. The study concludes that while using influencers in political communication offers new opportunities for public engagement, it also requires a careful approach to managing the associated risks and challenges. Political parties and candidates need to choose influencers who have a wide reach and high credibility and integrity to maintain public trust and enhance the effectiveness of political communication.

**Keywords:** *Political Communication, Influence and Challenges, Public Figures.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Political communication is a crucial element in the structure of modern democracy, playing a vital role in shaping voters' views and behaviors as well as influencing political decisions at all levels (Rodrigo-Martín et al., 2022). As a battlefield of ideas and ideologies, political communication involves transmitting and receiving information between politicians, political parties, the media, and the general public (Goyanes et al., 2020). This communication is not limited to efforts of persuasion or propaganda it also includes dialogue, discussion, and the exchange of opinions that enable citizens to make informed decisions in a broader political context (Cladis, 2020). In the era of globalization and digitalization, the face of political communication has undergone dramatic transformations (Rojas & Valenzuela, 2019). Social media and digital platforms have opened up new channels that allow direct and rapid interaction between political leaders and voters, bypassing the traditional gatekeeping typically performed by the mass media (Ali et al., 2020). This results in new dynamics in the political process, where campaigns can be tailored and targeted with unprecedented precision, and public feedback can be immediately analyzed and responded to (Zamora-Medina et al., 2020).

However, these advancements also bring their own challenges (Katzenbach, 2021). Misinformation and disinformation have become increasingly common, threatening the integrity of the democratic process and raising questions about the citizens' ability to make choices based on true information (Al Shehhi & Almarri, 2022). Additionally, increasing political polarization is often exacerbated by digital echo chambers that isolate individuals from contradictory views, reinforcing biases and dividing social dialogue (Elareshi et al., 2021). Therefore, understanding political communication requires a holistic approach that includes the tools and technologies used and the social, economic (Becker, 2020), and psychological contexts in which the communication takes place (Esser, 2019). In this context, it is important to explore how various actors within the political system from politicians and political parties to the media and civil society influence and are shaped by political communication (Gesser-Edelsburg, 2021). This discussion should also critically evaluate the media's role and responsibility in shaping public discourse and how individuals and groups use political information to influence, organize, and effect social change

In the current digital era, political communication has transformed with the emergence of social media as a primary tool for disseminating information and influencing public opinion (Sobieraj, 2019). One increasingly dominant phenomenon is the role of influencers in conveying political messages (Bouquillion & Ithurbide, 2022). Influencers, with their wide reach and ability to influence, become strategic tools in political campaigns to influence voters, particularly the younger generation (Watkins & Clevenger, 2021). However, the use of influencers in this political context is not without various issues and challenges, such as issues of credibility and potential biases that can undermine public trust in the democratic process (Boulian, 2019). A major issue that arises is how influencers influence political decisions through social media platforms and what the implications are for democracy (Knudsen &

Johannesson, 2019). Political activities that utilize influencers are often characterized by strategically packaged messages to create a positive or negative image of a political figure or agenda (Chowdhury & Naheed, 2020). This becomes a problem when the messages delivered are not transparent or even misleading, influencing public opinion based on inaccurate or biased information. Therefore, it is essential to conduct in-depth research to identify and analyze the real impact of these interactions, as well as develop strategies to mitigate their negative effects (Kang et al., 2020).

This research is conducted to meet the need for a better understanding of the dynamics between influencers and politics in the context of social media. This study aims to explore how influencers can be utilized in effective political communication strategies while minimizing the risks of disinformation and manipulation of public opinion (Schürmann & Stier, 2023). Additionally, this study also seeks to address the gaps in the existing literature regarding the real and direct influence of influencers on the political process and voter decisions. This study takes a qualitative approach to deeply understand the phenomenon of influencers in politics, using methods such as in-depth interviews, content analysis, and participant observation. Through this approach, the research contributes to the literature by providing new insights into political communication strategies and the role of influencers, as well as identifying factors that influence their effectiveness in political campaigns (Jungblut & Johnen, 2022). This approach allows for a deeper exploration of the motivations, perceptions, and interactions between influencers and their audience, which has not been extensively discussed in previous studies. The 'state of the art' of this research proposes innovations in the application of communication and political theories (Carlson, 2019). These innovations include the development of a theoretical framework to understand the influence of influencers in a broader and multidimensional context, including the psychological and sociological aspects of political decision-making. The novelty of this research lies in the comprehensive analysis of how influencers utilize political narratives to shape public opinion, distinguishing it from previous studies that focused more on the technical aspects of social media in politics.

There are several previous research opinions. The first research, according to (Navarro et al., 2020), the challenge of New Gatekeepers for Public Relations. A comparative analysis of the role of social media influencers for European and Latin American professionals. The results of his research stated that with the massive implementation of social media channels, only a minority of Latin American and European professionals use specific strategies to identify and engage with SMIs. Practitioners prefer traditional identification indicators: personal reputation, the relevance of topics covered, and the quality of the content shared online. According to (Hatcher, 2020), the second research is titled A Failure of Political Communication Not a Failure of Bureaucracy: The Danger of Presidential Misinformation During the COVID-19 Pandemic. The research stated that to correct the dangerous path that the nation is on, the administration needs to adopt a more expert-centered approach to the

crisis, and President Trump needs to practice compassion, empathy, and transparency in his communications. According to (Papakyriakopoulos et al., 2020), the third research is Political communication on social media: A tale of hyperactive users and bias in recommender systems. The research stated that by training collaborative filtering and deep learning recommendation algorithms on simulated political networks, we illustrate that models provide different suggestions to users when accounting for or ignoring hyperactive behavior both in the input dataset and in the methodology applied.

This research is expected to serve as a foundation for future researchers to develop more ethical and transparent models of political communication. It is also hoped that the findings from this study can be utilized by policymakers and political practitioners to design campaigns that are more socially responsible, taking into consideration the long-term impact on public trust and participation in the democratic process. Future research may adopt a multi-methodological approach to test these findings in different contexts and with a broader population to validate and expand the understanding of the role and influence of influencers in political communication.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The role of influencers in political communication, focusing on their impact on public opinion and the challenges encountered in collaborations with public figures, is a critical area of inquiry. This study employs a qualitative research approach to gain a profound understanding of the dynamics and implications of these interactions within the political context (Wojcieszak et al., 2022). The qualitative methodology was chosen due to its ability to explore the perceptions, motivations, and behaviors of individuals engaged in the complex processes of political communication. To collect data, the research incorporates various data collection techniques, including in-depth interviews, documentary studies, and participatory observation.

In-depth interviews were conducted with several influencers active in political campaigns, political communication strategists, and political analysts. Respondents were selected based on their experience in political campaigns involving influencers and their expertise in social media analysis and political communication (Goovaerts & Marien, 2020). The inclusion criteria for influencers were those with significant followers on social media platforms and involvement in one or more political campaigns over the last three years. The interview process aimed to understand various aspects, including the strategies employed to select influencers, the messages conveyed, responses from followers, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of influencers in campaigns. Additionally, the interviews explored influencers' perceptions of their roles in politics, including how they comprehend their ethical responsibilities in delivering political information to the public. The documentary study involved analyzing content from social media posts, blogs, videos, and other campaign materials involving influencers. This analysis aimed to identify themes, narratives, and persuasive techniques used in the communication materials (Carrasco

Polaino et al., 2018). Participatory observation was conducted in some cases, where researchers followed the online activities of influencers during the campaign period to gain insights into the real-time interactions between influencers and their followers.

Data collected from interviews, documentation, and observations were analyzed using content analysis techniques. This analysis facilitated the identification of key themes, patterns, and relationships in the data. These themes included communication strategies, the effectiveness of influencers in conveying political messages, follower responses, and the ethical challenges encountered (Matalon et al., 2021). This thematic analysis was supported by the use of qualitative data analysis software to assist in coding data and mapping interaction patterns. In this study, ethical aspects were also given significant consideration. All participants were provided with informed consent, where they were informed about the study's purpose, data usage, and their right to withdraw from the research at any time without consequences. Participants' identities, as well as sensitive data, were kept confidential to prevent personal identification and to maintain the integrity of the research.

This research strives to provide recommendations based on findings for political practitioners and influencers on how to manage effective and ethical political communication campaigns (Dan & Arendt, 2021). These recommendations are expected to provide insights for political actors in planning and implementing more responsible and impactful communication strategies in the continually evolving digital era. Overall, this research methodology is designed to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the role of influencers in political communication, assess their effectiveness, and identify challenges arising from their interactions with political figures. Through this approach, the study aims to contribute significantly to the existing literature and practices in political communication.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Public communication is a form of interaction that occurs between individuals or institutions and a broad audience, aimed at conveying information, influencing opinions, or mobilizing the community on specific issues or agendas (Tang, 2023). In the modern context, public communication is often conducted through various media, including television, radio, print, and particularly social media, which have transformed the way information is spread and received by the public. Social media rapidly, has become the main arena for public communication due to its ability to disseminate information widely and quickly, as well as enable direct interaction between the sender and receiver of messages (Castro Seixas, 2021). The role of influencers in political communication, in particular, has become highly significant in the digital era. Influencers are individuals who have the ability to influence the opinions or behavior of others due to their authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with their audience. In the political context, influencers can be community figures, celebrities, political experts, or even ordinary individuals who have a large following on social media (Peres et al., 2020). They use their platforms to shape public opinion, mobilize voters, and assist in building or destroying political reputations.

The use of influencers in political communication brings several significant advantages (Häussler, 2021). First, they are able to reach a broad and diverse audience in a short amount of time. This is invaluable in political campaigns where time and reach are essential. Second, influencers are often seen as more relatable compared to traditional politicians. They tend to communicate in a more authentic and personal manner, which can be more effective in influencing public opinion compared to traditional political advertising, which is often perceived as too formal or manipulative. However, this great influence also comes with significant challenges. One of the main issues is credibility and authenticity. Influencers are often accused of speaking on the basis of financial gain rather than genuine political belief, which can erode public trust in the messages they convey (Universidad de Cádiz (España) et al., 2019). Additionally, there is the risk of disinformation, where inaccurate or misleading information can be rapidly spread through influencer networks. This can have serious consequences on the quality of public debate and the democratic process.

In addressing these challenges, transparency is key. It is important for influencers and those who work with them in a political context to be clear about the motivations behind the messages conveyed. Additionally, there is a need for greater oversight and regulation of how influencers engage in politics to ensure that they do not become tools of propaganda without critical or ethical consideration. In the final analysis, the role of influencers in political communication cannot be ignored. They have become key players in shaping public opinion and political outcomes. Therefore, it is important to understand and critically evaluate their role in depth. Further research and ongoing discussion are needed to assess their long-term impact on democracy and to develop strategies that leverage their strengths for the public good while minimizing potential harm. In the future, we may see more collaborations between influencers and political institutions aimed at creating more inclusive and democratic dialogues in political communication while also developing clear guidelines for managing these practices ethically and responsibly.

**Table: Influence and Challenges of Collaboration with Public Figures**

<b>NO</b>	<b>Influences of Collaboration with Public Figures</b>	<b>Challenges of Collaboration with Public Figures</b>
<b>1</b>	Increases brand visibility and awareness	Difficulties in contract negotiation and agreements
<b>2</b>	Expands market reach	Reputation risk if the public figure is involved in controversy
<b>3</b>	Builds trust and credibility	High costs to secure endorsements from public figures
<b>4</b>	Enhances customer engagement through positive association	Dependency on the public figure may obscure the brand identity
<b>5</b>	Generates engaging and authentic content	Potential conflicts of interest
<b>6</b>	Encourages innovation and creativity	Challenges in maintaining long-term relationships

<b>7</b>	Boosts sales through effective promotion	Challenges in measuring ROI (Return on Investment) effectively
<b>8</b>	Strengthens market position and product differentiation	Issues of authenticity and shifting public perceptions
<b>9</b>	Facilitates international expansion	Encountering laws and regulations across different regions
<b>10</b>	Builds strategic alliances and networks	Risk of overexposure that can make public figures less relevant

Managing collaborations with public figures presents unique opportunities as well as challenges that necessitate meticulous management and strategic planning. Overcoming these challenges hinges on a comprehensive understanding of the potential benefits and the risks involved. By implementing a series of well-considered strategies, organizations can maximize the positive outcomes while mitigating the negative aspects of such partnerships.

1. **Developing Strategic Alignment:** The initial step in a successful collaboration is to ensure that there is a strategic alignment between the public figure and the brand or campaign. This involves selecting influencers whose public persona and values are in sync with the brand's identity and core values. By ensuring alignment between the figure's followers and the target audience, organizations can enhance the authenticity of the campaign and improve its reception among the audience.
2. **Conducting Comprehensive Background Checks:** To minimize the risks associated with potential controversies, it is crucial to perform thorough background checks on prospective collaborators. This includes reviewing their past behavior, public statements, and any previous controversies they may have been involved in. This vetting process aids in anticipating possible risks and preparing strategies to address them should they arise.
3. **Creating Clear and Detailed Contracts:** Clear communication and explicit contracts are essential for managing expectations and responsibilities in any collaboration. These agreements should detail every aspect of the collaboration, including the nature of the content, expectations for promotion, financial arrangements, and clauses that address potential issues such as moral turpitude or public scandals. This not only provides legal protection but also ensures that both parties are clear about their roles and responsibilities.
4. **Establishing a Crisis Management Plan:** In the event that a public figure becomes involved in a controversy, having a pre-defined crisis management plan is vital. This plan should outline steps to address various scenarios, potentially including distancing the brand from the figure, issuing public statements, or engaging in damage control measures. Preparing for such situations helps organizations respond quickly and effectively, thereby minimizing potential damage to the brand's reputation.
5. **Implementing Performance Metrics:** To address the challenge of measuring the return on investment (ROI) in influencer collaborations, organizations should establish clear performance metrics at the outset of the partnership. These may include engagement rates, conversion metrics, or changes in brand perception. Utilizing analytical tools to track these metrics throughout the campaign will enable ongoing evaluation and

adjustment of strategies to ensure the collaboration achieves its intended goals.

6. Diversifying Influencer Partnerships: Over-reliance on a single public figure can be risky. To mitigate this, organizations should consider diversifying their influencer collaborations. Working with a variety of figures from different backgrounds and niches can help spread the risk and ensure that the campaign remains fresh and appealing to a broad audience. Moreover, this diversification allows brands to reach a wider segment of the audience and reduce the negative impact if one influencer encounters reputational issues.

In conclusion, by addressing these challenges with well-thought-out and scientifically grounded strategies, collaborations with public figures can be navigated more effectively, ensuring that both the integrity of the brand and the beneficial outcomes of such partnerships are preserved. Political communication with public figures plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and garnering societal support. Through effective interaction between politicians and prominent personalities, significant influence can be exerted on public policy and the political orientation of the populace (Sánchez-Villar, 2019). The main advantages of this type of communication include enhanced credibility, the creation of a positive image, mobilization of support, and effective message delivery. One of the greatest benefits of political communication with public figures is the enhancement of credibility. Public figures who are well-respected and esteemed by the community can help politicians build or strengthen their credibility. When politicians are seen interacting with or receiving support from respected figures, the public often interprets this as validation of the policies or political stances they advocate. This is vital in an era where public trust in politicians tends to be low.

Additionally, communication involving public figures often aids in creating a positive image. Public figures usually have large followings or fan bases that can be easily influenced by their interactions with politicians. By associating with figures who have a positive image, politicians can leverage this to improve or reinforce their own image. In many cases, this positive image is crucial for attracting votes in elections or gaining public support on controversial issues. Mobilizing support is another advantage of political communication with public figures (Ekstrom & Lai, 2021). These figures often have extensive reach and can access various groups within society that may not be directly reachable by politicians. By involving public figures in campaigns or political initiatives, a message can reach more people and in a more effective manner. This also allows politicians to tailor their message to more specific target groups through figures who already have connections or influence within those groups.

Political communication with public figures also enables more effective message delivery (Djupe & Neiheisel, 2022). Public figures are often seen as more relatable or approachable by the general public compared to politicians, who may be perceived as more formal or inaccessible. When these figures speak on behalf of or support politicians, their message often feels more genuine or authentic to the public. This can be crucial in persuading voters or the general public to support certain policies or decisions. Ultimately,

the success of political communication involving public figures depends on how effectively politicians and their teams choose the right figures and strategically manage those interactions. By leveraging these advantages, politicians can strengthen their position in the public eye, expand their outreach, and effectively convey their message to various segments of society. Therefore, in an increasingly complex and competitive political world, the role of public figures in political communication becomes increasingly crucial and impactful.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The conclusion of this research is that influencers have an important role in political communication, serving as a bridge between political entities and the public. The ability to shape public opinion and the growing importance of their role in modern political strategy. Collaboration with public figures in politics can significantly amplify campaign messages and effectively reach diverse demographics. By utilizing their extensive networks and credibility, influencers can help political campaigns get closer to voters, making political messages more relatable and persuasive. However, there are some challenges in such collaborations. The main risk is potential reputational damage; the political landscape is inherently volatile, and any controversy involving influencers can adversely affect the public perception of the political campaigns they represent. Furthermore, the costs involved in acquiring influential figures can be substantial, and the return on this investment is only sometimes guaranteed, especially if the message conveyed by the influencer does not resonate with the audience or is met with skepticism. Furthermore, an over-reliance on influencers can overshadow the political message itself, with the focus shifting from the issues at hand to the figures supporting them. This can weaken the effectiveness of the political message and reduce the campaign's ability to stand on its own merits. In addition, influencers often bring their own viewpoints and biases, which can conflict with the goals of a political campaign or alienate some voters.

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